

Dealing with Criticism

This exercise is for you if you know that you are highly sensitive to criticism. Some people are able to accept a degree of criticism, see it as helpful and experience little or no lasting ill effects from it while others can find it very difficult to accept. This can lead to people becoming very afraid of trying new things or taking new opportunities for fear of being criticised. If this is you please give this a go!

Using the table on the next page follow these steps:

Step 1 – Reflect on situations that trigger your over-sensitivity

Think of five situations in your recent past where you were oversensitive to criticism. Describe the situation, including who else was involved, how you were criticized, and what the consequences of being over-sensitive to this criticism were, in the first three columns.

Step 2 – Adopt a different mindset

Consider the idea that this criticism is valuable, offering you the opportunity to improve yourself. How can you reframe each experience of criticism to become an opportunity for growth and learning? Going forward, how can this criticism help you? Write down your response in the fourth column of the table

Step 3 – From negative to positive

Come up with three things that you can say to yourself next time you notice you experience over-sensitivity to criticism. For example, this feedback is a blessing in disguise, not a personal attack; Without the feedback, I would not be able to make changes.....

Step 4 – Some more strategies to manage your over-sensitivity

Practice self-compassion. Offer yourself compassion during moments of criticism.

Don't take it personally. Notice what someone is saying objectively, without taking it on board as a personal attack. Listen to feedback with an open mind.

Repeat to yourself affirming statements such as: "This opportunity for growth and learning."

Reflect on the criticism you have received, if you have been wrongly criticized, assert yourself

Try not to become defensive in the moment.

Forgive yourself. Repeat phrases such as "I did the best I could," "My intentions are positive," "I can't always be perfect," "I let that person down, but I forgive myself," "I'm going to make mistakes sometimes; everyone does," "I'm not a bad person just because I made a mistake," and so on.

Resist the urge to offer a 'counter critique' in response if you are upset or angry.

Thank the person offering you feedback, even if it was not constructive or helpful and ask them how they feel this feedback will help you.

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Situation	Criticism Received	Consequences of being oversensitive	Opportunities for growth and learning
e.g. received criticism about my speaking skills from an audience member	e.g. was criticized for not being as good as the previous speaker	Felt ashamed and disappointed in myself, had trouble sleeping and kept going over the talk and dwelling on the criticism	I could dedicate my time to improving my public speaking, maybe ask for advice. I could also see this as an opportunity to practice self-compassion