Leading by example means accepting redirection as willingly as you provide it.

It is difficult for most of us to accept criticism from anyone, but especially from our children or our employees. After all, we are supposed to have all the answers and know how to do everything the correct way, right? Wrong! Everyone makes mistakes, even bosses and parents, and we really don't know everything. Willingness to accept feedback from others is important in how we lead. If you want your children and your employees to accept your feedback when they fail, you have to be willing to accept theirs when you fail. So how do you do it? We suggest that there are four key things to keep in mind to successfully receive redirection from others.

1. **Remember that they are taking a risk.** In the parent-child and employer-employee relationships you have the power and they don't. You can make their lives difficult and in some cases even dissolve the relationship (we don't recommend this with your children). Therefore it is vital that you understand that they are assuming all of the risk when giving you this type of feedback.

2. **Assume that they have your best interest in mind.** It is very easy to become defensive when receiving less than positive feedback. The primary reason that we become defensive is because we assume that the other person is trying to hurt us in some way. We generate a "guess" about their motive and that guess is usually negative. If you start with a guess that they have your best interest in mind, then you will be less likely to become defensive and more likely to have a successful conversation. If they are trying to hurt you, then you have an opportunity to discover why and determine what you can do to rectify that.

3. **Listen with respect.** Respectful listening really means allowing the other person to express their views and thoughts without you becoming defensive. Ask clarifying questions when you don't understand something, but don't justify your actions/results before the other person has finished because this will most likely be seen as defensive. It is also important to show good body language through your posture, eye contact and facial expression. How you look and what you say will set the tone for the conversation and will either lead to success or failure.
4. **Show gratitude for their feedback.** Remember that it is difficult for someone with less power than you have to step up and give you feedback. It is very important that you let them know that you recognize this and that you appreciate their willingness to help you become the best leader that you can possibly be.

If you want to lead by example, you will need to be willing to accept negative feedback as easily as you are willing to give it.

---

**About the Author:** Ron is co-founder and Executive Director of The RAD Group. He received his doctorate in Psychology from George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University in 1977. In addition to serving on the faculties of Stephen F. Austin State University, Belmont University and Iowa State University, he has been a consultant to hundreds of organizations around the world since beginning his consulting career in 1981. Dr. Ragain has actual hands-on experience in the oil and gas industry having worked in both refineries and on offshore drilling rigs. He has developed and implemented organizational improvement programs in every segment of the oil and gas industry, aircraft maintenance, alarm & security systems, retail merchants, restaurants, newspapers, hospitals and transportation. He specializes in organizational diagnosis, organizational and individual performance improvement and safety improvement. For additional questions, please contact Ron at rragain@theradgroup.com or www.theradgroup.com.