

# Career Headlines

## Watch Your Destructive Language

You may think you are being constructive during conflict, but your words may seem destructive to the other person. Look at what one speaker said and what the listener heard.

### Comment

*I can't see why you...*

*Look at this carefully, and you'll see...*

*I realize you can't be expected to...*

*You failed to say...*

*I know you're trying, but...*

*Most people understand that...*

### What the other person heard

*You're so stupid!*

*I'm smarter than you.*

*It's not your fault you're unqualified.*

*You can't be trusted.*

*You're not good enough for this job.*

*You're dumber than most people.*

How can you turn destructive words into constructive comments? Try these ways:

- Think about what you're about to say before making a comment that another might consider destructive.
- State your advice in ways that allows other people to keep their self-esteem.
- Reinforce others' good opinions of themselves with appropriate words.

Don't appear to be judging of another person.

Tackle a conflict situation as a mutual problem.

**Action:** Restate each comment below to make it constructive.

"If you weren't so defensive, you'd see that I'm only trying to help."

"We did it your way last time, and the result was a disaster."

"Stop trying to run everything."

"Why didn't you wait for help from someone who knew how to do this right?"

"This is a mess. You need to pull yourself together."



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