MODULE OVERVIEW

Responding to criticism without getting defensive

Adaptive module | ~20 min

A badly received objection doesn't go away: it is repeated at the coffee machine, far from anyone who could act on it. This module starts by reframing sincere criticism as a sign of interest, a gift that is sometimes badly wrapped, then gives the three steps to handle it: listen to the end, rephrase until you hear "yes, that's right," and respond. It also teaches how to spot a personal attack, which calls for a very different response.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 See criticism differently: as a point of view and a sign of interest, not an attack.

02 Take objections well in three steps: listen silently, rephrase accurately, and answer clearly after hearing the other person.

03 Reopen debate in meetings with mirror, relay, and echo questions to steer the exchange in a constructive direction.

04 Recognize a personal attack and defuse it without justifying yourself or striking back, by sidestepping or postponing.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants to stay calm and constructive when their work or ideas are challenged.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

1 **Self-assessment**: on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.

2 **Expert video**: 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.

3 **Practice scenarios**: the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.

4 **Dated commitment**: one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.

5 **Memo to download**: key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Disagree and Commit – Amazon (one of its 16 Leadership Principles)
- Receptive listening / rephrasing / response (3 steps) – close to Nonviolent Communication and active listening (Carl Rogers)
- Mirror question / relay question / echo question – Afthonios method

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Amazon – "Disagree and Commit", one of the 16 Leadership Principles that shape decision-making and the culture of internal debate
- Anecdote of Socrates answering an insult with "how well you know me" – a parable widely shared in personal development and coaching
- Calming effect of empathetic rephrasing on emotional intensity – documented in the literature on active listening and Nonviolent Communication
- Weger et al. (2014) – active listening and the feeling of being understood

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