How to Cope With Criticism When You’re Depressed

by SCOTT STE MARIE

Depression and Criticism

Being criticized for being depressed or having a diagnosis of depression can affect our ability to heal or seek help in the first place. In order to take actionable steps to deal with criticism, first we need to define the term correctly.

Criticism: The expression of disapproval of someone or something based on perceived faults or mistakes.

Expression of disapproval can come from others but we can also criticize ourselves for feeling the way we do. Again, this can slow our recovery and push us further down the spiral of depression. Let us discuss why this happens and how we can deal with criticism relating to depression.

Why Do We Criticize?

Human beings fear the unknown. A lot of the time, we reject what we do not understand, even if there is plenty of evidence and available information to support something.

Think about when you criticized someone or something in your life – if you are like me, you most likely don’t have to look back too far. We look at perceived faults of mistakes, meaning we do not have access to all of the information.

When you criticized someone, they probably didn’t fit the mold of your worldview with the information you had at the time.

For example, I used to criticize the ketogenic diet (zero carb diet) and claims that it treated depression and anxiety. The criticism was valid until I met someone who suffered from chronic pain, autoimmune disorder, depression and anxiety who then started this diet with incredible results on her mental health. I can no longer criticize the diet to the degree I used to because of this newfound personal testimony and scientific evidence I discovered.

When it comes to people criticizing depression, this may come from that lack of knowledge and perceived notions of the illness. People may see depression glamorized online or believe people use this as an excuse in the workplace for a few days off every month. The events people witness may skew their perception of a variety of things, including mental illness

Self-Criticism and Depression

We criticize ourselves the same way people criticize us and we criticize others. If you feel depressed but aren’t sure why or how this happened, you may criticize your own strength, character and personality. Everything you thought you knew about yourself is now up for debate because you don’t know what is truly happening to you.

Criticism will continue until you get all of the facts, look into symptoms and connect the dots. Now I know what you might be thinking – there are many unknowns with depression as far as the causes, treatments and overall science.

While this may be true, we have to work with the evidence at hand and the most important being your own personal feelings and experience. The evidence in the scientific community and stigma is irrelevant.

What is relevant is how you feel and if depression is having a negative impact on your daily life. It may be easy to criticize yourself in times of uncertainty and mental pain, which is why we need a new perspective and plan.

What Do We Do?

Step 1: Let's do Our Best to See Criticism as a Challenge.

If it comes from others, or ourselves, we can either accept criticism as fact or take action to see if it actually makes sense.

Of course, we cannot ignore the event that sometimes criticism (constructive criticism) is true and we need to be honest with ourselves if this is the case. Therefore, step 1 of being criticised is to find out if it is true or not.

Look at the evidence of past experience, present feelings, and literature.

Step 2: Ask Yourself What This Criticism Means to You.

What does it mean to you when a person tells you to "suck it up"? You could go back to the definition of criticism and make the argument that this person doesn't know all the facts and therefore, you can educate him or her or smile at his/her state of ignorance.

Step 3: Keep Moving!

Criticism from others and ourselves is part of life. To be critical is to disapprove but in another way, it is the need for more information.

After deciding if the criticism is true and figuring out its meaning, we keep moving. This means we can either work on it if it's true, or we let it go if it holds no meaning to the way we see the world or ourselves.

You have the power.

The Takeaway

Criticism will come and go, just like most things in life. It's not our circumstance that defines us but what we do given our current situation.

You have the control to let criticism hurt you, or you can make the conscious choice to dig a little deeper and find out if it holds any truth. It is a challenge that I know you can face and deal with!