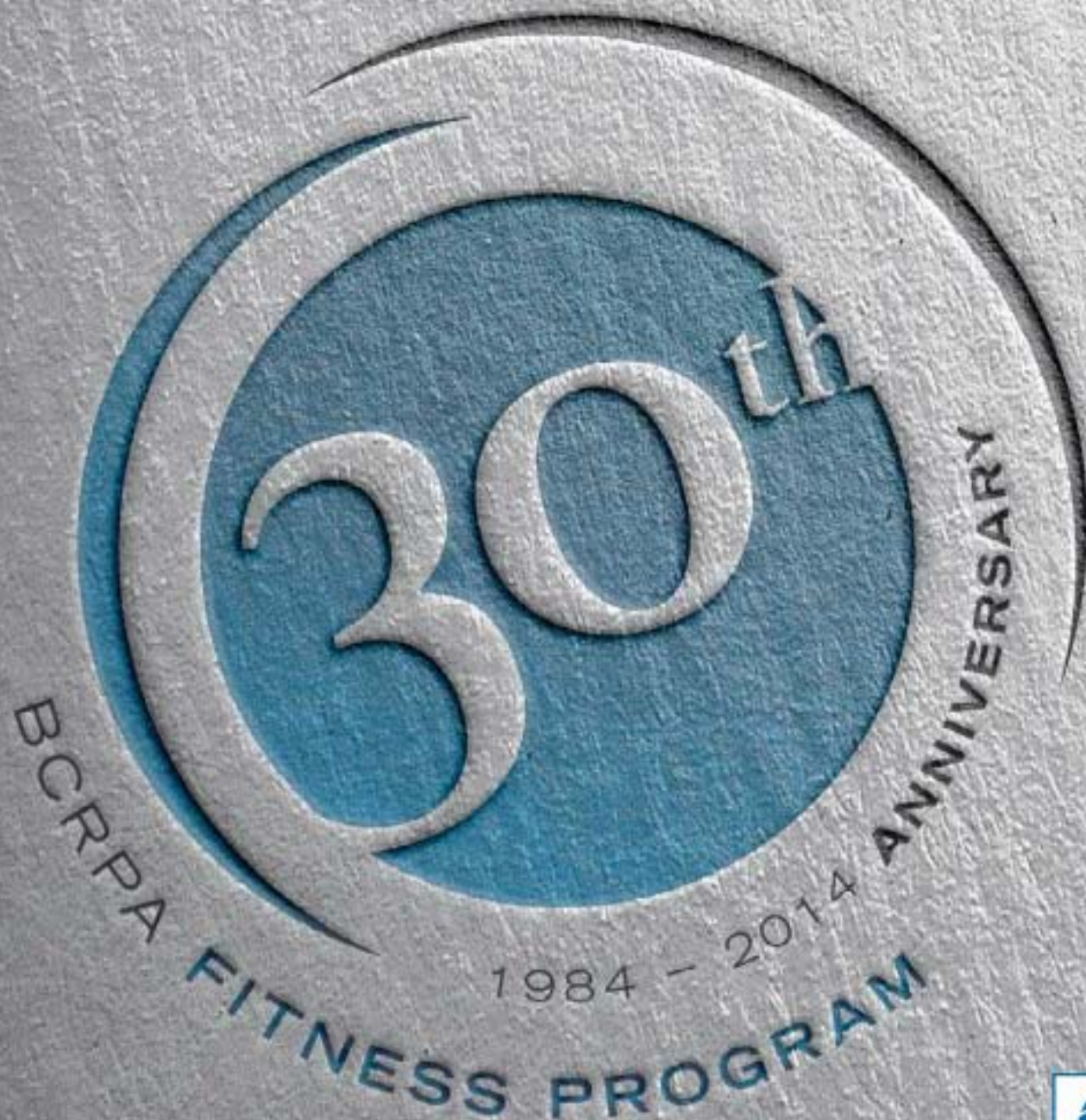


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HOW TO TAKE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM CONSTRUCTIVELY



If you have taught your first group fitness class, you have probably already experienced some form of criticism.

If you have been teaching for a while, you have probably had your full share. Either way, it has the potential to sting if you don't take the necessary steps to 'file' criticism appropriately in your ever-active brain. It is human nature to focus on negative critique rather than positive kudos - after all, we live in an era where judgment, criticism and, yes, narcissism runs rampant. However, this will not only eventually turn you into Sour Sam, it can break your spirit and turn your passion for health and fitness into deep resentment.

To avoid this and drive your desire to share your amazing talents, it's imperative to look at the feedback objectively. This will preserve your passion without feelings of unmet expectations or inadequacy in your abilities. Although your superiors are trained to deliver feedback in a sensitive and appropriate manner, it is still a choice how that feedback is internalized. Below are a few key points to keep at the forefront:

- It takes many cogs to turn a wheel. What is being asked of you to start doing, continue doing or cease doing is often in an effort to streamline company policies, practices and member relationships.
- Your participants' issues are not necessarily your issues. Sometimes, people go through difficult periods in life and they use various outlets to release. Recognize those people and detach yourself from their thought paths because you will never be able to please them and really, you're just in the cross-fire of their bad mood that day. Walk away and throw them positive, peaceful energy.
- They are for you, not against you. Think of negative feedback as fuel to drive you to do better, be better. No, it's not always easy to hear but in truth, every industry requires employees to grow and flourish - the fitness industry is no different. So, think of your employers (and members) as your cheerleaders challenging you to find different ways to say and do what is asked of you.
- It's your skills, not you. Constructive criticism is meant to further fine-tune your skills as an instructor. You, as a person, are not under fire. Detach those comments from your personhood - more often than not, the feedback is with your best interests in mind.
- You're not always right. Yup, That's true. Receiving feedback with an open mind may lead you to see that some things regarding your instructing or training really did need to be addressed.
- If you are offended when your superior provides you with constructive criticism, you probably don't have a teachable spirit. When you can't be taught, you can't learn and you eventually become a liability to the company rather

than the true asset you are.

- You can't please everyone! Though you may want your classes to be packed and everyone to love you, it's an unrealistic expectation that most definitely will lead to disappointment. Not everyone will love your teaching/training style, music, class layout, cueing, outfit or hairdo. That's perfectly ok. That's why this industry is so beautifully diverse and inclusive at the same time. So celebrate!

Ultimately, external validity of qualifications and capabilities is a never-ending and unattainable goal that will only bring rise to further scrutiny and unrest. Remember: constructive feedback is never about blame or shame. You are who you are and you need to love that. Use the constructive criticism to fuel your desire to grow, improve and succeed and you'll soon see that every bit of feedback was exactly what propelled you into the valuable educator you have become.

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