Normalizing and Building Resilience for Feedback

A toolkit for helping supervisors give feedback

What is important about receiving feedback?

Feedback is an act of care. Imagine a culture where feedback, even critical feedback, was considered a gift—an act of care and support—rather than punishment. Where feedback was always expected, welcomed and practiced with skill and humility on all sides.

Moving toward a culture that views feedback as a gift means not pretending that feedback is easy but rather that it is a skill to practice intentionally and together in shared responsibility.

FRAMING

The only way you became a good healthcare professional was because you received near-constant feedback. **Recall that feedback is what helped you learn and grow** into the professional and expert you are now.

Remember you were likely not taught how to do a lot of the parts of your job — teaching, hiring, paperwork, grant-writing — in the same way you were taught others. **It's okay to be learning and growing as you move through your career.**

Feedback is a gift that is designed to help you learn, grow, and improve.
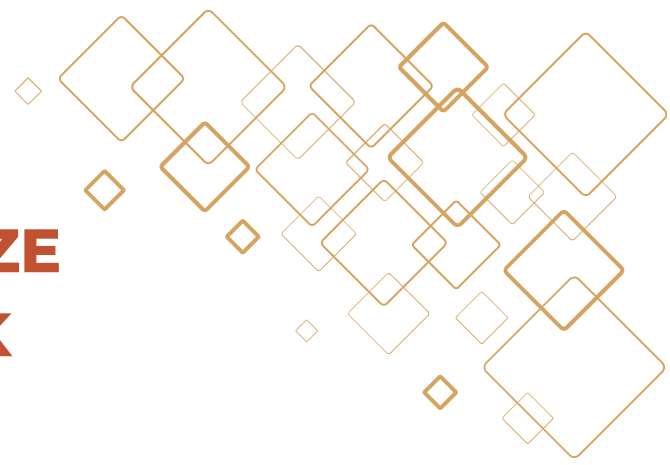
Remember that making mistakes is human and that generally **the worst mistake is not to learn from one's mistakes.**

Feedback should never be delivered in a manner that is **demeaning, cruel, or discriminatory**.

WE NEED TO NORMALIZE RECEIVING FEEDBACK

> Receiving critical feedback can trigger a threat response (fight, flight, freeze, fawn). It's fine and normal to feel activated this way.

> When you are receiving feedback, especially if you are emotionally activated, try to invite curiosity over self-judgment or blame of others

>> Instead of asking "What did I do wrong?" or "Did someone else do something wrong," try to re-frame to ask yourself **"What can I learn from this?"**

> You may be doing something that reflects the way you were taught or how you were treated. As standards change, your methodologies need to change too. If you are told you need to make modifications, that's not a condemnation of you or your skills - it's a gift to help you provide the teaching and care that are required and that you're more than capable of.

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1 BEFORE

When you know you will be entering a feedback conversation, help ground yourself with the following reflections

◆◆ Am I truly open to hearing critical feedback right now and if not, what do I need in order to be? (A breath, a walk, a pause, a better time, another person present?) If I know the feedback is going to occur even if I'm not ready to hear it, **what can I do to put myself in the best position to listen** anyway?

◆◆ **Am I in a growth mindset?** If not, how can I get there? Remember: feedback is not failure, feedback is learning. It's a gift.

◆◆ What will it mean for me if there is something **true and negative** in this feedback?

◆◆ What questions can I ask to **better understand** the feedback while **calming my defensive reactions?**

◆◆ How does **my body** usually respond to feedback? How can I ground myself and center my body to receive this feedback?

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2 DURING

While you're receiving feedback, try to
notice the following:

What **emotions** am I feeling right now? Am I feeling them in my body? My feelings are private and valid, and it's okay to feel them.

Breathe and **try to focus on listening and understanding.** I will have time to process my feelings afterwards. If I can't respond to the feedback in the moment, that's okay.

Take notes or otherwise keep a record of what is being shared in case my emotions end up clouding or distorting my memories.

Put the feedback into context. If I don't know, I can ask things like, "What does this mean for my career?" or "How do you think this will impact our relationship going forward?" I shouldn't assume the worst.

It's okay to ask questions but not if they come from a defensive place or seem like you're interrogating the person. It's okay to ask for clarification or specific examples, or ask for specific ideas about how the issue can be resolved.

What is this feedback really about? My performance? My communication? My behavior? It's not a sole judgement of me as a human or my character.

After the feedback conversation is over, try ask yourself or do the following:

What support do I need to process, reflect, and act on this feedback?

If I'm feeling upset, I can take a walk or do something else that typically helps me dispel energy and **recenter myself.**

Don't overgeneralize. If the feedback was that it's not helpful to students' learning when I interrupt presentations, I shouldn't assume I can never correct students presentations. It simply means "correct without interrupting."

Brainstorm process enhancements that might **prevent future situations.** If students often present incorrectly, I can build in breaks for the student to stop and ask for corrections before proceeding. This will allow me to give timely and accurate information without interrupting.

If I'm unsure how to incorporate the feedback, I can **ask trusted friends, peers, and mentors** to help me. They will have more emotional distance, so they may be able to help me brainstorm.

I can **circle back** with the person who gave the feedback later to check in, ask clarifying questions, and brainstorm solutions.

Don't catastrophize. This feedback is likely not career-ending.

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What if the feedback seems wrong?

➡️ Speak with trusted mentors and peers - not just friends who will always side with you. Ask for their objective thoughts. They may need time to gather their thoughts.

➡️ Look for patterns. Is this feedback similar to things you've heard in the past? Does this feel like it's coming from out of the blue?

➡️ If the feedback is feeling inaccurate or inappropriate, try to determine if there is an "intent vs impact" mismatch. You can check out the **Intent vs. Impact** toolkit to learn more.

> Try to clarify misunderstood intentions

> Try to own impact even when the intent was good

Identity and Power

➡️ Feedback can feel different depending upon who gives it, how it's given, and whether our identities and roles seem to have been part of a missing context. It's okay to acknowledge this.

> Take time to process

> Ask clarifying questions if needed

> Speak to a trusted person to get their perspective