

Ep #13: The Secret to Handling Critical Feedback Well



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With Your Host

Kori Linn

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This week, we're talking about receiving critical feedback and how critical feedback can be the exact blueprint to get you where you want to go.

You are listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It, the podcast for ambitious, high-achieving womxn who are ready to stop feeling stressed about work and kiss burnout goodbye forever. Whether you're starting a business or staying in your day job, this show will give you the coaching and guidance you need to start loving your work today. Here's your host, Career Coach, Kori Linn.

Hey y'all. It's Kori Linn here to talk to you about all the things you need to have a meaningful career. So excited. Have a great topic for you today, but before we jump into that, I just want to mention as you probably know, the podcast giveaway is done, but I would still love rates and reviews if you feel so inclined to do that. And there's something in it for you also.

Even though the giveaway is done, I left up the giveaway form, so if you do leave a review, you can upload it through the giveaway form and what you'll get is a DIY worksheet that will help you walk yourself through a career strategy session of your own.

It's got all the questions I'm going to walk through with the people who won the prize and even if you're not on a call with me, it will be super valuable in helping you understand where you are in your career, where you want to go, and laying out the path to get there.

And it's not just about the path. It's also about laying it out in a way that is doable, that you can begin to work on, and that you can continue to work on over time without giving up, without burning out, and while having obviously, lots of fun.

So if you want to leave me a review, I would love it so much and there's something in it for you. And I'm going to read a review too, just for fun. So this review is from OrchidSF and the title is, "Mind-blown." And the review says, "Kori Linn shares tips and complex ideas in a clear, simple, and actionable way. I just listened to the episode on overworking and what she

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said about the perception of work equaling worthiness really resonated with me. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom.”

OrchidSF, you are so welcome and thank you so much for leaving me a review. I really, deeply appreciate it. I'm not just saying that y'all. I really, really appreciate it. I love to read the reviews. Sometimes I cry some happy tears. So I'm very, very much appreciating you all when you do that.

One more thing also, the cat might be screaming in the background of this episode. As y'all know, my cat Cowboy has a lot of his own thoughts and feelings, and today, he's giving me the critical feedback that I'm not sitting on the couch where he'd like me to be sitting, so you may hear him voice his discontent.

And speaking of people voicing their discontent, let's get into today's topic, which is receiving critical feedback. How to handle critical feedback and how to actually take critical feedback and make it work for us, make it help us be able to get to where we want to go in our careers and in our lives.

So let's just start by saying though that getting critical feedback is like, not the most exciting thing ever, right? It can even be downright painful. You may hear the words opportunity for growth and your brain may translate that to mean you basically suck at life.

The next thing you know, you're wallowing in despair, everything is terrible, all that, or maybe that's not you. Maybe instead you feel outraged. This “feedback” is totally unfair and instead of wallowing, you're hopping on the complain train, listing all the many failures of your boss and everyone you work with in excessive detail and it's all their fault.

You know, you might handle critical feedback in a different way, but those are two ways that I see as being really common. I know for me, I was kind of more in the wallowing camp. I could get - it's like that thing Brené Brown says in one of her TED talks. I could get a review that said 38 nice things about me and one you could work on this and I would just be like, it would be so upsetting for me and I would really struggle with that.

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But as a coach, what I've come to understand and through my own personal experience too is that feedback is in many ways the exact blueprint we need in order to become who we want to become. The exact blueprint, y'all. And yet, we resist it like hell.

And let's be clear, when I say we, I'm including myself in that. Even now sometimes I still do this. So you're in good company if this is you as well. We all want to get better at the things we do but that doesn't mean that we like the part where we're told exactly how we're not quite there yet.

But what if I told you that you could hear critical feedback without having negative feelings about it? What if you could get critical feedback all day long even and not have it ruin your day, but even better, make it work for you instead of weaponizing it against yourself.

And I'll just add a little caveat because as I said, sometimes I still struggle with negative feedback. So it's not that we're never going to have that twinge, but it's really relating to the feedback in a really different way, even if it takes a little minute and we have to get over the sting at first.

I do think we can get to the point where we can really welcome the negative or just critical feedback. But let's get into it. How is this possible? It seems like magic but it's not. It's coaching. Of course is it.

And when I say it's coaching, what I mean is when we receive critical feedback, it's not the critical feedback itself that makes us feel like shit. The only reason that critical feedback feels bad is because of what we think that feedback means. What we think it means about us, what we think it means about the world, what we think it means about our bosses, our workplace, our colleagues.

Maybe, like I said earlier, we think it means that we suck and we're failing. Maybe we think it means that our boss is an asshole. Maybe we make it mean that we're not as far along as we should be. Let's just take that last example and break it down.

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When we have the belief that we should already be better than we currently are, we view everything through that lens. Yes, our work life, but often also all kinds of other things like our relationships, our bodies, our bank accounts, and more.

And when we have this belief, it can feel painful to have people explain to us in great detail how we are not there yet. All the ways in which we aren't there. We already know we're not there. We're already mad about it. And sometimes it can feel like they're just rubbing salt in our wounds and that's pretty rude.

High achievers, that's you, and also me. We think that the solution to this is simply to get much better as fast as possible. We think that the way to feel better is to be better. We may even think on some level that if we could just get good enough, then we wouldn't have to have critical feedback at all. And we think that would be really fun.

And this approach may seem logical, but it actually does not work. Because when you habitually think that you're not quite there yet, then you will keep applying that thought to yourself no matter what you achieve. Even when you receive glowing feedback, you will not feel satisfied and instead you'll be thinking about how you should be doing even better, be getting even better feedback, or be at an even higher level.

It is a vicious cycle, y'all. The more we want to get ahead, the further behind we feel. Not because we are behind in any kind of objective measure, but because we can never measure up to a belief that says we should always be further than we are.

When you think about that, it actually makes sense. You can't measure up to something that's always saying you're not good enough. You can't surpass that by doing stuff if you're always applying the lens, not good enough, not good enough. Any achievement in your life will feel not good enough.

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And if you just pause right now and think about your own life, I'm sure you have examples of that. I have examples from my own life of things that I really wanted to achieve, and as soon as I achieved them, I thought I was going to feel amazing. And maybe I did for 45 seconds, but then that voice was coming back in being like, "We should be even better though. We should be even further. We should make even more money."

So what's the solution? The solution is to change how you think about feedback. Feedback can help you get to where you want to go. It can help you get there faster, but only, only, only if you can actually hear it.

When you view feedback as evidence of your failure to be where you should be, then it's painful to look at it. It feels terrible. And when we can't look at the feedback, we can't examine it, we can't understand it, and we can't implement it, which is to say you can't extract the very valuable information that the feedback contains and actually use it to your own benefit when you're afraid to look at it.

Feedback is like a map. But when you see that map as evidence of your failings, then you will not want to spend any time studying it. Looking at the map will feel terrible. You'll want to go have some vegan ice cream or a glass of wine or like, a lot of potato chips instead.

But why? Only because you believe the feedback means something bad about you. Consider for a moment if you looked at the same feedback through this lens, these are the exact directions I need to get to where I want to go.

Then you might be excited to look at the feedback. You might be able to see it as something that can help you, not as something that's trying to hurt you. Let's look at an example so you can see what I mean.

Maybe your boss says that your "opportunity for growth" is leadership. Your boss specifically wants you to demonstrate more leadership in meetings with senior stakeholders. Instead of assuming this is a problem or a sign that you aren't cut out for your role, flip it into a blueprint.

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The exact next step you need to take is to develop the skill of speaking in meetings. What does this skill involve? What do you need to do to help yourself create this ability? Do you need to prep notes? Do you need to practice what you'll say?

I don't know the best answers for you for this. You know the best answers for you for this, right? So whatever the thing is for you, you can think about how do I take this feedback and use it to my advantage? How do I take this feedback and help it set me up for success? What would I need to do to be able to do that?

What can I learn from this feedback and then how can I go about implementing it and trying things on in my efforts to move towards it? To follow the map, to use the blueprint to create more of what I want to get further along in my career.

You can also spend some time getting yourself excited to take on this learning by thinking about what will become available to you as you gain this skill. There might be roles you've been interested in before but not applied to because they require speaking skills.

Gaining this skill can serve you in your current role but it can also serve you in building a career path you love. And I just want to say, it's normal to want to be told we are amazing. We all want that on some level.

And here's the thing; you are amazing. You don't need to be better in order to be good. But if you want to get some results that you don't have yet, then you might want to learn some new stuff, right? So the next time you get some "tough feedback," take a deep breath and then ask yourself, how can this help me become more of who I want to become?

I know some of y'all also want to know about giving feedback, and I'll do a whole podcast on that at some point. But this episode about how you can think about receiving feedback will also be useful for when you want to give feedback.

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When you can see critical feedback you receive as a helpful blueprint, something that supports you as you create a meaningful, successful career, then it's easier to give feedback too, even if that feedback is critical in nature. Because you can see that you are helping the other person to be more successful and that you're giving them a blueprint for success.

One more thing. I know that some of you are wondering about bad feedback. Like, isn't it true that sometimes feedback isn't helpful or is just downright mean? Here's my answer to that. You get to decide if the feedback has value or not.

You can decide to discard feedback if you think it's not useful. But I think it's helpful to always start by looking at it as if it could be useful. Sometimes the feedback that we like the least can actually help us the most. I know that this has been true for me, so can you be willing to at least take a look at difficult feedback?

Can you be willing to at least ask yourself how it could be useful to you, even if you don't appreciate the way it was delivered, or you suspect it may have not been offered with your best interests in mind? In that way, you can even turn "bad" feedback into something that's beneficial for you.

Okay? Okay. You got this. And if you have questions about receiving critical feedback, come find me on Insta and just ask me there. I love having conversations with y'all and it's super fun to engage with you about the content.

And if you love what I teach and you want some help taking things a little bit deeper, and figuring out how this all applies to your own life, I've got good news for you.

I've got space for a few new one-on-one coaching clients starting this month, so let's hop on a call. I'll give you some coaching right away to help you get going and if it seems like a good fit, I will share with you how we can work together. Just head on over to my website and click on the Work With Me button and get started there.

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Also bonus, my coaching offering is totally virtual as to better serve my global audience, and yes, I do work with people who are not native English speakers and we've had great success doing that. There's even a testimonial on my website with someone in that category so you can check that out on the testimonials page. Alright y'all, have a lovely week and I will talk to you next time. Bye.

Thank you for listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It. We'll have another episode for you next week. And in the meantime, if you're feeling super fired up, head on over to korilinn.com for more guidance and resources.