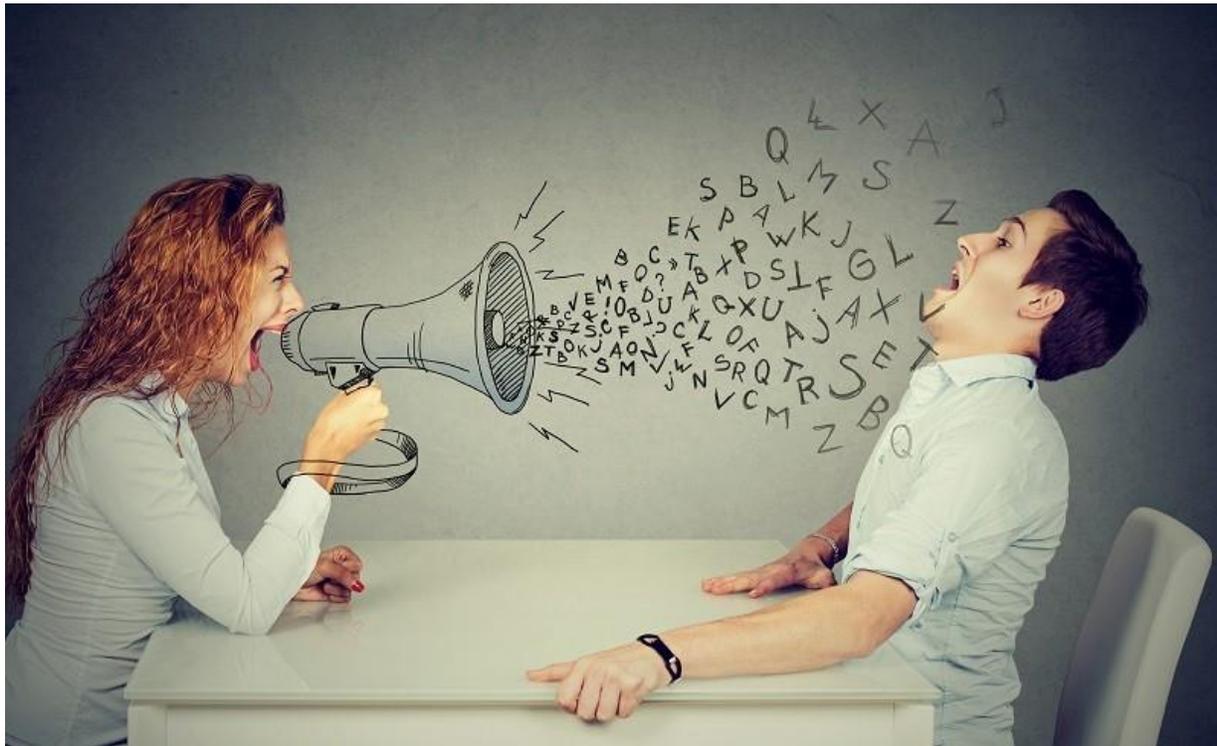


Contribution > Criticism

July 2020 | LinkedIn Article by Wendy Berenson



"At the end of the day I want to be able to say that I contributed more than I criticized." - Brené Brown

I don't know if this thought might land on you the way it landed on me. It struck me that many times I'm quick to jump in with a criticism instead of jumping to a place where I can openly listen to contribute. Have you ever uttered any of these phrases?

"Um, I don't think that's a good idea."

"Yes, but there's no way that would ever work."

"What you are saying doesn't even make sense."

Ouch. Just reading them is like looking in the mirror and recognizing all the times I've said something similar.

How can we turn criticism to contribution? Consider taking a lesson from two of InnerWill's Five Practices of Values Based Leadership (Building Awareness, Realizing Potential, Developing Relationships, Taking Action, and Practicing Reflection).

1. *Develop Relationships* - Listen without passing judgment – then listen some more. Make a conscious effort to understand the other person's values, styles, and beliefs. Reality check – just because you disagree with someone doesn't mean that either of you are wrong. It's ok to disagree. We all have different perspectives and thoughts, and that can be incredibly productive. Some of the most innovative ideas have come from productive disagreements.

2. *Take action* – A way to contribute is to get involved, lead with courage and work toward the change you would like to see. We can lead by example. No time for armchair quarterbacking!
3. *Develop Relationships* - Celebrate the success of others – focus on what people are doing right and acknowledge and thank them for it. Look around and pay attention. The actions are there just waiting for your acknowledgement.

When I think about contribution over criticism, I'm reminded of an old poem that I've long since committed to memory. What I could not find, though was the author. An extensive internet search turned up a few different possibilities and even an "anonymous." While I can't present you with the author, I can challenge you with a few stanzas from the poem....

Is anyone encouraged over what you did or said?

Does someone whose hopes were fading now with courage look ahead?

Did you waste the day or lose it, was it well or sorely spent? Did you leave a trail of kindness or a scar of discontent?

Those stanzas cause me to think of our Fifth practice of VBL: Practice Reflection – review my thoughts, actions and impact.

Ask yourself, at the end of today, did you contribute more than you criticized? What did you do today that you can learn from for tomorrow? As humans on this planet, we are all connected, and we all have the power to leave a scar or blaze a trail of kindness.

Comment below or send me a note at wendy.berenson@innerwill.org. I'd love to hear from you!

Learn more about InnerWill's solutions at innerwill.org.

