

Productively Receiving Feedback

SUMMARY:

Facts about Receivers of Feedback:

1) They're Uncomfortable - Nobody is comfortable receiving feedback on themselves. We start out in this state of discomfort which tends to put us on the defense before the conversation even begins.

2) They Blame Others - When we hear feedback we don't like or aren't in agreement with, our tendency is to put someone else at fault and deflect taking responsibility.

3) They Shut Down - If triggered, we'll withdraw from the conversation. Arms get crossed, eye contact stops and the conversation screeches to a halt. We might even retreat physically and walk away.

Facts about Givers of Feedback:

1) They Too Are Uncomfortable - Nobody is comfortable giving not-very-positive feedback to others. It's a difficult conversation to start and makes most people nervous right out of the gate.

2) They're Rooting for You- Even if you are participating in a tough conversation, the feedback giver always wants you to succeed. They're hoping you hear the feedback, learn from it, and take better action as a result.

3) They Aren't Perfect - It's tough to initiate and navigate a tough conversation. Most givers aren't perfectly skilled in this type of conversation. They may be abrupt, or say something that feels wrong out of sheer inexperience or nervousness.

THE CONVERSATION IS THE RELATIONSHIP.

- Susan Scott, Author of *Fierce Conversations*

THREE CONVERSATION TRIGGERS

1. TRUTH - We'll shut down if we perceive what the person is telling us is untrue. We judge the validity of the statement, then used that as the basis to judge everything else that is said.

is what you are saying true?

have you said things in the past I deemed untruthful?

do I think you are an honest person?

2. RELATIONSHIP - How you feel about the giver of the feedback *at that exact moment* is how you feel about the feedback they are giving you.

do I like you? do I respect you?

do I think you are a credible person?

3. IDENTITY - If we feel the feedback strikes a chord with our personal identity, we'll receive the feedback as a permanent judgment vs. a temporary observation.

how do I perceive my personal identity?

did the feedback call out something I'm sensitive about?

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TIPS FOR STAYING PRODUCTIVE:

The goal is to stay engaged in the conversation and manage the thoughts and emotions that may rise up and cloud our ability to remain productively involved.

- 1. Prepare Ahead of Time** - Taking time to prepare for a tough conversation, a year-end review for example, gives your rational brain a leg up and helps you stay calm in the moment.
- 2. Get Clarification and Ask Questions** - It's your responsibility to make sure you understand everything that's been said, especially if you disagree.
- 3. Take a Breath** - If you feel your emotions rising, pause and take a deep breath. Deep breathing releases a calming response and gives you a moment to get your thoughts in order.
- 4. Take Notes** - A rise in our emotional state hinders our rational brain from thinking straight. Take notes on what is being said so you have something to rely on if your brain gets a bit fuzzy.
- 5. Excuse Yourself** - If you start to get physically upset - crying or raising your voice - consider excusing yourself from the conversation. Best to have a do-over a couple hours later or in a few days than to continue with an uncomfortable & ineffective conversation dynamic.

You are in control of

- what you do or do not accept
- how much sense you make of the feedback
- the questions you ask and what you get clarified
- whether you choose to ignore or learn & grow

DISCUSSION:

1. What has been a good strategy for you when you were uncomfortable initiating a tough conversation?
2. Share what tends to trigger you into conversation shutdown.
3. Was there ever any feedback that was really tough to hear, yet in the end was extremely valuable to you/your career.
4. What's a good next step to take with a person when a conversation with them has gone south?