



# **Criticism, Praise or Feedback –**

## **What is your “go to”?**

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RYCNC 2025  
Lunch & Learn  
February 21

# Agenda

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- Introduction to
  - Criticism
  - Praise
  - Feedback
- Sample Statements – Which are they?



# Words matter

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- We learned it when we were young: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” But it’s not true!
- Even words spoken with the best of intentions can sometimes convey a message that is far more critical and negative than we intend.
- It doesn’t mean we should hold back on correcting their behavior when necessary, but we can do that in a way that doesn’t tear down their spirit.

# What is Criticism?

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Criticism is the **construction of a judgement** about the negative or positive qualities of someone or something.

Criticism may also refer to an **expression of disapproval** of someone or something.

# Criticism

## Why our youth react poorly



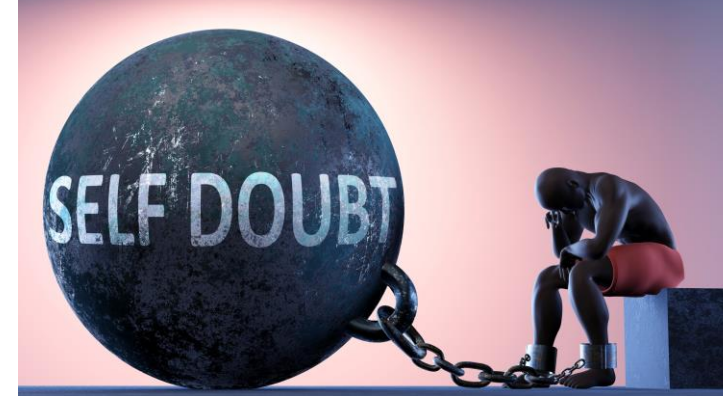
Youth we serve lack resiliency.  
When they hear criticism, they...

- Believe the **WHOLE WORLD** is being critical, and not just you
- Catastrophize; make it 10x worse
- Believe they shouldn't exist and should just disappear

Why this happens to them...

- They may never have been deeply appreciated
- Possible self-loathing
- No room left inside of them to take on more reminders of their failures
- Shame and humiliation
- Fear of failure, again

# Criticism – Potential Reactions



## Mental Health Concerns

- OCD & Perfectionism
- Hating themselves, not you for your criticism of them (self-loathing)
- Emerged in shame
- Feeds into their fear of rejection, isolation, and guilt
- High anxiety

## Growth & Learning Processes

- Fear of trying new things
- Blocks self-assertive behavior
- Fuels rebellion
- Discourages cooperation
- Makes communication feel “unsafe” and they shut up instead of speaking up
- Chronic self-doubt
- Difficulty handling conflict

# Constructive Criticism Builds Up Destructive Criticism Tears Down

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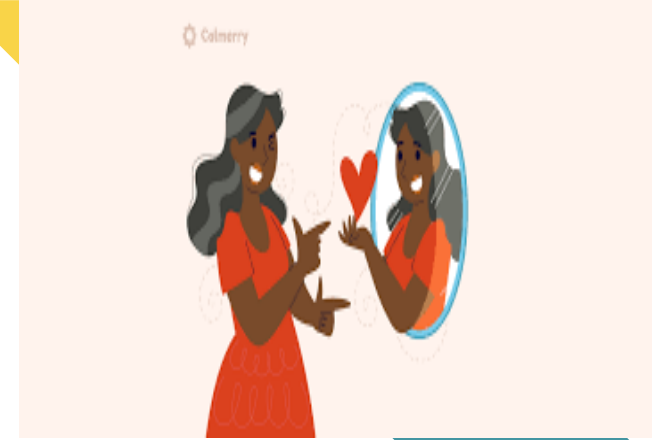
1. Sandwich the criticism between two complaints.

- Thanks for cleaning up. I'd like it if you would do it without me reminding you. You are becoming such a great help around here.

2. Ask first. Are they willing to let you give them constructive criticism?

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3. Use the LBNT method: Start with LIKED BEST, end with NEXT TIME

- I LIKED BEST the way you helped your friend today.  
NEXT TIME come and get me if you are worried about your friend doing something dangerous.

4. Go POSITIVE!

- Instead of “I don’t like when you...”  
say “I’d like it if you would...”



# Constructive Criticism Builds Up Destructive Criticism Tears Down



5. Instead of attacking character, take issue with the decisions the young person made.

- Instead of calling them “messy” ...
  - Say instead “I know with so much growth going on, it is easy for you to become disorganized, but I still need you to keep up with your stuff.”

# What is Praise?



# Why Praise Matters

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- It keeps them motivated.
- It improves their self-esteem.
- It boosts their self-confidence.
- It encourages good behavior.
- It offers positive reinforcement.
- It inspires cooperation.
- It emboldens them to try new things.
- It encourages a growth mindset.

# Ways to Praise

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- Look for effort and good behavior to praise
- Focus on the youth's strengths
- Celebrate the big and small victories
- Focus on the progress, not the outcome
- Be specific



# Avoiding the Negative Consequences of Praise

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- Don't exaggerate – youth know when you do this!
- Don't encourage perfectionism.
- Avoid comparison – unless it is to how much **THEY** have improved.
- Focus on growth and moving forward, not on what they already do well or enjoy doing.
- Rewards can encourage good behavior, but it is best not to overuse them.

# What is Feedback?

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It is a means of communication that helps individuals to improve their performance, correct their mistakes, and achieve their goals.

Feedback is a critical aspect of our lives as leaders. We give and receive feedback daily in our professional and personal lives.

Feedback can be a powerful tool for encouraging others, but it can also be damaging if delivered poorly. While giving feedback may seem simple, it requires skill and practice.

# Feedback Should Be a Conversation

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- It is not a one-sided dialog where you list the mistakes they made or how they should change.
- It is used to help them see their potential.
- It is a collaborative approach, where the person who's giving the feedback is open to a conversation.
- Ask first...

# Feedback Focuses on the Future

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- The emphasis is on how to be more effective and productive in the future, rather than placing blame for the past.
- Start by talking about their strengths or what you appreciated.
- Then focus on opportunities for improvement.



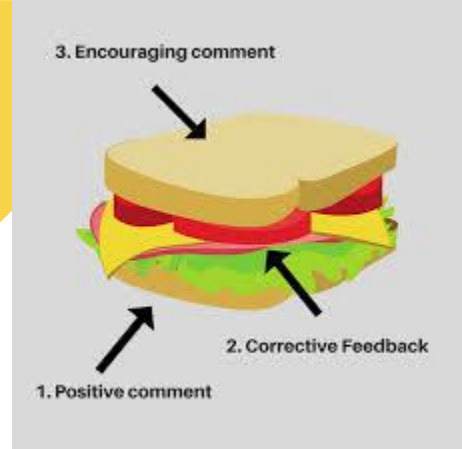
# Feedback – Use the 4-step Approach

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- Signal first – “Can we spend a minute talking about ...”
- Give specific, objective data that can be applied to finding a solution, like “I noticed that you were a little distracted today.”
- Discuss the impact.  
Example: “While you were scrolling on your phone, you missed out on hearing about the assignment.”
- End with a question.  
Example: “What would you suggest we do to keep you more engaged?”

# Feedback – Start and End with the Positive

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- **Sandwiching:** Include positives around the area that can be improved.
- This makes it easier to handle for the youth.
- It shows your appreciation and praise as well as addressing need for improvement.
- **Example:** “You were a strong team player today. I believe you could do even better if you were here at the beginning of the game so you could hear all of the instructions. Thanks for being here!”

# **Criticism, Praise or Feedback?**

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- 1. Sarah told me how much she appreciated your card. She really liked the personal note you wrote on it.**
- 2. Why are you so messy? I would like it if you picked up after yourself.**
- 3. I noticed that you didn't participate in discussions the last couple of days.**
- 4. This must be a good day for you. You seem happy.**

# **Criticism, Praise or Feedback?**

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- 1. It would work better for me if I could get my version of the story out before you asked a lot of questions.**
- 2. Our team almost won today! Try harder next time. You can do it.**
- 3. You were a great team player today. I liked it much better when we got to choose our groups instead of you assigning us to a group. Next time can we try that please?**
- 4. You've improved a lot this week. Keep it up!**

# **Criticism, Praise or Feedback?**

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- 1. I felt frustrated when this project took the whole week to finish instead of just a few days. I'd like to check out what you're thinking about the amount of time it took.**
- 2. I found this project difficult to grade because it was messy.**
- 3. Your work is much improved over the last project. It was a pleasure to read.**



# Thank you

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