

Ouch, you've been criticised

Now turn a dressing down into a career step up

Messing up at work – can it be anything but mortifying? “Definitely,” says leadership psychologist Averil Leimon. “Skilful use of negative feedback is what separates high fliers from their peers.” It’s the reason why interviewers always ask that question about how you handle your weaknesses. Cunning, huh? So here’s how to deal...

IN THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES...

DON'T RESPOND WITH A BRUSQUE, 'OK'...

...then run for the door. “It just looks like you want to get away,” says Alison Green, founder of careers blog askamanager.org. It’s better to own up, but spin it. For example, “If they say you’re not creative, say, ‘I know it’s not my key strength, but I’m good at putting systems in place,’” says Charlie Ryan, MD of career advisors The Recruitment Queen.

AND IF YOU DISAGREE...

Say, ‘I didn’t realise. Why do you think that?’, so they can explain. It might be a surprise, it might hit home: either way, don’t get defensive. A good line is, ‘I don’t want this to be frustrating for you, how do you think I can improve?’

IN THE FIRST FIVE HOURS...

STAY PUT FOR 20 MINUTES

“Post-ordeal, go straight back to your job – even if your mind’s blank,” advises Leimon. “Immediate escape to the loo – however tempting – can look like stropiness.” Ditto: giving your boss the silent treatment.

GET ADVICE FROM ONE TRUSTED COLLEAGUE

“Use them as a sounding board to vent and see how they’d handle it,” says Ryan. “But you never know who’s in your boss’s pocket. Think: ‘Does my boss share with this person too?’ If so, a non-work friend or boyfriend is safer.”

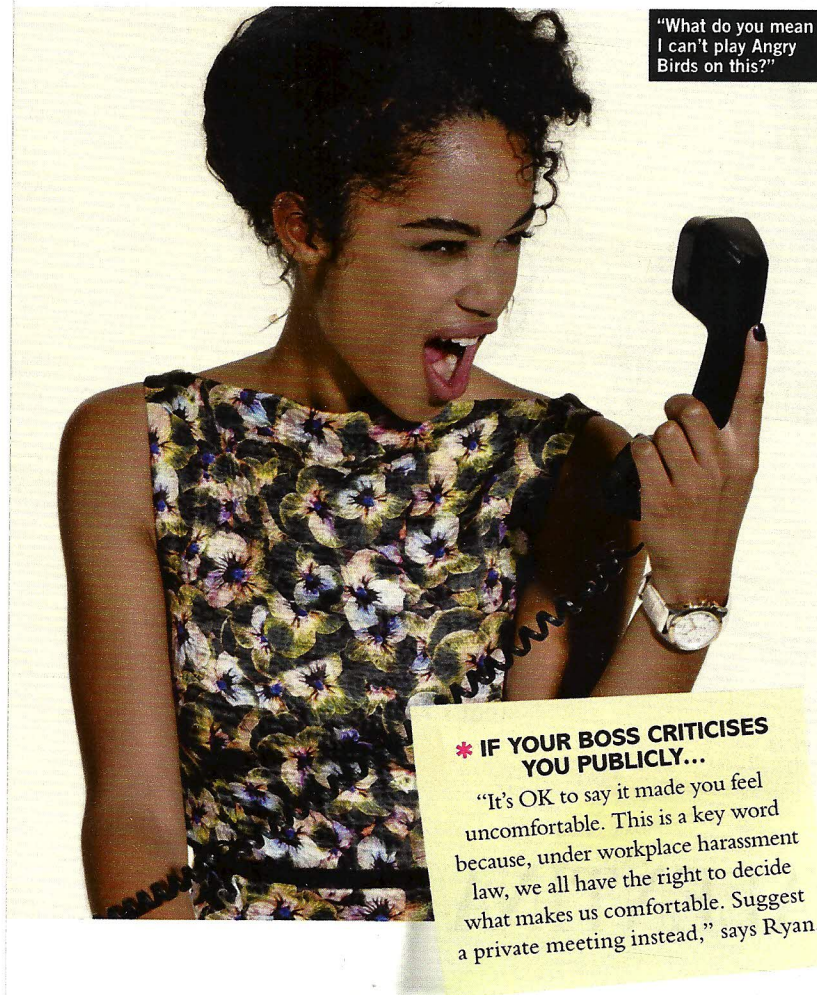
IN THE FIRST FIVE DAYS...

SCHEDULE A ONE-TO-ONE

“Ask for 30 minutes of your boss’s time to make sure you’re on track,” advises Ryan. “Request a meeting within 24 hours of the criticism happening. Managers are extremely busy; while you’ll have the incident on repeat in your head, they’re likely to forget about it sooner. Chat while it’s still fresh.”

WIN BACK TRUST

“When you meet, wear whatever it is that makes you feel at your professional best,” says career development coach Gina Visram. “Pick two or three areas you’ll work to improve in the next month, and ask if you can get in the habit of short regular updates. By facing criticism head on, your self-esteem stays intact – and you’ll be back in their good books.”



“What do you mean I can’t play Angry Birds on this?”

*** IF YOUR BOSS CRITICISES YOU PUBLICLY...**

“It’s OK to say it made you feel uncomfortable. This is a key word because, under workplace harassment law, we all have the right to decide what makes us comfortable. Suggest a private meeting instead,” says Ryan.