



Criticism...A Good Thing? A Bad Thing? The Choice Is Yours

Criticism has taken such a bad rap that being criticized is first cousin to being insulted. Yet criticism is just another thing that doesn't matter, but our relationship with it does. The word actually comes from critic, one who takes things apart for the reason of putting them back together in a better, more beneficial way. So real criticism has the intention of *leaving a thing in better shape than it was found, at least in no worse condition if at all possible.*



There are two sides to criticism, the deliverer and the receiver. When someone criticizes me, what's more important than what he says is how I listen to it [my intention] and here is how I listen to all criticism. No matter what is said, I'm listening to find something useful. This allows me to know that it makes no difference whether the speaker intends his criticism to be insulting or instructive. My intention is to make it useful if I can.

Whew! Big worry is gone. I don't have to know if the speaker intends to put me down or not. This lets me relax and look for something useful in anything he says and in any way he says it. Now all criticism has the potential of being valuable and I don't fuss about the intention of the criticizer. This attitude toward criticism is made easy to the degree we don't identify ourselves as what we say or do. What we say or do are [products] results of our efforts—they are not who/what we are. Therefore, someone finding fault with what I have said or written or an action I have taken does nothing to me, so I don't have to take any criticism personally and therefore my need to be defensive doesn't arise, saving me lots of time and energy which I apply to any value I've found in the criticism.

Exercise:

For the next month daily invite criticism from friends, lovers, bosses, spouses, siblings, neighbors, anyone and receive it with the conscious intention of finding value in what they say or don't say, do or don't do. In other words look for value in their whole delivery: words, gestures, tone of voice, emotional state etc.

How does one invite criticism? Mostly by being open to it. However if none is forthcoming, ask for it.

And in this one-month practice don't tell people that you are practicing receiving criticism because telling them can soften the "blows"—it can modify the criticizer's behavior. Practice receiving raw criticism—it can damage nothing but your voracious ego.

Dear Reader,

Al Gore's movie An Inconvient Truth is definately one to not miss. It is highly informative. Regardless of your

political preferences and any other biases you may have, let his information in and carefully consider it.

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