



## Don't Fear Criticism in the Workplace

It's easier to give criticism than to accept it. However, openness to criticism can help advance your career. This is why the "ability to accept criticism" is frequently a part of performance reviews. Make accepting criticism easier by understanding that defensiveness is like a "mental reflex." It naturally rejects criticism. The key is mastering control over this impulse. Do so by recognizing that everyone feels defensive when criticized. It's inescapable. Recognize also that rejecting criticism and rebuffing others who offer it ensures you will get more of it. Practice being welcoming to criticism. This can feel awkward, but it can help inoculate you against reacting negatively to criticism. The result is personal growth, improved performance, and a growing reputation as an outstanding, approachable worker.

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## Online Gambling Addiction

Addiction to online gambling is a growing problem. Research shows it predominantly affects teens and young adults, particularly men. Although online gambling addiction and traditional gambling addiction are similarly diagnosed, the anywhere, anytime, out-of-sight aspect of online gambling via the internet makes it particularly menacing. To help a problem gambler, seek help for yourself first. Ironically, as the concerned person in the relationship, counseling can empower you to know how and when to intervene while learning about and treating the adverse effects of your loved one's gambling behavior on you. Source: [www.netaddiction.com](http://www.netaddiction.com)



## What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to differences among employees regarding how they think and process information. People with autism and those with ADHD are examples of the neurodiverse. The world of work is rapidly seeking to accommodate and support these employees with broad programs of inclusiveness because of the strong value they bring to organizations. If neurodiversity is new to you, read the U.S. Department of Labor's blog "America's Workforce, Empowering All" at <https://blog.dol.gov> to learn more. Discover more about accepting differences, communicating effectively, discarding stereotypes, overcoming misconceptions, and the role you can play in helping coworkers feel valued.

## Enthusiasm Is Contagious

We all want to work around people who are enthusiastic. Like all attitudes—even negative ones—enthusiasm is contagious. Enthusiasm's ability to lift up others makes it a soft skill valued by employers. You can't fake enthusiasm. So how do you maintain real enthusiasm when stress and job strain rule? Don't see enthusiasm as a temporary state of mind or dependent on others. Instead, recognize enthusiasm as a part of your personality and a resource that helps you cope with stress and positively influence your environment. To stay enthusiastic, develop your passion by pursuing your dreams and ideas. Doing so will build resilience and help you take action early to intervene with factors and influences that could undermine it.

## Good for the Heart, Good for the Brain

If you do a lot of sitting and get little physical exercise, you are naturally at risk for cardiovascular disease, especially if you are over 55. New research shows that within six months of participating in a commonsense, aerobic exercise program you will experience improved cognitive functions—meaning better brain health. These include increased attention span, the ability to stay focused, better decision-making, improved working memory, better planning, and the ability to think with more agility—switching back and forth between tasks you're doing. You have even better returns if you follow a diet of vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy foods, less salt, and moderate amounts of whole grains, fish, poultry, and nuts. Do you fear losing your mental capacity as you age? Here's your mission: Get moving, and remember, what's good for your heart is good for your brain. (Consult with your medical provider before beginning an exercise program.)

## Resolving Relationship Problems at Work

Are you tolerating a difficult workplace relationship? Thorny relationships are often tolerated because switching job functions or leaving is not an option. If this sounds like you, it's time to discuss your situation with an EAP counselor or job coach. People conflicts are the most common complaints of workers, but the fewest for which help is sought. The reason: Thinking it's hopeless. Numerous strategies exist for resolving workplace conflicts. Whether it is learning different responses to triggering comments or behaviors, or discovering the mechanics of turning the relationship around entirely, get out of the rut and explore the options with a pro. Abraham Lincoln once said, "I do not like that man. I must get to know him better." Perhaps this might be the approach that works for you.

## Empathy: Happier Customers, Less Stress

Direct customer service is known to be stressful. But there are customer service "tools" (ways of thinking and communicating) that can make this job easier and more rewarding. Upset customers, no matter the cause, have one thing in common: They want the pain to stop. The problem or need, even if unresolvable, always has another part—customer's anger, agitation, or disappointment. Intervention calls for the skill of empathy. Empathy helps those with whom we interact feel heard. The more deeply heard, the quicker the return to a prior state of calm. This emotional relief is your reward and theirs. Empathetic responses are classified by "levels." The higher the level, the greater the calming effect. For example, imagine a customer agitated about a \$10 service charge. The following levels of empathy would likely have increasingly positive benefits for the customer:

**Level 1:** (lowest and least helpful): "Easy does it, this is not my fault."

**Level 2:** "I'm sorry, but the invoice does say a \$10 service charge applies."

**Level 3:** "I apologize if you are only finding out about this now."

**Level 4:** "I agree the charge can be easy to miss."

**Level 5:** "You feel blindsided and taken advantage of, and for that I'm sorry." Experiment and role play with your team.

Try to hit level 5 responses with customers. Before long, you'll be a customer service dynamo and enjoy your job much more.