

# CRITICISM VS FEEDBACK

## BECOMING BETTER THAN YOU WERE THE DAY BEFORE!

*Written by Kay Millican, 4th Dan Black Belt*

Many of us have been there. That moment in class, or in life, where someone tells us something we've done is not right, and it's all we can hear. We think that there's something wrong with us and what we did. We get upset, and lose confidence.

There's a big difference between hearing input as criticism ("oh my goodness, there's something wrong with *me* and what I'm doing"), and feedback ("hey, this person is making a *contribution* to me that can **help me do better next time**, and to help others do better too").

Criticism can be defined as the expression of **disapproval** of someone on the basis of perceived faults or mistakes.



Feedback, on the other hand, can be defined as information about a person's performance which is used as a **basis for improvement**.

When you are in class, and an instructor focuses on a move and points out what was "wrong" with the stance or the move you did, they aren't showing disapproval and criticising you, and they aren't judging you.

An instructor evaluates what you are doing, for sure, but then they give feedback, **designed to help you**.

Instructors have trained for years to understand the martial arts they teach. And they become good at spotting ways you can improve.

They want you to **challenge yourself** to improve the move, make it technically better and more effective.

It's designed as feedback, to you so you learn to be a better martial artist, and to others so they think about how they do a move and how they might improve it.

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On the dojang floor, instructors aren't criticising you. **There's nothing wrong with you.** In fact, instructors are usually in awe of everyone who walks through the dojang door, because it takes guts to come and learn martial arts.

As soon as we stop hearing what happens to us as criticism, we are free to get rid of the accompanying upset, and instead we can focus on how we can do better.

And do you know what, **sometimes we are our own worst critics.**

I remember a coloured belt grading I did, where I was in tears afterwards, criticising myself and believing the instructors must have thought I'd done a terrible job.

One instructor at the time assured me, that I'd been watched throughout my whole training and was assessed on what I'd learned throughout that process and how far I'd come.



That made all the difference to me in future gradings (I still get very nervous, but I know if I give it all I have every time I train, this is what is noticed).

I have a picture on my wall at home, it says **"It's not about being better than someone else, it's about being better than you were the day before!"**

I think that's awesome advice. If everything we hear in the dojang, at school, at work, at home, we take on as **how we can do better**, that's a really positive place to come from.

Martial arts is a life-long journey of self-discovery and seeking to be better every day, as a martial artist and as a person. And the more feedback we get, rather than trying to just figure it out for ourselves, the better.