

A S S E M B L Y

H A N D L I N G
F E E D B A C K

HANDLING FEEDBACK

Welcome to your worksheets for HANDLING FEEDBACK.

At least that's what I've called it.

What I really want to dig into through these worksheets is how we can build a new way of looking at feedback that is wise and centred.

I want you to scan back in your mind to a time when you received some tough feedback; maybe something that was said to you in a work, hobby or education context that has lingered with you and become a belief you now have about yourself.

I can vividly remember being 21 and living on my own in London. I was finishing up my youth work degree and my placement mentor had me over for dinner. After dinner we sat in her living room and she pulled out a piece of paper with a list of things she wanted to feed back to me about how poorly I was doing. She told me:

- ***You are struggling to manage your money***
- ***You are struggling to focus on your uni work***
- ***You are struggling with pulling your weight in the centre.***
- ***You are struggling with humility.***

OH. MY.

I was absolutely floored. And devastated. And humiliated.

I was 21. At Uni. In placement. In London. Away from my family in Canada. Um, YEAH! Of course I was struggling with all of those things! Yeesh. It stung so hard and I was so overwhelmed by the casual setting and the heavy 'pulling in'. The feedback was so hard to hear and for many years after, I heard that feedback ring over me in every other role I had.

"Am I sucking with money?" "Am I pulling my weight here?" "Am I being cocky?" "Does everyone else think this about me...?"

What was one persons observation into a period of my life actually became a new set of beliefs about myself. And with that set of beliefs came behaviours that I used to try and counteract them or manage them.

People pleasing, staying quiet more, overdelivering, burning out quickly, sacrificing myself to the cause, frugality to the point of punishment.

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Does this ring any bells? Can you think of a time in your life or career that you have received feedback and it has become a belief?

I want us to collectively start to shed some of these beliefs together – because it's important that we as women begin to understand what feedback is, when it's important, how we interpret it and how we can use it in the service of our own callings or aspirations rather than have it silence us or stop us from doing the things we would really love to do.

The idea isn't to fob off or be cold and robotic towards criticism – shutting ourselves down. That's totally inhumane, impossible and unfair. We cannot deny the part of ourselves that wants to be seen, to be acknowledged, to matter to other people. We should honour that part of ourselves that desires respect and appreciation. And that is why it's imperative that we begin to speak a new language and develop a new set of behaviours around feedback, praise and criticism.

There are 5 things that I want to highlight as key to interpreting and using feedback:

1) IT REALLY MATTERS WHO YOU ASK.

Not everyone is important to get feedback from and our expectations around this are everything. The most important people to get feedback from are people who are connected to the success of your work - customers, clients, stakeholders, etc. If we are asking our close family members for feedback on something they have no interest, knowledge or stakes in, we are doomed!

Can you think of a time when you have asked the wrong person for feedback on something that was really important to you and you were hugely disappointed or deflated? What would it have meant to ask someone more integral to the idea or work?

2. YOU GET TO DECIDE IF THE FEEDBACK MATTERS, OR HOW YOU INTERPRET IT.

So much of this process of re-understanding feedback is about cultivating wisdom around what feedback is actually important to take on board. Something Tara Mohr talks about a lot in *Playing Big* is the idea that "feedback only ever tells you about the person giving the feedback, it doesn't tell you anything true about the work itself". I love this, because it then gives me the freedom and autonomy to decide if the feedback is important for me to consider.

I want you to look up your favourite book from your favourite author on Amazon and read the 5* reviews and also read the 1* reviews. You will find both, but neither of them tell you anything true about how good the work of the author is. It only tells you about the person giving the feedback.

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3) IT'S PERFECTLY OK NOT TO ASK FOR FEEDBACK.

There are times where it is totally irrelevant to ask for feedback. Sometimes what is important for us is to run with our intuition or our gut and not get sucked into the opinions of others. Often what happens is that asking for feedback in those highly intuitive times can halt our traction and we can lose momentum. If your gut is speaking to you about doing something - keep at it. There may be a time for feedback down the road, but when your intuition is leading you - be led.

Can you recall a time when you have felt really in your flow and you have found yourself halted by someone else's feedback - either asked for or not?

4) WOMEN ARE MORE ATTUNED TO FEEDBACK

As women we are highly switched on to other more subtle types of cues (body language, facial expressions, tone etc) and so when we are getting feedback, we are taking in the entire situation and person - not just the words. It's not surprising then that feedback often comes far more loaded for women than it does for men. We also tend to laser focus in on feedback and dwell on it longer. This comes from likability being the only currency for women before we had any rights or access to our own finance or laws that protected our safety. We relied on being liked to get us by, so any threat to our likability may still feel very viscerally painful or scary for us - including feedback.

What is your experience of likability? Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you have had a visceral reaction to negative feedback given to you because it jeopardised your likability?

5) THERE IS NO ESCAPING FEEDBACK.

If you want to do something that sets you apart or is your truest, most important work - it will always be met with both praise and criticism. There is no escaping it, so we need to get super comfortable with how to handle it in a way that is wise and respectful towards ourselves.