

# Criticized By The Boss? Here's How To Handle It



AP Photo/Elise Amendola -

Story provided by [Forbes](#) (pic provided by ESPN.go) -

**Scenario 1:** You're staring at your boss during your performance review and can't believe the criticism you're receiving.

**Scenario 2:** You've just presented an idea during a staff meeting and your boss angrily criticizes it in front of the entire department.

You want to tell him or her what you think, but know that if you do, you'll likely damage your career. Here's what you should do when you want to call your boss the B-word...

## Be professional and proactive

The most important aspect of handling criticism is to exhibit professionalism. Take a deep breath, remain composed and do not become defensive.

"View the criticism constructively as a growth opportunity. If you feel it is unwarranted criticism, absorb it and, at a later time, ask for a meeting to discuss your concerns calmly and professionally," says Kathleen M. Sturgess, MA, NCC, a professor at the University of Phoenix and a mental health professional.

A tactic to pre-empt public criticism from managers is to meet with them early on in your relationship to discuss communication preferences and boundaries. During this discussion, "set a 'contract' with your manager on what is considered appropriate and inappropriate feedback," advises Bruce Avolio, Ph.D., executive director for the University of Washington's Center for Leadership & Strategic Thinking at the Foster School of Business. This proactive approach can help prevent negative criticism from occurring in a public forum.



**Don't take things personally**

It can be difficult not to take criticism personally, especially when it is unexpected or given in front of others. But as Sturgess says, "It's not about you, really. It's about the chance to improve and develop within your career. If you immediately become defensive, ask yourself why. What is the internal issue you're struggling with that elicits such a reaction?"

Also remember that sometimes criticism from a boss might be due to other factors not related to you or your behavior. They might be angry because they were irritated by their own boss. According to Avolio, this is called the fundamental attribution error. "When you feel the urge to blame yourself, zoom out and see how the situation or context may have impacted what happened."

**Try to control your (hurt) feelings**

Realize that this is a work situation, not your personal life. "This is your boss, not your bestie," reminds Sturgess. "Hear what your boss has to say, thank her, and move on. Having an argument with her is not going to do anyone any good."

Don't let your hurt feelings impact your performance. "Localize your feelings to the problem at hand and don't let it spread," Avolio says. "Feelings are recoverable, and there are states of being, so you go from one state to the other by the choices you make."

If you feel the criticism was unwarranted or given in an inappropriate location, consider discussing the situation with your boss. "Ask for permission to provide feedback, as your boss may not realize [he or she] hurt your feelings," Avolio adds. "Many times they don't know."

