



Free Guide to Dealing with Critical Coworkers

As a rising professional, you may be confronted by coworkers who are determined to block your path or break your spirit.

When faced with negativity and criticism, avoid retaliating with the same style of language. My challenge to you — and myself— is to mindfully pursue the high road.

Living honorably in these mean-spirited times isn't easy, but it's worth the effort. Positive and people-focused leaders are valued — even if their business unit is struggling — because they possess the soft skills needed to develop teams, manage change and boost productivity.

Here's how to lead with integrity, regardless of the situation.



If someone discredits or condemns you ...

- **Refuse to engage in mean-spirited hate talk.** Responding to slurs with more slurs can only result in an ugly confrontation.
- **Offer a disarming comeback.** Have a handful of “power phrases” in your hip pocket, ready to go. Savvy professionals use this image-saving tactic to exude confidence under pressure. When the accusations fly, calmly reply, “I wouldn't say that,” “Here's what I can tell you” or “Not exactly; let me explain.”
- **Stop engaging.** Never give anyone permission to mistreat you. If the insults continue, walk away, get off the call or end the email chain as quickly as possible. By disengaging from an out-of-control situation, you demonstrate professionalism and self-respect. Simply say, “That's an interesting perspective,” and walk away.
- **Mentally flip their slight into an accolade.** In other words, take what was said and translate it into a decisively positive thought. So, if they say you're a loser, tell yourself you just won an Olympic gold medal.
- **Above all, stay focused on the positive.** Save your energy for the things in your life and business that deserve attention.



If someone always interrupts you ...

- **Be diplomatic but hold your ground.** Say, “Please make your point when I’ve finished mine.”

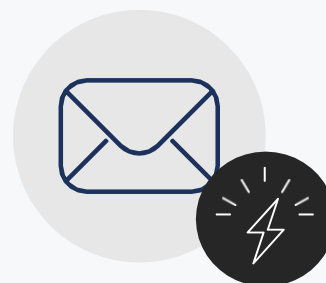
If someone is taking credit for your work ...

- **Speak up but keep emotions out of it.** Stick to the facts. Say, “Perhaps you’re unaware of my role in”
- **Clarify your role.** Some people have trouble articulating their point of view, so they’ll repeat yours instead. When a copycat comment echoes in your ears, rather than say, “I just said that,” try this: “Thanks for affirming my position.”

Emotionally Charged Words and Phrases to Avoid

Avoid emotionally charged words and phrases. They can trigger negative emotions in your coworkers and cause them to shut down.

- AX TO GRIND
- RAMIFICATIONS
- INFERIOR
- IRRITATED
- SHOCKING
- HATE
- IN THE HOT SEAT
- STUPID
- FAILURE
- RUDE
- DISAPPOINTMENT
- DEMAND



**EMOTIONALLY
CHARGED**