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Why You Should Respond Positively to Negative Feedback

Your first impulse could be to lash out, but you might find a greater advantage in these alternatives.

By Richard Moy



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Getting negative feedback (<https://www.inc.com/laura-garnett/getting-negative-feedback-has-some-surprising-benefits.html>) is never fun. As you're getting it, you usually want to crawl into a hole and never come out.

And after you leave that room? Well, you probably want to fire off quite the email (<https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/you-should-never-give-negative-feedback-through-email-unless-you-do-it-like-this.html>). But chances are that your response could get you into trouble.

So, before you blurt anything out, take a deep breath (<https://www.inc.com/melanie-curtin/neuroscience-says-listening-to-this-one-song-reduces-anxiety-by-up-to-65-percent.html>) and read this:

You'll Want to Say: "You're Crazy for Seeing it This Way"

Bad feedback will often seem like it came out of thin air. Your first reaction will be to tell the other person that they're wrong. Why? Because if they were right, surely you would have heard about this sooner—and from a lot of other people. Except that's not always the case, so don't jump to this conclusion just yet.

Instead Say: "I'm Having Trouble Seeing That. Can You Provide an Example So I Can Learn From It?"

At the same time, don't worry if you're not quite seeing things the way someone else is. Sometimes hearing their thought process can help you either understand where you went wrong or help you clear up a miscommunication. No matter what the case is, go into this with the stance that you understand you might've messed up.

You'll Want to Say: "Why Didn't You Tell Me Sooner?"

Even if you don't disagree with the feedback, you also might not be excited that it's coming out of nowhere. In an ideal world, you'd hear about things as soon as they come up. But realistically, your team can't always drop what they're doing to let you know something's up.

Plus, you might have unconscious habits that prevent people from giving it to you until it escalates, such as sulking when you someone corrects you. Or storming out of conference rooms if a colleague disagrees with you.

Instead Say: "I Wish I'd Received This Feedback Earlier, Is There Anything I Do That Makes Me Appear Unreceptive to Constructive Criticism?"

Nobody every likes admitting they might make life difficult for another person. But as difficult as it was for you to hear it, it was probably harder for the other person to deliver the negative feedback (<https://www.themuse.com/advice/this-is-how-you-give-honest-feedback-to-anyone-anytimewithout-hurting-feelings>).

So, find out if your body language, habits, or even work style makes it challenging to be direct with you .

You'll Want to Say: "That'll Never Happen Again

This seems like the first thing you'd want to say, right? After all, isn't this is the best way to let someone know that you've acknowledged their feedback and take it seriously? Well, not quite.

I'm sure you're awesome, but even the most "perfect" people on the planet can't promise that they'll never make a mistake again;-even the same mistake. So, setting that expectation will only make your life harder than it needs to be.

Instead Say: "Here's My Plan for Preventing This From Happening in the Future"

That being said, you need to do more than acknowledge your mistake. You should tell the other person that you get where they're coming from and that you have a plan for attacking it next time. You'll show your boss or colleague that you're serious about correcting the issue, without setting yourself up for failure down the road.

Ready to have this conversation? OK, then the next step is sending an email-just not the original one you planned to shoot over.

Rather, it looks like this:

Hi [Name],

Thanks for giving me that feedback. I appreciate your honesty in this situation and I have a few thoughts I'd like to add to the conversation. Let me know if you [have time this week /could meet on Thursday afternoon/would like me to put 10 minutes on your calendar] to discuss.

In the meantime, I'll [response to the feedback that you can enact right away].

Thanks,

Your Name

Getting bad feedback sucks and it'll never feel great in the moment. But your response to it will ultimately dictate whether you let it eat you up or if you learn from the experience. And because you're taking the time to read this article, I'm sure that you'll do the former.

--This post (<https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-youll-want-to-respond-to-bad-feedback-and-how-you-actually-should>) originally appeared on the *The Muse* (<https://www.themuse.com/>).

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