

Career Headlines

Monday, February 2, 2015

Getting Defensive

Amy is finishing the first draft of a website her boss asked her to design when Drew looks at her computer screen and remarks, "Let me show you how to size that art so it fits better."

Has anyone ever given you good advice you didn't ask for, and you became so annoyed that you didn't benefit from the advice?

For most of us, that's a natural reaction. We take pride in our work, and when someone points out that we're not doing the job right—or that we could do it better—we feel we've been attacked. Our self-esteem suffers. We get defensive.

Depending on your personality, when this happens, your defensiveness may lead to several outcomes. You may:

- Feel a surge of anger
- Strike back with words
- Mentally withdraw or "tune it out"

Here are some defensive thoughts that may enter your mind:

- "I'm being judged."
- "He's trying to put me down."
- "She wants to control me."
- "He thinks he's the boss of me."
- "She wants to make me look bad."



These defensive reactions often keep us from responding rationally. Not only do we refuse to benefit from the other person's advice, but we may make the situation worse by becoming upset about what was said.

How can you overcome defensiveness?

Step 1: Put aside your ego. Even if you're criticized, realize it is only about one thing and not about your overall job performance or your worth as a human being.

Step 2: Don't judge what you hear. Refuse to jump to conclusions about another person's motives.

Step 3: Concentrate on what the speaker is telling you. It may be helpful.

Step 4: Paraphrase and repeat what the speaker said, so you're sure you heard right.

Action: How would you handle the following situation?

At your annual review, your boss praises your work, gives a modest salary increase, and then names five specific things you could do better.

**Career Solutions Publishing 1199 Lancaster Avenue Berwyn, Pennsylvania 19312 United States
(610) 993-8292**