**Criticism - Stories & Illustrations**

**Before you criticize somebody, ask yourself three questions: 1. How do I feel about offering this criticism? Does it give me pleasure of pain? If part of you is looking forward to it, hold back. Your motives are probably at least partly insincere (you don’t so much wish to help the person as relish cutting him down to size) and your listener will probably respond defensively and reject your critique. If the thought of criticizing another pains you, yet you feel impelled to speak up, do so. Your motives probably are sincere; your concern for the other person will shine through, making it likely that he or she will be able to accept or at least hear, your criticism. 2. Does my criticism offer specific ways to change? 3. Are my words non-threatening and reassuring? When criticizing, avoid the words “always” (You’re always irresponsible”) and “never” (“You’ve never thought about anyone else’s needs”). Such words one-dimensionalize and demoralize the person being criticized and will probably impel her to deny everything you’re saying. Who would admit, “Yes, it’s true. I’ve never thought about anyone else’s needs”? Be particularly careful to avoid speaking such words to children. Their egos tend to be especially vulnerable, and such rebukes could result in their feeling worthless. Keep in mind the words of Johann Paul Friedrich: “If a child tells a lie, tell him that he has told a lie, but don’t call him a liar. If you define him as a liar, you break down his confidence in his own character.” *(Joseph Telushkin, in Words That Hurt, Words That Heal)***

Solitary shots should be ignored, but when they come from several directions, it's time to pay attention. As someone once said, "If one calls you a donkey, ignore him. If two call you a donkey, check for hoof prints. If three call you a donkey, get a saddle." *(Marshall Shelley, in Well-Intentioned Dragons)*

**Fat shaming backfires: When people have a weight problem, their friends, family members, and doctors often nag them to stay away from calorie-rich food and point out how much weight they’ve gained. But a new study has found that “fat shaming” may in fact have the reverse effect and make overweight people eat more, reports The Washington Post. British researchers studied 2,944 adults aged 50 or older, over four years. They found the 5 percent of volunteers who reported day-to-day “weight discrimination” – such as being treated disrespectfully in shops or at work – gained an average of 2 pounds, whereas the others lost 1.6 pounds over the same period. Shaming people for their weight, researchers concluded, doesn’t make them cut calories; it makes them feel discouraged and depressed, so they resort to comfort eating and pile on more pounds. “Weight discrimination is part of the obesity problem and not the solution,” said researcher Jane Wardle. “Everyone, including doctors, should stop blaming and shunning people for their weight.” *(The Week magazine, October 3, 2014)***

**Insects do not sting out of malice but because they also want to live: likewise our critics – they want our blood, not our pain. *(Friedrich Nietzsche)***

**People in positions of authority have to find fault with their associates from time to time. It’s part of the job of leadership to help people recognize how they can improve. But much as the job needs doing, it’s also important to know how to do it correctly. The reason is obvious. Most of us resent being told that our work may need improving – especially if the person who does the criticizing is direct, tactless, and forceful. Harsh criticism can hurt morale, damage egos, and sometimes create lasting resentment. How, then, should you go about it? In the first place, be sure of your facts. Be certain that you’re not making a mountain out of a molehill. If the mistake is important and has upset you, cool off first. Let things settle down a bit so you don’t say things you’ll be sorry for later. Pick your time carefully. It can be very upsetting to a person to be censured just before tackling an important piece of work. And, of course, always discuss the situation in private. No one likes to be criticized in front of others, especially fellow workers. Ask questions first – don’t accuse. Be sure people have a chance to state their side of the case first before you blame anyone. If they know they’re at fault, they may admit it willingly. That makes the situation easier all the way around. Before you criticize, let people know you appreciate some of the good things they’ve done. They will accept your criticism much more gracefully if you do. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Drama is a cinch. You’ve got an hour and a half to impress an audience. Comedy is a lot tougher. You have an instant critic – laughter. As soon as you do a bit, the laughs have got to come or you begin to bomb. *(Jackie Gleason)***

Nothing new about criticism of trial lawyers. In 1641, the Massachusetts Bay Colony made it illegal for anyone to earn money by representing another in court. In 1658, the Virginia Legislature passed a law to expel all lawyers. *(L. M. Boyd)*

Charlie Brown: “Did you read the paper today? Did you read about all the terrible things going on in the world? It’s very depressing.” Lucy: “I’ll thank you not to criticize my year!” *(Charles Schulz, in Peanuts comic strip)*

**The most ubiquitous typeface in history, Times New Roman, came about as a result of a damning letter to the editor back in 1931. After criticizing the British Times for being badly printed and typographically out of date, Stanley Morrison was commissioned by the newspaper to create the serif typeface. *(Harry Bright & Jakob Anser, in Are You Kidding Me?, p. 185)***

**After writing the runaway best seller Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe was bombarded with hate mail. Out of one package that she received fell the ear of a slave. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 202)***

**Once the New York Times ran an article ridiculing Unity, entitled “Christian Science Outdone.” “This is a good piece, with very good testimonials,” wrote Mr. Fillmore, and proceeded to reprint the entire article. He thanked the author for writing it, commenting that he had received numerous letters from people asking help who had never heard of Unity until they read the article in the New York Times. Over and over the history of Unity has shown this to be the case: the main effect of critical articles has been to interest people in Unity. (James Dillet Freeman, in The Story of Unity, p. 143)**

**A Russian man spent a month starving in a forest after fighting with his wife about a bowl of soup. Yuri Ticuic, 69, stormed out of his home in a remote region after his wife served him soup he felt was not hot enough. Ticuic became lost in the woods, and survived for a month on berries and leaves until he was finally found, suffering from malnutrition and frostbite. "No matter what happens," he said, "that's the last time I criticize my wife's cooking." *(The Week magazine, December 28, 2012 - January 4, 2013)***

**Criticism is a word with blood on its teeth because we know that one definition is “the act of finding fault.” Criticism’s unsavoriness was drummed into us by our parents: “If you can’t say anything nice about someone, don’t say anything at all.” But who obeyed? A person who doesn’t have anything bad to say about someone – or about a work of art – may be a saint, but he’s more likely a bore. We define ourselves, in part, by the discriminations we make. The value of what we love is enriched by our understanding of what we dislike. *(David Ansen, in Self)***

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