

Rebound from a co-worker's insult

Insults from co-workers or your boss can feel like a slap across the face—and it's all too easy to become defensive and retaliate. If you do, you could irreparably damage the relationship or your career. Instead follow these five steps to take the sting out of the insult:

- 1. Determine if it is truly an insult.** Negative feedback, if done respectfully, is not an insult. Correcting you when it is needed is not an insult. Name-calling, putting you down for no reason, or attacking your work without just cause are insults. Ensure that your thin skin isn't making their comments worse than they are.
- 2. Don't ignore your feelings.** If you bury your hurt or shame or you pretend you aren't affected, your emotions will keep bubbling to the surface. Instead, acknowledge how you feel, but don't obsess over the situation. Instead, ask "Am I ready to let go of this?" As you do, your pain will fade.
- 3. Understand the insulter's intentions.** Some people enjoy hurting others. Others are just thoughtless and make silly comments without intending to be malicious. While no one should mistreat or disrespect you, do assess your own actions to see if you could have handled a particular situation better. Observe how the person interacts with others. It could be that the person is just a jerk and not worth agonizing over.
- 4. Remember that not everyone is going to like you all the time.** No matter how hard you try or how good of a person you are, some people will dislike you. When you realize that it has nothing to do with you—and everything to do with the other person—their words won't hurt you so much.
- 5. Stand up for yourself. When you are insulted, speak up.** While you don't want to scream or lose your cool, you should say something, such as "Don't talk to me like that. I don't deserve it, and I won't tolerate it. I'll gladly finish this conversation when you can show me some respect." Be confident and be strong. If the abuse continues, talk to your boss or HR.

— Adapted from "[Dealing with Verbal Attacks: 6 Ways to Take the Sting Out of an Insult.](#)" Andrea Still, Tiny Buddha, www.tinybuddha.com.