Toolkit: Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process (CRP)

The Critical Response Process (CRP) toolkit offers a structured approach for engaging participants in constructive feedback on creative or in-progress work. Developed by choreographer Liz Lerman and artist John Borstel, CRP emphasizes thoughtful, positive dialogue, empowering our users to refine their ideas and projects. With beginnings in the arts, this resource fosters a supportive, inclusive environment that promotes critical thinking and communication skills essential for progression and growth. By implementing CRP creates a space where their participants feel safe to explore, reflect on feedback, and make informed choices about their work, building confidence and skill in managing projects effectively.

Quick CRP Overview

Roles

Maker: The person who is presenting a work-in-progress. They are here because they want to improve the work they brought by receiving feedback.

Responder: The people who are giving feedback to the Artist/Maker. They are here because they want to help the maker create their best work possible.

Facilitator: The person who guides the process and ensures the steps are followed.

Steps

Step 1: Statements of meaning from responders

Responders answer the question: "What is evocative, unique, memorable, meaningful, interesting, what is working?"

Filter: Be specific. Save any overt judgments for later

Step 2: Maker asks questions

The Maker asks questions about their work and the responders answer.

Filter: Negative opinions are allowed, but stay on topic. Only answer the question that has been asked.

Created by: M. Workmon, June 2024

Step 3: Responders ask neutral questions

The responders ask neutral questions and the maker answers.
Filter: Remove opinions from your questions. Ask to gain information.

Step 4: Permissioned opinions from responders

The responders ask permission to give specific opinions on the work.

Filter: Responders begin with "I have an opinion about _____, would you like to hear it?" and the maker can answer yes or no.

(One-page adapted from Phil Weaver-Stoesz)

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Steps and Tips & Tricks

This section covers key principles for effective Critical Response Process (CRP) sessions, emphasizing maker control, preparation, and confidentiality. Use these structured steps and tips to create a focused, respectful, and adaptable feedback environment.

Important Things to Know About CRP

Maker/Creator/Artist Agency

- One of the key principles of CRP is maintaining the artist/maker's control over their work. The maker has the final say in what feedback they accept or decline.

Feedback is a Dialogue

- CRP is a collaborative process. The goal is to engage in meaningful dialogue that benefits both the maker and responders.

Preparation is Key

- Both facilitators and responders should come prepared if possible. Familiarize yourself with the work and the CRP steps before the session.

Flexibility and Adaptation

- While CRP has a structured framework, it can be adapted to fit the needs of different groups and settings. Be open to making adjustments as necessary.

Confidentiality:

- Respect the confidentiality of the feedback session. What is shared within the session should remain within the group unless explicitly agreed upon otherwise.

Preparation and Setting the Environment

- **Select a Facilitator***: Choose someone familiar with CRP to guide the session. Note that not all CRP sessions need a facilitator if you are utilizing general concepts versus leading a facilitated session.
- **Gather Materials**: Ensure you have CRP guidelines, response sheets, question prompts, and any necessary recording tools.
- **Set Up the Space**: Arrange seating in a circle or semicircle in a quiet, comfortable space. For digital sessions, please set up a Zoom room and establish guidelines for interactions.

Understanding Process Participants

In the CRP process, there are commonly three distinct roles.

- **Maker/Creator/Artist:** The creator of the work being discussed.
- **Responders**: Individuals providing feedback.
- **Facilitator**: Person managing the CRP session.

Critical Response Process Steps

Watch the full 8-minute video on the Critical Response Process (CRP) where Liz Lerman and co-author John Borstel introduce the classic 4-step CRP framework. This video provides a clear overview of each step, illustrating how CRP facilitates constructive, maker-centered feedback.

Step 0

Pre-Session Conversation with Maker/Creator/Artist

Purpose: To understand the maker's needs, focus areas, and boundaries for the feedback session.

- **Facilitator**: "Before the session begins, I'd like to understand what you most need from this feedback session. Are there specific areas you'd like to focus on, and are there any topics you'd prefer to avoid?"
- **Maker**: Shares their needs, focus areas, and any off-limit topics.
- **Facilitator**: Take note of these points to guide the session appropriately.

Step 1

Statements of Meaning

Purpose: To start with positive feedback and highlight what resonated with the responders.

- **Facilitator**: "We will begin with Statements of Meaning. Responders, please share what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, or exciting about the work."
- **Responders**: Each responder shares their thoughts, focusing on positive aspects *without offering critique or opinion*.

Prefer to hear the description from Liz Lerman and John Borstel? Jump to Step 1 of the Critical Response Process (CRP) video.

Step 2

Maker/Creator/Artist as Questioner

Purpose: To allow the maker to ask specific questions about their work and receive targeted feedback.

- **Facilitator**: "Now, the maker will ask questions about their work. Responders, please answer only the questions asked."
- **Maker**: Asks questions about aspects of the work about which they are curious.
- **Responders**: Provide answers to the maker's questions, staying focused on the queries posed.

Prefer to hear the description from Liz Lerman and John Borstel? Jump to Step 2 of the Critical Response Process (CRP) video.

Step 3

Neutral Questions

Purpose: To encourage open-ended, exploratory dialogue *without judgment or suggestion*.

- **Facilitator**: "Next, we will move to Neutral Questions. Responders, please ask neutral questions about the work."
- **Responders**: Ask neutral, open-ended questions (e.g., "What was your intention behind this element?").
- **Maker**: Responds to each question, reflecting on their work and intentions.

Tips and Tricks for Asking Neutral Questions

Asking neutral questions is a crucial part of Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process (CRP). These questions should be open-ended, non-judgmental, and designed to elicit thoughtful responses from the maker. Here are some tips and tricks for formulating and asking neutral questions effectively:

1. **Stay curious.**
    - Approach your questions with genuine curiosity. The goal is to understand the maker's intentions and perspectives, not to impose your own views.
2. **Use open-ended questions.**
    - Frame your questions in a way that requires more than a yes or no answer. This encourages the maker to explore and elaborate on their thoughts.
3. **Avoid "why" questions.**
    - "Why" questions can sometimes feel accusatory or confrontational. Instead, rephrase them to focus on the maker's process and choices. Instead of "Why did you do it this way?" ask, "What inspired you to approach it this way?"
4. **Avoid leading language.**
    - Use language that doesn't suggest a particular answer or judgment. For example, instead of asking, "Why did you choose that awkward color scheme?" ask, "Can you talk about your choice of colors?"
5. **Focus on specific elements.**
    - Direct your questions to specific aspects of the work, such as themes, techniques, or choices. This can help the maker provide more detailed and insightful responses. "Can you describe your decision-making process for this particular aspect [here]?"
6. **Be respectful and supportive.**
    - Ensure your questions are respectful and supportive. The tone should convey that you are seeking to understand and support the maker, not to critique. "How did you develop this particular piece [in the context of your work]?"
7. **Practice active listening and reflect back the maker's words.**

    - Pay close attention to the maker's responses. This can help you formulate follow-up questions that delve deeper into their thought process. “You mentioned this section is about [this topic in these words], can you tell me more about how you represented that visually?”

Prefer to hear the description from Liz Lerman and John Borstel? Jump to Step 3 of the Critical Response Process (CRP) video.

Step 4

Permissioned Opinions

Purpose: To give the maker control over receiving opinions and critiques.

- **Facilitator:** “Finally, we will share Permissioned Opinions. Responders, if you have an opinion, ask the maker if they would like to hear it. maker, you may choose to hear or decline these opinions.”
- **Responders:** Offer opinions prefaced with, “I have an idea/opinion/suggestion about [define it briefly here], would you like to hear it?”
- **Maker:** Decides whether to hear each opinion and can accept or decline without explanation.

Now that you’ve read about the steps, continue reading about how to improve your CRP.

Prefer to hear the description from Liz Lerman and John Borstel? Jump to Step 4 of the Critical Response Process (CRP) video.

Tips and Tricks for Facilitators

1. **Establish an Inclusive Space:**
    - Create an environment where all participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions.
    - Emphasize the importance of respect and constructive feedback.
2. **Be Neutral and Objective:**
    - As a facilitator, remain neutral and objective. Your role is to guide the process, not to influence the content of the feedback.
    - Keep the session focused and on track by gently steering conversations back to the CRP framework if they veer off course.
3. **Prepare in Advance:**
    - Meet with the artist beforehand to understand their needs and boundaries (Step 0).
    - Review the artist’s work if possible, so you can facilitate the session more effectively.
4. **Encourage Participation:**
    - Ensure that all responders have the opportunity to speak, especially during the Statements of Meaning and Neutral Questions steps.
    - Balance contributions to avoid dominance by any single participant.

5. **Manage Time Effectively:**
    - Use timers to keep each section of the process within the allotted time.
    - Be mindful of the overall duration of the session to respect everyone's time.

Tips and Tricks for Responders

1. **Focus on Constructive Feedback:**
    - Aim to provide feedback that is helpful and constructive. Avoid vague or overly critical comments.
    - Remember that your role is to support the artist's growth, not to judge their work.
2. **Use Neutral Language:**
    - During Neutral Questions, phrase your questions in a way that encourages open-ended responses (e.g., "Can you tell us more about...?" rather than "Why did you...?").
3. **Stay Within the Framework:**
    - Adhere to the structure of CRP. Each step is designed to build on the previous one and maintain a positive, constructive dialogue.
4. **Be Mindful of Tone:**
    - The way you phrase your feedback can significantly impact how it is received. Aim for a tone that is supportive and encouraging.

General Time Management Strategies

1. **Prioritize Key Areas**
    - **Focus on Priorities**: Encourage the maker to highlight the most critical areas where they need feedback, and prioritize time for these topics.
    - **Limit Scope**: Avoid trying to cover too much in one session. Focus on a few key areas to provide meaningful and actionable feedback.
2. **Maintain a Positive Pace**
    - **Keep it Moving**: Maintain a steady pace throughout the session to keep energy levels high and ensure all steps are covered.
    - **Avoid Overloading**: Be mindful not to overload the session with too much discussion on one point, which can detract from other important areas.
3. **Effective Communication**
    - **Clarity and Brevity**: Encourage clear and brief communication from all participants. This helps in keeping the session within the allotted time.
    - **Active Listening**: Promote active listening to ensure all feedback is heard and understood the first time, reducing the need for repetitive discussions.
4. **Feedback Loop**
    - **Reflect and Adjust**: After each CRP session, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved in terms of time management. Use this feedback to adjust future sessions.

Asynchronous CRP Sessions

1. **Clear Instructions and Deadlines**
    - **Detailed Guidelines**: Provide detailed instructions for each step of the process, including expectations for response times.
    - **Set Deadlines**: Clearly communicate deadlines for each part of the feedback process. Use calendar invites or reminders to help participants stay on track.
2. **Progress Monitoring**
    - **Shared Progress Tracker**: Use a shared document or spreadsheet where participants can mark off when they have completed their tasks. This helps everyone see the overall progress.
    - **Regular Check-Ins**: Schedule periodic check-ins via email or messaging platforms to remind participants of upcoming deadlines and to answer any questions.
3. **Time Allocation**
    - **Flexible Timing**: Allow flexibility in when participants can contribute, but keep the overall process within a defined timeframe (e.g., one week for completion).
    - **Buffer Time**: Build in some buffer time to accommodate delays or additional rounds of feedback if needed.
4. **Encourage Conciseness**
    - **Focused Responses**: Encourage participants to be concise and focused in their feedback to ensure clarity and avoid overwhelming the maker with too much information at once.
    - **Summarize Key Points**: Ask participants to summarize their key points at the end of their comments to highlight the most critical feedback.

Example Dialogues

These example dialogues demonstrate each step of the critical response process across creative roles, showing how to set feedback focus, encourage constructive input, and maintain respectful boundaries. Use this guide to facilitate organized, meaningful feedback sessions.

Quick Role Overview

Roles

Maker: The person who is presenting a work-in-progress. They are here because they want to improve the work they brought by receiving feedback.

Responder: The people who are giving feedback to the Artist/Maker. They are here because they want to help the maker create their best work possible.

Facilitator: The person who guides the process and ensures the steps are followed.

Use the links below to jump to the example perspective you'd like to review on this page:

- Maker as Artist
- Maker as Instructional Designer
- Maker as a Professor
- Asynchronous Conversation Feedback with Maker as Proposal Creator

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Maker as Artist

Step 0: Pre-Session Meeting with the Artist

> ***Facilitator***: "Before we start, could you tell me what you most need from this feedback session? Are there specific areas you want to focus on or topics you'd like us to avoid?"
>
> ***Artist***: "I'm particularly interested in feedback on the narrative flow of my piece. I'd like to avoid discussing the technical aspects of my technique right now."

Step 1: Statements of Meaning

> ***Facilitator***: "We will start with Statements of Meaning. Who would like to go first?"
>
> ***Responder 1***: "I found the use of color in your painting very striking and evocative."
>
> ***Responder 2***: "The rhythm and flow of your dance piece were very engaging."

Step 2: Maker/Artist as Questioner

> ***Artist*:** “How did the transition between the first and second sections of my piece come across?”
>
> ***Responder 1*:** “It felt smooth and natural to me, maintaining the overall mood.”

Step 3: Neutral Questions

> ***Responder 2*:** “What inspired the main theme of your work?”
>
> ***Artist*:** “I was inspired by a recent trip to the mountains, aiming to capture the sense of solitude and vastness.”

Step 4: Permissioned Opinions

> ***Responder 3*:** “I have an opinion about the pacing of the piece, would you like to hear it?”
>
> ***Artist*:** “Yes, please.”
>
> ***Responder 3*:** “I felt that the middle section could be a bit faster to maintain the energy.”
>
> ***Responder 4:*** “I have an idea about the costumes in the scene, would you like to hear it?”
>
> ***Artist:*** “No, thank you.”

Maker as Instructional Designer

Step 0: Pre-Session Meeting with the Maker

> ***Facilitator*:** “Before we start, could you tell me what you most need from this feedback session? Are there specific areas you want to focus on or topics you’d like us to avoid?”
>
> ***Maker*:** “I’m particularly interested in feedback on the flow and engagement of the module. I’d like to avoid discussing the technical aspects of the platform right now.”

Step 1: Statements of Meaning

> ***Facilitator*:** “We will start with Statements of Meaning. Who would like to go first? What did you find interesting, provocative, inspiring or memorable?”
>
> ***Responder 1*:** “I found the interactive elements of your module very engaging and effective in illustrating the concepts.”

***Responder 2*: “The way you structured the content made it easy to follow and understand the key points.”**

Step 2: Maker as Questioner

***Maker*: “How did the transition between the introduction and the first activity come across?”**

***Responder 1*: “It felt smooth and natural to me, maintaining the overall flow and keeping my attention.”**

Step 3: Neutral Questions

***Responder 2*: “What inspired you to choose this particular approach for the discussion section?”**

***Maker*: “I was inspired by recent trends in active learning strategies, aiming to foster more interaction and collaboration among learners.”**

Step 4: Permissioned Opinions

***Responder 3*: “I have an opinion about the pacing of the module, would you like to hear it?”**

***Maker*: “Yes, please.”**

***Responder 3*: “I felt that the middle section could be a bit faster to maintain engagement.”**

***Responder 4*: “I have a suggestion about the graphics used in the quizzes, would you like to hear it?”**

***Maker*: “No, thank you.”**

Maker as a Professor

Step 0: Pre-Session Meeting with the Professor

***Facilitator*: "Before we start, could you share what you most need from this feedback session? Are there specific areas you’d like us to focus on or avoid?"**

***Professor*:** "I'm particularly interested in feedback on how well the module supports critical thinking and whether the case studies are engaging. I'd like to avoid discussing the grading rubric right now."

Step 1: Statements of Meaning

***Facilitator*:** "We'll begin with Statements of Meaning. Who would like to go first? Whataspects did you find impactful or engaging?"

***Responder 1*:** "I found the real-world case studies very relevant and thought-provoking for the students."

***Responder 2*:** "The pacing of the activities seemed well-suited to encourage reflection without feeling rushed."

Step 2: Professor as Questioner

***Professor*:** "How did the case studies work as a bridge between theory and practical application?"

Responder 1: "The connection between the theory and the case studies was clear and helped to make the concepts feel very relevant. By applying theory directly to these real-world scenarios, students are able to see how the material translates into practical situations. This approach reinforces their understanding and gives them a stronger sense of how these concepts would function in their future careers."

Step 3: Neutral Questions

***Responder 2*:** "What led you to include these specific case studies?"

***Professor*:** "I selected these cases because they highlight common issues students may encounter in their future careers, aiming to develop problem-solving skills."

Step 4: Permissioned Opinions

***Responder 3*:** "I have some feedback about the length of the reading materials, would you like to hear it?"

***Professor*:** "Yes, please."

***Responder 3*: "I think shorter readings might encourage students to focus more deeply on each case study."

***Responder 4*: "I have an idea about adding a peer-review element to the module, would you like to hear it?"

***Professor*: "No, thank you."

Asynchronous Conversation Feedback with Maker as Proposal Creator

Step 0: Pre-Session Meeting with the Responders

***Maker*: *[Comment in Google Doc]* “Before we start, I am most interested in feedback on the overall flow and clarity of the proposal. I am not interested at this time in feedback on the charts and tables as I am still working on those components.”

***Responder 1*: *[Reply to comment]* “Got it. Thanks for letting us know. I’m ready to provide feedback focused on these areas.”

Step 1: Statements of Meaning

***Maker*: *[New comment]* “Let's start with Statements of Meaning. Please share what you find meaningful, interesting, or engaging about this proposal.”

***Responder 1*: *[Reply to comment]* “I find the innovative approach to integrating technology in the classroom very compelling and forward-thinking.”

***Responder 2*: *[Reply to comment]* “The proposal is very well-organized and provides a clear overview of the project's objectives and expected outcomes.”

Step 2: Maker as Questioner

***Maker*: *[New comment]* “How did the transition between the introduction and the methodology section come across to you?”

***Responder 1*: *[Reply to comment]* “The transition felt smooth and logical, making it easy to follow the proposal's narrative.”

Step 3: Neutral Questions

***Responder 2*: *[New comment]* “What motivated you to choose this specific framework for evaluating the project's impact?”

***Maker*: *[Reply to comment]* “I chose this framework because it has been widely adopted in recent educational research and aligns well with our project's goals.”

Step 4: Permissioned Opinions

Responder 3**:** *[New comment]* “I have an opinion about the timeline you've outlined for the project, would you like to hear it?”

Maker**:** *[Reply to comment]* “Yes, please.”

Responder 3**:** *[Reply to comment]* “I think the timeline might be a bit too ambitious considering the scope of the project. Perhaps extending it by a few months could make it more feasible.”

Responder 4**:** *[New comment]* “I have a suggestion regarding the collaboration with external partners, would you like to hear it?”

Maker**:** *[Reply to comment]* “No, thank you.”

Example Asynchronous Progress Tracker Table

This following table streamlines tracking and reviewing feedback in a critical response session, capturing the session time frame, focus areas, and participant responses across key categories.

Creation Name/Location:
Duration of Feedback Session: 1 week from date to date
Maker Notes on Feedback Areas:
For this session I would like to focus on the following:

- *Topic 1*
- *Topic 2*
- *Topic 3*

I am not currently interested in feedback on the following:

- *Topic 1*

Participant	Statements of Meaning	Maker Question Responses	Neutral Questions	Permissioned Opinions
Maker	NA	Completed		
Responder 1	Completed	Completed	Completed	Not Yet
Responder 2	Completed	Not Yet	NA	NA
Responder 3	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed

Citations and Additional Resources

Lerman, L., & Borstel, J. (2003). *Liz Lerman's critical response process :A method for getting useful feedback on anything you make, from dance to dessert* (1st ed.). Liz Lerman Dance Exchange. ASU Library Permalink.

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