

Balanced Living

June 2025



Positive Ways to Accept Criticism

Do you hate being criticized even when you know you've made a mistake? If so, it's no wonder -- criticism can make people feel incompetent, angry and just plain awful.

How do you, personally, respond to criticism? Do you make excuses or lash back with criticism? "This fight-or-flight response is natural and common, but it isn't very productive. It cuts off communication, often just when it's needed most," says Jean Lebedun, Ph.D., author of the video program "The Art of Criticism -- Giving and Taking."

Many supervisors don't give criticism in a tactful manner. Nevertheless, you should accept criticism so you can learn from your mistakes. But don't fret; it'll be easier when you use Dr. Lebedun's "4-A Formula -- Anticipate, Ask questions, Agree with something and Analyze."

Anticipate

Accept the fact that everyone makes mistakes and that you'll probably be criticized for yours. That way, criticism won't come as a surprise. "You anticipate criticism by asking yourself, 'What can I learn from this criticism?' Then, whenever you feel yourself growing defensive or getting angry, you repeat the question 'What can I learn?'" advises Dr. Lebedun.

Here's another way to anticipate: Take the wind out of the sails of criticism by admitting your mistake first, before your supervisor has an opportunity to say anything to you. This makes your supervisor's job easier and makes you appear more professional.

Ask questions

Many times, people who criticize are letting off steam and may be exaggerating the problem. This is especially true when the criticism contains the words "always" and "never." Therefore, it's important to pinpoint the criticism by asking questions like these: "What part of the report didn't you like?" "What aspect of my attitude makes life at work difficult for you? Could you give me an example?"

Asking questions accomplishes two things: It gives you specific information on how you can improve, and it teaches people they'll have to be specific when they criticize you.

Agree with something

When faced with criticism, most people focus on the part of the negative feedback that may not be true and ignore the rest. This doesn't solve any problems, and you don't learn anything. When you agree with one part of the criticism, you become open to learning. An easy way to agree is to say something like this: "You might be right; my report doesn't have all the details."

"You don't have to agree with everything; even agreeing with one small aspect of the criticism will create an atmosphere of teamwork," says Dr. Lebedun. "The focus then can become how you'll work together to solve a problem, which will lessen your feeling of being attacked."

Analyze

Finally, take a break and evaluate what you've heard. You need time to process the information, determine if it's a valid criticism and decide what you'll do to solve the problem or correct the mistake. If this is a complaint you've heard repeatedly, you should think about what you can learn from the situation, so it doesn't happen again.

The benefits of the 4-A Formula are that you'll look for solutions rather than excuses and you'll be in control of your emotions, Dr. Lebedun says. "You'll also appear more professional."

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Disconnecting From Work in Off-Hours Can Make You a Better

Striking a better work-life balance might make you a more effective manager on the job, according to a new study. A survey of managers and their employees found that bosses who could shut off after-work emails, calls and job-related stress had greater success guiding underlings to meet work goals.

"We found that when leaders psychologically detached from work when at home -- they did not actively think about work-related issues, but instead engaged in activities that allowed them to disconnect and recharge -- they felt more energized the next day at work, in ways that made them more effective as rated by their direct reports," said study lead author [Klodiana Lanaj](#). Managers who were best able to distinguish between their work life and their home life ended up "rated as more transformational and powerful by their subordinates," said Lanaj, an associate professor of management at the University of Florida Warrington College of Business.



“In contrast, on days when leaders kept ruminating about negative aspects of their work while at home, they felt more drained the next day at work, and were less transformational and powerful,” she added. Lanaj and her colleagues in 2019 surveyed 73 full-time work managers/leaders, including human resources managers, directors of finance, general managers and/or chief engineers. Nearly 6 in 10 were women, and the majority were white, with an average age of 38. Work was mostly conducted outside the home.

On average, participants had been on the job for nearly eight years. A team of nine employees was average. Surveys were conducted about an hour a day over 10 consecutive workdays, and assessed the degree to which each team leader felt able to mentally detach when the workday ended. They were asked how much their jobs affected them emotionally outside of office hours. They were also questioned about their sleep quality and quantity; their at-work energy levels, and how they felt about their own leadership skills and competence. The team also surveyed 63 men and women who worked for the managers in question.

These subordinates were asked how well the manager communicated goals and vision, displayed energy and enthusiasm, and/or challenged their team to think outside the box. Employees also rated how effective their manager was at wielding power and/or getting the team to listen and execute requests. Lanaj acknowledged that the findings may not jive with modern American office culture in which corporate leaders think “that remaining connected to work at all hours -- staying and emailing late -- signals to our colleagues and bosses that we are committed to our work and that we take what we do seriously.” But such signals won't matter much if you don't have the energy to appropriately motivate and guide the work of your team, she stressed.

For those in that camp, Lanaj suggested some practical steps to de-stress and recuperate. They include:

- Don't look at your work phone after 9 p.m.
- Take a leisurely stroll in nature
- Get exercise
- Spend time with loved ones.

That advice was echoed by [Dr. Joe Verghese](#), director of the Montefiore-Einstein Center for the Aging Brain at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City. Verghese, who wasn't involved with the study, suggested hard-working managers can improve their well-being by “picking up a hobby, meditation and exercise” in their off hours. Making a concerted effort to de-stress after hours can reap all kinds of benefits beyond better work performance, including reduced anxiety and depression, increased sleep quality, and better overall health, he said.



“The idea,” said Verghese, “is not to turn off your brain when you get home, but make a conscious effort to reduce the stressful aspects of work when not in the workplace.” The findings were published April 6 in the [Journal of Applied Psychology](#).

More information

There's more on stress management at the [U.S. National Institute of Mental Health](#).
SOURCES: Klodiana Lanaj, PhD, associate professor, management, Warrington College of Business, University of Florida, Gainesville; Joe Verghese, MBBS, professor, neurology and medicine, and chief, divisions of cognitive and motor aging and geriatrics, and founding director, Montefiore-Einstein Center for the Aging Brain, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York City; *Journal of Applied Psychology*, April 6, 2023

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Embracing Change

Change is a natural part of life and can be an opportunity to learn, grow, and build your character. However, change of any kind can be difficult to navigate and adjust to, whether you view it as positive or negative. Here are some suggestions for managing and embracing changes when they occur.

Manage Your Expectations

Sometimes the anticipation you experience before a big change occurs can cause more stress and anxiety than the change itself. Find ways to cope with the upcoming change in order to lessen your stress levels. Find someone to talk to about your feelings regarding the change, such as a trusted friend, family member, or counselor.

Radical Acceptance

First coined by psychologist Marsha Linehan, radical acceptance involves the practice of fully accepting reality as it is and acknowledging there are some things you cannot control—especially when things don't turn out the way you wanted or expected. Fighting or resisting change often makes it more painful than it otherwise would be. It doesn't mean that you are helpless to change things in the future but that you accept the present moment as it is.

Transitions Are Temporary

Keep in mind that the beginning of a transitional period is often the most difficult, and the adjustment period gets easier with each day. Try to take it one day at a time and keep channels of communication open with others who are also involved in the change. Remember that how you feel now regarding the change is temporary and you will adjust in time.



Find Positive Aspects

If change often causes you worry and fear, look for possible positive outcomes of the change. For instance, there could be new opportunities that enrich your life and connect you with new people. Also, change will often help you grow and learn about yourself. What at first may be considered a problem, could turn into a beneficial opportunity.

Build Your Resilience

Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt to difficult situations and come out stronger. Resilient people find ways to cope with adversity and overcome setbacks by utilizing their skills and resources. Think of change as an opportunity to strengthen your resiliency.

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Webinar Now Available:

Hold Your Head High: Communicating with Confidence in the Workplace

We all admire people who can communicate comfortably—and effectively—even in challenging situations at work. This seminar will teach two models of effective communication and will help you practice your new strategies in tough scenarios—negotiating your salary, talking with your boss about career development, confronting disrespectful behavior in the workplace, and more.

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PTSD Awareness Month

June is PTSD Awareness Month, and is a time dedicated to raise awareness about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and supporting those affected by it. PTSD is a mental health condition triggered by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event, such as war, natural disasters, accidents, or assaults.

Symptoms of PTSD can vary widely from person to person. Overtime, PTSD symptoms can vary in how severe they are. According to the Mayo Clinic, PTSD symptoms are generally grouped into four types:

Intrusive memories involve unwanted, distressing recollections of a traumatic event, flashbacks, upsetting dreams, and severe emotional or physical reactions to reminders of the trauma.

Avoidance includes efforts to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event and staying away from reminders of it. Negative changes in thinking and mood encompass negative thoughts about oneself or the world, persistent negative emotions, memory problems, detachment from loved ones, loss of interest in activities, difficulty feeling positive emotions, and emotional numbness.

Changes in physical and emotional reactions (arousal symptoms) involve being easily startled, always on guard, engaging in self-destructive behavior, trouble sleeping and concentrating, irritability, angry outbursts, and physical reactions like sweating, rapid breathing, fast heartbeat, or shaking.

If you or someone you love have disturbing thoughts or feelings, see your doctor right away. Suicide Prevention resources:

- In the U.S., call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Or use the Lifeline Chat. Services are free and confidential.
- U.S. veterans or service members who are in crisis can call 988 and then press "1" for the Veterans Crisis Line. Or text 838255. Or chat online.
- The Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S. has a Spanish language phone line at 1-888-628-9454 (toll-free).

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/posttraumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967>



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Preventing Burnout: Prioritizing Work-Life Balance

In today's fast-paced world, the demands of work, family, and everyday responsibilities can quickly pile up, leaving little room to focus on your own wellbeing. When you don't set intentional boundaries or carve out time to rest, it's easy to slip into burnout, a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion. The good news is that a few small habits can help you protect your energy and feel more balanced throughout your day.

Establish Clear Work Hours: Set defined start and end times for your workday—and stick to them. Avoid the temptation to "just check one more email" after hours. Creating a firm boundary helps you fully transition into personal time, giving your mind and body a chance to reset.

Prioritize Connection: Make time for relationships outside of work. Whether it's a weekly dinner with friends, a phone call to family, or a walk with a neighbor, nurturing personal connections supports mental wellbeing and helps create a fuller, more satisfying life outside of professional demands.

Take Intentional Breaks: Step away from your desk regularly, even for just a few minutes. Short breaks for a walk, stretch, or deep breathing can significantly boost focus and reduce feelings of overwhelm throughout the day.

Learn to Say No: Overcommitting can quickly lead to burnout. Be realistic about what you can take on, and don't be afraid to respectfully decline additional tasks that don't align with your priorities or capacity.

Create Transition Rituals: Establish small routines that mark the end of your workday—like shutting down your laptop, taking a short walk, or playing your favorite music. These rituals signal to your mind and body that it's time to shift gears and focus on personal time.

Practice Self-Compassion: Some days will feel more balanced than others, and that's okay. Recognizing that balance is an ongoing process can help you avoid perfectionism and maintain a healthier, more forgiving mindset.

By being intentional with your time, protecting your boundaries, and nurturing the relationships that energize you, you can create a healthier work-life balance. Remember: prioritizing your own wellbeing isn't a luxury—it's essential for staying connected, resilient, and present both at work and in life.

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/05/04/five-strategies-to-prevent-and-avoid-burnout-at-work/>



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Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month

Brain Awareness Month is a time for reflection, education, and hope. For many, caring for a loved one living with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia is a journey filled with both heartbreak and profound moments of grace. It teaches patience, forgiveness, and a deeper kind of love that leaves an imprint forever.

Memory is a gift often taken for granted until it begins to slip away. Every story shared, every laugh exchanged, and every quiet moment together becomes even more precious. Witnessing these changes firsthand highlights just how important it is to protect brain health at every stage of life. While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, there is growing research showing that certain healthy habits and preventive steps may help support cognitive wellbeing over time.

Protecting brain health means caring for the mind and body together. Regular physical activity, eating a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats, staying socially connected, managing chronic health conditions like hypertension or diabetes, and continually challenging the mind with puzzles, reading, and learning new skills are all powerful ways to strengthen memory and resilience.

Medical care plays an important role, too. Talking with a doctor about cognitive assessments, memory screenings, and preventive exams can provide valuable early insights. Monitoring blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar helps protect not only the heart but also the brain.

For those who are caregivers, or have been caregivers in the past, the love and strength given each day is seen and honored. Caregiving is a beautiful and selfless act, but it is important to remember that caregivers need care too. Seeking support, making time for personal wellbeing, and reaching out for resources are vital parts of the journey. This Brain Awareness Month, it is important to honor the memories that shape us, support the minds that connect us, and take small, meaningful steps toward protecting brain health for ourselves and the people we love.

Source: <https://www.alz.org/>

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, well-being & legal issues.

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Here for you as life happens



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Big Beautiful Summer Salad

Ingredients

- 3 small golden beets (10 ounces total), peeled and trimmed
- 2 small ripe avocados (6 ounces each)
- 1 cup chopped fresh herbs (such as tarragon, dill, parsley, chives, and/or cilantro)
- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons low-fat buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 small garlic clove
- 2 tablespoons plus 4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice, divided
- ¾ teaspoon salt, divided
- 8 cups chopped romaine lettuce
- 1 (15.5 ounce) can no-salt-added chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup lightly packed microgreens (such as pea shoots)
- 1 cup fresh corn kernels (from 2 ears)
- 1 cup frozen edamame, thawed
- 1 small watermelon radish, halved and thinly sliced on a mandolin (about 1/4 cup)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Directions

1. Wrap beets together in 1 sheet of microwavable parchment paper. Microwave on high until tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool for 5 minutes. Cut each beet into 8 wedges.
2. Meanwhile, cut 1 avocado into 12 wedges. Chop the remaining avocado.
3. Combine herbs, buttermilk, water, garlic, 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons lemon juice, and ¼ teaspoon salt in a blender. Puree until smooth, about 10 seconds, stopping to scrape down sides as needed. Add the chopped avocado; process on medium speed until blended and smooth, about 30 seconds, stopping to scrape down sides as needed.
4. Arrange romaine on a large platter. Top with chickpeas, microgreens, corn, edamame, radish slices, beet wedges, and avocado wedges. Drizzle with oil and the remaining 2 teaspoons lemon juice; sprinkle with the remaining ½ teaspoon salt. Spoon the buttermilk dressing over the salad.

Nutrition

Per Serving: 2 cups salad & about 2 1/2 Tbsp. dressing

Calories: 292 | Protein: 11g | Carbohydrates: 31g | Dietary Fiber: 11g | Saturated Fat: 2g | Total Sugars: 8 g | Sodium: 400mg | Cholesterol: 1mg

Source: <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/272776/big-beautiful-summer-salad/>

Working Solutions



June 2025

Outstanding Performance Tips: Show You're a 'Self-Directed' Employee

You probably have a reputation as a “self-directed” employee if your work habits include anticipating needs, taking initiative, and solving problems independently. Managers love self-directed employees because they require less oversight and lighten the load. Here are three tips that will build your professional credibility: 1) instead of asking your supervisor, “What do you want me to do?,” show that you have ideas and options for them to consider; 2) instead of waiting to be told about a problem or what’s needed, be aware, proactive, and attempt to solve problems when first spotted (Your goal is to be seen as a problem-solver, not a passive employee.); and 3) after being given an assignment, don’t wait for your manager to ask, “Well, how’s it going?,” share the results, outcome, or work product when completed. With these practices, you’ll be seen as a self-directed employee.

PTSD Awareness Month: Other Events Can Cause PTSD

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) doesn’t just affect war veterans or those who have experienced life-threatening events or injuries. Don’t let this myth cause you to hesitate getting treatment for symptoms you suspect could be from a past trauma. You may feel that your trauma isn’t serious enough to justify treatment or that you should handle it on your own. PTSD can result from a wide range of distressing experiences. Fear, intensity of your experience, and not necessarily the type of event are what underlie the illness. Chronic abuse, domestic violence, prolonged bullying and harassment, sexual assault, traumatic childbirth, or even betrayal or a serious relationship breakup can lead to PTSD. It’s impossible to predict who will develop PTSD after a traumatic experience, as many factors, including genetics, may play a role. Don’t let PTSD keep you from the life you want and deserve. Treatment is for anyone who thinks they’ve been affected. Learn more about symptoms: www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/ptsd_basics.asp

Prostate Cancer Prevention: Weight Management Tops Diet

Dr. Nigel Brockton, vice president of research at the American Institute for Cancer Research, says, “The most modifiable risk factor for prostate cancer is obesity rather than diet or individual components of diet directly.” It’s true that research has found a higher risk of prostate cancer from foods that contain saturated fat and protective factors from many foods that contain lycopene, like tomatoes. But Brockton is saying food is not the most important. It’s weight management and exercise. Is it easier for you to focus on getting more lycopene from tomatoes than getting 150–300 minutes of exercise weekly? Eat a healthy diet, but remember, salad won’t replace the sweat when it comes to prevention of prostate cancer. Source: Fortune magazine, May 22, 2025

Working Well Under Pressure

Many jobs demand the ability to work well under pressure—but few offer training on how to do it. Most employees figure it out as they go, but that can lead to poor habits, chronic stress, burnout, or even resignation. If your job is high pressure, discover whether the following tips will help you finish the day with more energy and less stress. 1) “I got this!” Attitude is everything, even if it means faking it until you make it. By viewing work under pressure as something to command and not fear, you will feel more in control with a positive mindset and experience more resilience. 2) Set regular intervals to preempt fatigue by detaching from duties, even if it’s only for several minutes. Hydrate and move. For example, walking only a single flight of stairs will stimulate your body and refresh your ability to focus. 3) Focus on one task at a time. Avoid seeing what’s facing you as a single, overwhelming challenge. But if this feeling wells up, stop, take a breath, step back, and regain perspective. 4) Look for support. This includes the EAP, which can help you manage stress. For example, venting your frustrations can offer relief and help you regain focus. 5) Use a pull strategy to lift mood—anticipate an exciting personal reward you can look toward when the work is completed.



You're Probably Not a Workaholic

Ever been accused of being a workaholic? The label is often overapplied, particularly by friends and family, but you can assess whether your work habits are unhealthy. It's worth reflecting on your work habits because self-awareness is the first step if you need to make a change to be happier. Consider motivation, choice, level of joy or excitement, and effects on your health. 1) The person who loves to work (work enthusiast) is motivated by passion and conscious choice, while the workaholic feels compelled and has a loss of control over work. 2) The work enthusiast can set boundaries on when and how much work they do, but the workaholic feels unable to control when and how much. 3) The work enthusiast feels joy and fulfillment, while the workaholic is not joyful about work and feels there is no choice but to continue. 4) The work enthusiast has healthy relationships, whereas the workaholic neglects relationships. 5) The work enthusiast doesn't suffer when not working, but the workaholic experiences anxiety when they can't work, along with adverse effects on their relationships and health. If you spotted signs of unhealthy work habits, take the next step. Consider a deeper assessment, set limits, and prioritize your well-being. Still unsure about your work style? Talk to a professional counselor or reach out to your EAP. Learn more:

medicalnewstoday.com/articles/workaholic

Strength Training Matters as You Age

Don't overlook strength training as you age. It's as important as aerobic exercise—especially for preventing injuries. In fact, research shows that maintaining muscle mass can improve balance, boost metabolism, and enhance overall mobility as you get older. As you age, muscles lose mass and strength. This makes muscles weaker and more prone to injury, even from everyday activities like carrying heavy objects, bending over, standing for a long period of time, moving heavy furniture, and even pulling a cord to raise a blind. With muscle atrophy, injuries may happen even with good technique. Regular strength training, however, helps counteract this decline. Strength training can also support bone density, reduce the risk of falls, and help manage chronic conditions such as arthritis or diabetes. If you're new to strength training or have health concerns, talk to your doctor before starting. With strength training, you are more likely to enjoy a healthier and more active future.

Kick Off Summer with a Family Meeting

It's summer, and for families that means new routines, activities, and schedules. It's the perfect time for a family meeting. This powerful tool that can also become a tradition helps keep everyone connected and organized, while it models and strengthens family bonds. Other bonuses include teaching life skills like assertiveness, compromise, cooperation, and problem-solving. How to do it: Gather everyone in a comfortable space, review previous meeting issues, share successes, and set the meeting's goals. Encourage open, respectful discussion. Brainstorm solutions, agree on action steps, and talk about plans, ideas, trips, chores, transportation issues, and responsibilities. Conclude the meeting on a positive note.

Extreme Time Management that Works

Time is a perishable resource, so consider these two simple time management conventions to maximize your productivity: time blocking and time boxing. Time blocking schedules specific blocks of time for different work needing to be completed. The benefit, which is underappreciated, is relief from constantly thinking about the work that needs to be done and when it will happen. Time boxing assigns a specific amount of time to a given task; however, focus on the work begins and ends on time—precisely on time! The value of this convention is extreme focus, made possible by the sense of urgency imposed by the strict start-stop boundaries. Learn more: hubstaff.com/blog/time-blocking-vs-time-boxing/

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, & legal issues.

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