



How to Respond to Constructive Criticism

Years ago, receiving any type of criticism, even constructive criticism, was excruciatingly painful for me. I took everything personally and couldn't separate the feedback from my feelings, which only created and perpetuated an environment of frustration, resentment and fear in my mind. Any time I was at work and a coaching session came up, my mind swirled with worst case scenarios, my body tensed up and I got a pit in my stomach...all for nothing because 9 times out of 10 my supervisor had the absolute best intentions and simply wanted to offer a suggestion to help me, save me time or make the project run more smoothly.

To respond to constructive criticism more appropriately:

1. Relax, nod your head (very slightly, you're not a bobblehead doll), and calmly ask, "Great, what else can I work on?"
2. Consider the source of the feedback. Has this person been in your role before, experienced a similar situation or does he/she demonstrate qualities that you admire? If so, listen and train your brain to search for what you can learn from this person and from the feedback. When I'm in the middle of a stressful situation or knee-deep in a project, it can be difficult to pull back and see the big picture. That's why I'm so grateful for this person's perspective because he/she may have just shared an observation or suggestion from the outside looking in that I couldn't see and would have never considered. If the person *doesn't* have experience with this situation and you would never want to trade places with him/her, say, "Thank you, I'll take that under advisement," Then, in your mind, say, "Annnnd release."

If you're still struggling with separating the feedback from your feelings, change your self-talk to, "I'm learning, I'm growing" or "It's just information," saying it over and over and over again to yourself. Both phrases give you your power back by shifting your perspective and allowing you to see that feedback is the path to growth.

If you need a visual reminder, buy a box of Q-tips and tape a few to your desk or your wall to remind yourself to **Quit Taking It Personally**.

For more tips like these, send an email to andrea@andreaashcraft.com with your name and "Add Me" in the subject line.