



## HANDLING CRITICISM WITH CLASS

Everyone faces criticism at one time or another. And, when taken properly, constructive criticism it can be a great learning tool. The fact that the criticism is personal does not necessarily indicate that the response should be along the same lines. The trick to getting value out of well-intentioned criticism is to not take it personally, but rather, learn to use it for your benefit. Here's how:

1. **Avoid defensive denials.** Let the other person finish what they are saying before you respond. Even if the criticism is entirely unjustified, ask questions that will help flesh out the situation.
2. **Take responsibility.** When you make a mistake, admit it and move on. Taking responsibility early, when you are to blame, helps defuse any tension from the outset and also sets the stage for the other person to hear your side of the story.
3. **Take your time before you reply.** Being assertive does not imply producing an instant reply. A brief pause will permit you to think of an appropriate answer. You are even allowed to go back and address a past situation that was bothersome to you.
4. **Seek the details.** Try to learn whether the other person has based the criticism on inaccurate information or mistaken assumptions. Summarize the criticism using your own words to indicate you've understood. Consider asking, "What makes you say that?"
5. **Present your side and more.** Give your point of view then offer possible solutions to prevent a similar situation from happening.
6. **What about destructive criticism?** Destructive criticism aims to hurt an individual's self-esteem by causing psychological damage to people and rendering them less effective in what they do and who they are. Destructive criticism is not very useful. It may inform you that you made a mistake, but if no remedy is suggested and no show of confidence that the mistake can be rectified is made, then the net effect will be negative. The best way to handle it? Remember the acronym "**FIDO**," which stands for, "**Forget It and Drive On.**"

Remember that criticism can contain nuggets of truth that are worth hearing. You can listen and then decide whether or not you agree. It is ultimately up to you!

