



Ahh, the yearly review. We look forward to the raise, and dread the opportunity for our supervisors to pick apart our performance like a Thanksgiving turkey. Realistically, we all have areas where we could improve. Normally, we can take these bits of constructive criticism in our review and improve those areas. What do you do, though, when your overall review is bad?

If you get a bad performance review, it is definitely time to take stock. One of two things is happening. Either your manager has told you repeatedly about the areas in which you can improve and you haven't listened, or your manager hasn't been communicating with you about your need for change. Either way, this is an opportunity for you to reassess your current position and methods of operation. Your job may depend on it.



****Before you say anything or do anything...breathe.** Thank your manager for their time and ask to schedule a time for a follow-up meeting.

****When you have left the office for the day, take the time to read your review in detail.** Read it from beginning to end, and take in all of the details of the criticism.

****At this point you can assess what parts of the review were founded on fact and which parts seem unfounded to you.**

****Prepare your response in writing, so that when you meet with your manager, you will be able to remember all of the points you want to stress.** (This will help you remember everything you want to say.) Go over the review again. Highlight what you think are correct criticisms and create strategies for change. Then prepare written responses to the criticisms that you felt are untrue.

****The day of your meeting, take the time to get out in the morning.** Take your dog for a walk. Take yourself for a walk. Just do something that will be nurturing for you and help you to prepare mentally for your meeting.

****When you meet with your manager, thank them again for the time that they took to thoughtfully prepare your review.** Bring forward the points of the review that you feel were valid and share your plans for correction of each issue. Ask for suggestions and strategy for improvement. Next, calmly explain your reasons for disagreeing with the criticisms that you felt were unsupported. Let your manager know why you think their criticism in those areas was not a true assessment of your performance. Whatever you do, stay calm and communicate everything with appropriate professional language and be open to your manager's suggestions. In these cases, if you get defensive, your boss will win the discussion, so weigh your words carefully.

Once you have survived the performance review and the follow-up conversation, begin to keep records of the things you are doing to improve. Especially keep track of the things that you have been doing to follow your manager's suggestions for improvement. Keep in touch with your manager about the things that you are doing to improve and ask for additional suggestions if needed.

You can survive a bad review. If they are not kicking you out the door, they see some value in keeping you, and you should be encouraged by that. Work to improve your performance and produce the results you are expected to produce. If you do, your next review could be a positive one.

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