

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
From *YouthWorker Journal* and YouthWorker.com

Make ‘Em Laugh
Dealing with Our Critics

By Paul Asay

What Happened

As fighting continues along the Gaza Strip and a militant Muslim group continues to cause chaos in northern Iraq, the prime minister of Turkey was causing a different sort of controversy. “A woman should be chaste,” said Bulent Arinc. “She should know the difference between public and private. She should not laugh in public.”

The idea that woman shouldn’t laugh caused quite the stir across the globe. Women worldwide began posting pictures on Twitter, featuring them giggling, sniggering, chortling and guffawing with glee—and in public no less.

Even Emma Watson, star of the Harry Potter movies and newly dubbed Goodwill Ambassador for UN Women, took to the social networking site to register a mirthful protest—doubling over in laughter.

The Twitter protest, which often includes the hashtag #direnkahkhaha, is a reminder that sometimes the best way to deal with unfair critics simply is to laugh. Sometimes, we can greet anger with a smile, turn a harsh word away with gentleness or a joke. That doesn’t mean we should retreat from our principles or change the way we do things. Yet sometimes we can diffuse hard feelings or extinguish a brewing argument with a well-placed word or smile.

Talk About It

Have you ever helped deflect anger or criticism through kindness or good will? When? Have you seen anyone else do so?

Sometimes literally laughing in our critics’ faces as did the protesters for #direnkahkhaha can make them angrier while proving the point. Are there times when it’s important to stand up for what you believe is right, regardless of hurt feelings? Have you encountered that in your own life? When?

There are lots of other ways to deal with folks who get mad at you for no good reason. Can you think of some? What seem to be the most effective ways of dealing with critics? The most ineffective?

When we talk about criticism, it’s important to remember that sometimes, critics have a point. Sometimes they’re right and we’re wrong. When someone criticizes you or gets angry at you for something, how do you determine whether they’ve got a good reason to

be angry? If you think you were wrong, what's the best way to deal with it? Can you think of a time when that happened to you?

What the Bible Says

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1-2).

“Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few” (Eccl. 5:2).

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly” (Prov. 15:1-2).

Paul Asay has written for *The Washington Post*, *Christianity Today*, *Beliefnet.com*, and *The (Colorado Springs) Gazette*. He writes about culture for *PluggedIn* and wrote the Batman book, *God on the Streets of Gotham* (Tyndale). He recently collaborated with Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, on his book *The Good Dad*. He lives in Colorado Springs with wife Wendy and his two children. Follow him on Twitter at @AsayPaul.