



YES, YOU'RE WRONG!

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I honestly believe that criticism is a two-way street: its sense and sensibility lie in the way one gives it and how one takes it. No matter how noble a person's intention is in giving criticism, that is easily marred by the manner with which the criticism is disposed. In the same vein, no matter how wise and truly constructive criticism is, if the criticized takes it as a direct insult or a hurtful derogative, the noble intention is readily defeated.

Imagine, if you will, a parent who wants to correct a child's mistake on his homework. When the parent chooses to employ hurtful and insulting words to drive home a point, the child ceases to see the correction as being a generous helping of wisdom. He begins to see that having the parent help him with his schoolwork can result to a break in their relationship because the parent fails to see the work that the child puts into everything. Contrast that with a loving way by which a parent delivers criticism. Helpful words like, "Let's work on this together and see if we can come up with a better answer" or "I know the answer is right there, we just need to find it together" can spell the difference between an expletive and a motivational word. Children respond well to encouragement, and as parents, it is our inherent obligation to respond to their needs positively, nurturing their talents and helping them let go of their negativities in the process.

It can be difficult to temper down criticism when a snappy answer can simply serve to put an end to every argument. But remember how it had once been said that words are like stones that you can never take back once they're hurled. Words hurt a lot more than cuts from a knife, and in more ways than one. Haven't we been advised to "put a guard" over our mouths? That doesn't merely refer to watching what and who you talk about but also watching what comes out: a nasty word, a biting remark, or a painful criticism. Having to bite one's tongue can be painful or even risky, but parting with a negative word is even much riskier.

As we go about our lives in our own careers and families, let us try not to be too critical nor overly accepting. Of course, condescension can also be a double-edged knife: you can either be arrogant or humble, depending on how you cut it. Keeping hold of your horses when something is patently incorrect can be very difficult. But wise people know how to play everything in a positive light. They always know how to deliver criticism without appearing to be doing so.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you find it easy or difficult to deliver criticism? Why?
2. What are the consequences of destructive criticism? Explain each consequence, if needed.
3. Why do people avoid individuals who are hypercritical?
4. What are your personal opinions on people who are considered perfectionists?
5. Have you ever been criticized harshly? Talk about the details of that incident in class.