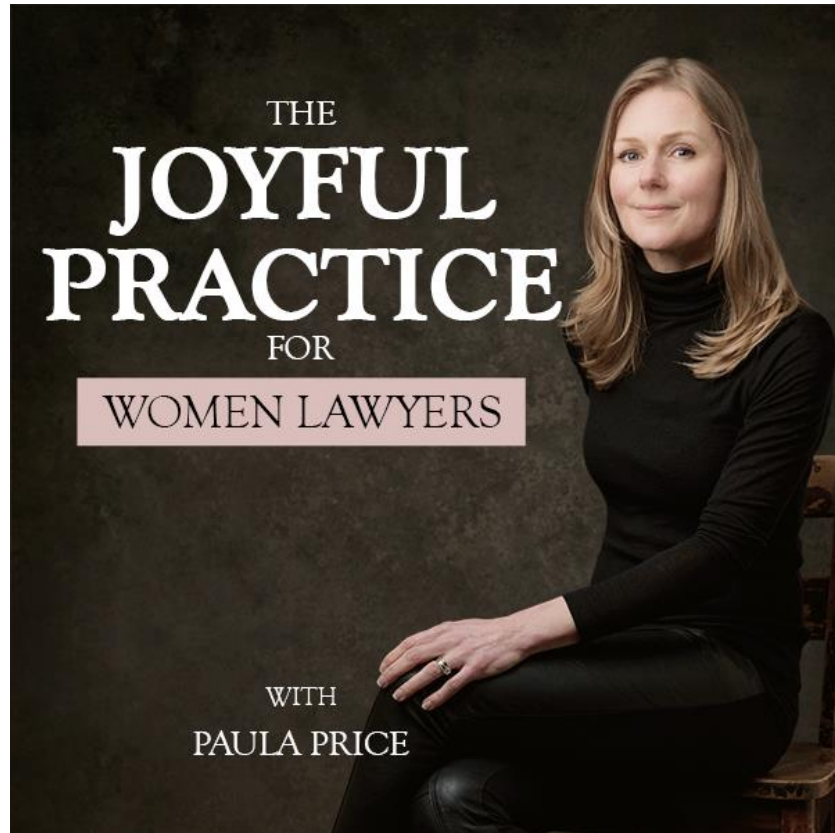# Ep #41: The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Paula Price

Ep #41: The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback

You're listening to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast episode number 41.

Welcome to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast. I'm your host Paula Price, lawyer turned certified executive coach. This podcast was created to empower women lawyers just like you to create a life and practice you love. Join me every week for a break from the hustle so we can focus on you, what you truly want, and how you can create it.

If you're over the overwhelm, done with putting out fires, and ready to create a life and practice that brings you more joy, you're in the right place. Ready for today's episode? Let's dive in.

Hello my friends. Welcome back to the podcast. I am so excited to have you here this week. Thank you so much for joining me. As always, I love connecting with you. This week I am delighted to be speaking with you all about feedback. Feedback is something that I think is a little bit underrated. I don't think we talk about it enough. I think we also particularly in this pandemic like existence that we're in, I think we can also sometimes not be receiving enough feedback.

This thought came to mind over the weekend. I visited with a friend of mine. She's not a lawyer. She's another type of professional. She was telling me about a performance review that she had recently at work. It had been a while since she'd been reviewed. She's relatively senior within her organization. When she was talking about the feedback, she was like, "You know, this woman who was giving me feedback started saying all these amazing things. Wow, it felt so good."

I thought yes, it does feel really great when someone gives us feedback and it's positive and it's constructive and it helps us. There is a magical feeling that comes along with that feedback. So that's part of what we're going to talk about today. I also really just wanted to dive in and talk about

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feedback. I want to talk about what feedback is. I'm going to share with you three things that you may not already know about feedback.

I'm also going to offer some practical strategies for when it comes time to giving and receiving feedback. That's something that I think we can all turn our mind to. Something that we can all improve on continuously. I think you're really going to enjoy today's episode. So let's get started.

First of all, why feedback? For most of us, this is not something that we were taught in school. I don't remember receiving a course of the option of a course in law school that was how to give and receive feedback. Yet it is enormously helpful when you understand feedback and how you can work with it. How you can receive it, how you can give it, and perhaps most importantly for your own personal growth at least is how to use feedback.

Once we have this discussion, what I'm hoping for you is that you'll start to see opportunities in your day to day practice, even in your personal life where there are opportunities for feedback that you can leverage. So as we go through the episode, as always I invite you to think about what's going on in your life right now. Think about how the tools and the concepts that we're talking about here are applicable for you because that's really where you're gonna get the most benefit from listening to this episode.

So why is it that feedback is such a wonderful tool and yet one that is not fully used to all of it's advantage? I think the number one reason is probably just that we're busy, right. You've got a busy practice. You've got a long to-do list. You've got emails to respond to. Maybe you've got kids that you need to pick up after school.

When it comes to feedback, it just never really makes the cut, right. We talked about those quadrants, Stephen Covey's quadrants. There's urgent and important. There's urgent and not important. There's important but not

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urgent, and not urgent and not important. Of course we go to that quadrant of not urgent but important, and to me feedback falls into that category.

So we're too busy to really spend the time focused on feedback. So that's one of the reasons that we're not really leveraging it in our day to day. It also is because we're not really trained, and we don't understand how to use feedback, right. Maybe what your version of feedback is is a performance review that you have once every six months, once a year. Maybe your review is really in depth and engaging and you find that you get a lot of benefit out of it.

Maybe you have a review and you feel like people are really just ticking the boxes, giving you a pat on the back, and saying keep going. You leave your performance review without really knowing what to work on or how you're going to improve or what you're excelling at even for that matter.

So it could be that your views of feedback is that maybe it's not something that's super helpful to you. That just really hasn't been your experience of it. It may also be that there is no feedback, right. Sometimes you work in an environment where there's very little feedback, and the feedback that you receive might be a little bit cryptic.

I remember when I was in practice some feedback I would get would be looks good, send it to the client. That was usually a sign that whatever it was that I had done was good enough. That it didn't require further revision, but I never really knew what about it was appealing to the person that was revising it. Maybe a client gives you feedback. It's like hey, thanks for your help on this. Maybe it's specific. Maybe it's not. We don't always know what to make of the feedback.

Another reason why feedback isn't really part of our day to day is cultural, right. I mean I think going and asking for feedback can sometimes feel really awkward. I know I used to feel very awkward asking for feedback. As

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a coach, I now ask for feedback whenever I work with a client. It's one of the first conversations I have with them is how can I serve you? What's going to be helpful to you? Because everybody's going to find something that is going to be helpful for them in their unique situation.

If I'm working on a project with somebody, I may ask them ahead of time what is going to be a success for you? I guess that's not so much feedback, but it leaves the groundwork for the feedback, right. If what I'm trying to do is going to be a success in the eyes of the person that I'm creating it for, that in itself would lend itself to the type of feedback that I would hope to elicit, which would be generally positive.

So what do we do in terms of feedback? Well, I think it's something that we sort of just don't even really address on the day to day. Feedback may feel like there's either too much of it. Maybe you're in the middle of a review and somebody's giving you some really tough feedback and it feels overwhelming. And now what are you going to do with it? Maybe you feel like there's a complete dearth of feedback. There's no feedback at all, and you don't even know what other people are considering of your performance. You may feel a bit lost. Are you on the right track?

It may also be that when you receive difficult feedback or no feedback at all that you don't really know how to deal with it. It may be that you're in one of those situations where maybe you're in front of a judge and they don't quite love what you have to say. They're asking you questions, and you're feeling put on the spot. In a situation like that, it might help to have some tools to figure out what to make of it. It could also be that because you don't see the value in it, you don't necessarily go looking for it.

As a result, what I think happens is that we miss out on opportunities to grow. We could be getting so much more out of feedback if we understood it better and had tools to actually use it. That is why we're talking about feedback today. What we're going to talk about is number one, what it is.

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We're going to share, I just mentioned this. Sorry I'm repeating myself, but three things that you may not know about feedback. Then finally practical ways to leverage feedback going forward.

So first of all, let's start with the definition of feedback. For the definition of feedback, I turned to my trusty online Merriam-Webster dictionary. Here's what the dictionary had to say. Feedback is the transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event, or process to the original or controlling source.

So what does this mean? Well, it sounds like the transmission of information that may either be evaluative. So telling someone in this case how they did corrective. So maybe this is contrastive feedback. It's going back to the person who is the source of the action. So that's a pretty technical definition. What I would invite you to do is think about what feedback looks like for you in particular.

If you work in a law firm or another organization, feedback might be what we talked about earlier. Maybe it's that performance review where the feedback is collected and then shared with you. Or maybe it's something a little bit less formal. Maybe you wrote a draft of an argument and you handed it to a colleague to look at for you. They've sent it back to you, and they've got markups on it.

Maybe it's comments that you receive from clients that you work with or a judge that you spoke in front of. Maybe it's feedback that comes from a colleague who saw you speak and wanted to offer their views on how that came across to them.

It may also be that feedback is unspoken. So sometimes there is feedback in the sense of you work a lot with one particular individual, and then all of a sudden you find that that person is no longer reaching out to you. It could be nothing. So I don't want to go planting gremlins inside your head. That's

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definitely not my intention, but sometimes we give feedback by pulling away. You may do this with others, and others may do this with you. So that's another source of feedback.

In terms of who is giving you feedback in a professional environment, it may be your clients who are giving you feedback. It may be your colleagues. It may be management who are giving you feedback. It may be your friends who are giving you feedback. It may be a mentor. It may be a principal. It could be all sorts of people who are giving you feedback in your professional environment.

I would also offer that you are giving yourself feedback. You are responsible or you are certainly a part of the internal dialogue that is going on within your mind throughout the day. So you are effectively giving yourself feedback on everything that you're doing, and you're also interpreting the feedback.

So we'll talk about this in a minute, but all the feedback that comes to you is being filtered through your own lens and processed through the framework that you use to deal with information. So I would invite you to be mindful of that as we're going through today's podcast episode and as we talk about feedback generally. That we often associate feedback with something that comes from an external source.

For the purpose of today and for the purpose of seeking out feedback in your professional life, in your personal life, I would invite you to ask for that feedback from yourself. Believe it or not, you are a pretty good source of feedback. You'll learn more about why that is as we talk about the next part of this podcast episode, which is three things you may not already know about feedback.

Now before I dive in, I just wanted to point your attention to an article in the Harvard Business Review magazine. It came out in March/April 2019. It is a

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fabulous article. It's called *The Feedback Fallacy*. It's written by Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall. It is a relatively short article. It is such a beautiful compilation of some really interesting concepts all woven into the rubric of feedback.

The punchline here is why feedback typically doesn't work. I think what they're talking about here is that notion of constructive criticism in particular. There's a lot that we can take from this article and apply to our professional lives. So I just wanted to point out that source because a lot of the information I'm going to talk about here can be traced back to that article.

So number one, the first thing that you may not know about feedback is that feedback comes with a bias. This we may know intuitively. This may be something that is very obvious to you, but what is interesting about this particular article is that it highlights just how imperfect the feedback is that comes from other individuals or from any individuals because all of us are seeing the world through our own particular lens.

We have our own biases whether they're conscious or unconscious. We have our own views of how we see the world, and that is reflected in the way that we give feedback and the feedback that we give. That bias is something that can't be trained out of you. So we all have it. We can't dispose of it.

What that means is that whenever you give feedback to somebody or whenever you receive feedback, it says more about the person. I think the number that was given in the article is more than 50%. More than half of your rating of someone else reflects your characteristics, not theirs. Which is a super interesting fact to take into account next time somebody is giving their opinion good or bad.

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You see this. If you haven't seen anecdotal examples already, which I'm sure you have, you might think of the example of tipping, right. There are some individuals who are regardless of the service that they get at a restaurant, at a coffee shop or wherever the tip jar or the tip prompt on your credit card payment shows up, they're going to tip at the highest level. Because that is their personal view of how they tip. The degree of service that they receive from the other end may influence that number by some degree. However, I think that the performance is less of an indicator of how much that person will tip than their own views on tipping.

So you might notice that with feedback or even with individuals in your life. You might notice that certain friends or relatives have a discourse that seems to repeat itself, right. You may find that a lawyer that you work with has an ongoing narrative in relation to contractors maybe that you're retaining to help with on files that always seems to sounds the same. So I'd invite you to start looking for that and to start noticing that in yourself as well. That there is a bias, and that effects the feedback that you're giving.

It kind of depends, well it does depend on the feedback that you're giving, right. If you're giving feedback on a math problem, for example. If two plus two is four or maybe you're doing more complicated math than that, but where there is a distinctly correct answer. Where there is a process that must be followed in order for the result to flow from that process.

Then feedback may be less biased, right. It may not carry the same unconscious bias or the same distortion that I'm talking here because there's something that is truly objective to measure against. For many things like performance, speaking, business efficacy, those areas where there's an element of greater subjectivity is more influenced by the person who is giving the feedback.

I'll just read a portion of what was said in this article. So here's one quote is, "Humans are unreliable raters of other humans, particularly when it

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comes to abstract qualities like business acumen and public speaking." The conclusion of all of this which I think is fascinating is in other words, the research shows that feedback is more distortion than truth. So it's super fascinating.

Now with this I want to add a caveat that I'm not saying that feedback is irrelevant and that you should ignore it, especially if the person who'd giving you feedback is your boss or you favorite client or somebody who you want to maintain a relationship with. Their feedback is their view. So we want to be respectful of that. Their feedback may be determinative of whether or not you continue to work with that person because they may want things done a certain way.

What I think is important here is to distinguish yourself from the truth of the feedback. So if somebody gives you feedback that's difficult to hear then just be mindful that that is that person's opinion. That is that person's feedback. Not everybody will share that feedback. So what you make that feedback mean about yourself needs to take into account that that feedback is inherently tailored, if you will, to the person who gave that feedback to you.

One more thing I would like to highlight before we move onto the second thing about feedback you may not already know is that you are an excellent source of feedback for yourself. Your own feedback that you give yourself will be distorted with your own biases and unconscious beliefs. So I just want you to bear that in mind.

Going back to that internal narrative, I did a podcast episode called How to Be Your Own Best Boss. In that episode, I talk a lot about that internal narrative and how to really shore yourself up as opposed to tearing yourself down. Again, when you hear yourself and you're giving yourself that feedback, some it's positive. Some of it's negative.

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Be mindful of what it is that you're saying. Because sometimes you may be giving yourself distorted feedback. If that's the case then you may want to work on recognizing that and learning how to process that in a way that is more effective for you. So that was number one. Feedback itself comes with a bias.

Now the second thing that you may not already know about feedback is that criticism inhibits the brain's ability to learn. So we've talked about this before on the podcast that the ability for your mind to work properly can be impaired by receiving or being in the process of dealing with negative emotion. In terms of how you learn, and the article did a beautiful job of laying this out, in terms of how you learn, you learn where you're already strongest.

So if you look at your brain and the concentration of neural connections, you're going to grow where you're already strong. An analogy used is that rather than growing new branches, learning is really about growing new buds on existing branches. So that's a really interesting place to start is that you're going to grow where you're already strongest, which will lead into the next section which is really about building on your strengths.

The second thing I wanted to highlight here is that when you receive negative feedback, it has an impact on you at a neurological and physiological level which impairs your ability to learn. So there was a group of students. They were broken into two separate groups. For one group of students, they were basically asked to think about things that they hadn't done, weaknesses, things that they weren't very good at.

What they found among that group of students is that that triggered a sympathetic nervous response. This is also known more commonly as the fight or flight reaction. In that situation, what happens is your brain and your body focus on survival. So learning basically is smothered because the strong negative emotion is that is produced by criticism inhibits access to

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existing neural circuits and invokes cognitive, emotional, and perceptual impairment. In other words, your body starts to shut down on anything that is not essential for survival, which limits your capacity to learn.

Now I wanted to offer a little anecdote here which I think is kind of cute. My nine year old son was telling me the other day about something that he does when her realizes he's about to get a lecture. Without revealing too many of the offenders, I will volunteer myself as one of the culprits who may lecture or otherwise go on at length. So my son was telling me, "When I see it coming, I switch my brain into daydream mode."

So he literally will shut off, which I think is fabulous. Because if I had that ability or if I had that idea, maybe I'll try it next time somebody comes at me with some negative criticism, then I could probably spare my neural circuitry a bit of pain and trouble by just thinking about something completely different.

That's not how I'm wired. It may not be how you're wired. If you're wired to sit there and take in that negative criticism whether it comes from somebody else or even if it comes from yourself then realize the impact that it's having on you, right. That's actually effecting your ability to learn, and it's effecting your circuitry. You're now in fight or flight.

Now if you are paying attention to strengths, interestingly this will have the opposite effect. So one group of students was basically told to think about these negative things. Another group of students was asked to think about positive things. So they were coached on thinking about what they're good and focusing on their dreams.

What they found in that group of students is that their parasympathetic nervous system was actually engaged. That is also known as the rest and digest state of being. In that state, there was the stimulation in the growth of new neurons, better immune system function, and cognitive emotional

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and perceptual openness. In other words, that more positive state catalyzed learning.

This may seem counterintuitive to you if you're one of those people who believed that beating yourself up or pushing yourself or being harsh on yourself or on others would illicit better performance. In fact, it looks like it is the opposite that will truly enhance performance.

Here I also mention this notion of appreciative inquiry. It's something that I've talked about before on the podcast. It's something that I learned about in my coach training, which was so interesting. It's basically a way of growing systems. It's a counter point to the problem solving method. So if you're looking at an organizational system and you're fixated on a problem and all your focus goes into solving that one problem them you may fix the problem, but what you miss out on is the opportunity for growth.

So in the appreciative inquiry model, rather than focus on fixing an existing problem, the process is turned around. It's looking at what is working in a system, and then asking questions about how you can build on those systems to create something greater. I'm going to come back to that, but it's a really neat concept. If you're not familiar with it, I encourage you to look it up. Just invite yourself to think about how you might apply that thinking in your practice.

As a lawyer when I was in practice, I did a lot of problem solving. I was never really aware of this other way of viewing the world. I may have done it at an unconscious level, but isn't it fun to learn a new tool that you can use to problem solve or appreciatively inquire. I don't know. Is that what you would call it? To turn a problem on it's head. Instead of focusing on what's not working, focus on what is and how you can grow.

So I promised you three things about feedback. So we've talked about the bias of the source. We have talked about the fact that negative feedback

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actually inhibits growth. The third piece is that excellence is unique to the individual.

So, again, this is something that was born out of the research done in support of the article that I mentioned. I talked about this a little bit last week when discussing confidence in the context of what excellence looks like in the individual. If you haven't listened to that episode, I would encourage you to go back. It's episode number 40. It's all about what to do, how to excel when you don't feel confident yet.

One of the examples that I gave when it came to excellence was the distinction between Michael Jackson and Pavarotti. They're both singers, and yet they are so different. Sorry, I should have said they're both excellent singers. They are so different.

So you can imagine if you're Pavarotti and someone tells you that you need to dance and sing like Michael Jackson and vice versa. If you're Michael Jackson and somebody says that you need to move and sing like Pavarotti, they're really going to struggle to do that. They can't meet that other person's objective criteria of excellence or their markers of excellence. It's not innate to them.

So what this article is saying is that each of us is programed with our own unique strengths and our own innate ability to be excellent. So excellence isn't achieved by setting out a standard checklist and asking people to measure up to it. I mean it may be good guidance, but it's not going to foster the development of true excellence.

I'll read another quote from this article which I just love. Here it goes. "Excellence seems to be inextricably and wonderfully intertwined with whoever demonstrates it. Each person's version of it is uniquely shaped and is an expression of that person's individuality, which means that for

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each of us, excellence is easy in that it is a natural, fluid, and intelligent expression of our best extremes. It can be cultivated, but it's unforced."

So what that means is that your version of excellence, and I would invite you to think about what you are excellent at, what you do better than anybody else. Your version of excellence is unique to you, and the best way to develop it is to lean into it and to build on it. The best part too, it just keeps getting better and better, is that it's easy. It's relatively easy for you to excel in your own way.

So with that in mind, I would invite you to move us on or I guess I'm inviting us to move to the next section, which is okay. This is really great. This is really interesting Paula. I've learned all these fun things about feedback, but how does this actually apply in my day to day practice? So let's do that now. I've got six tips. I'm gonna try to move through them fairly quickly, but I think these will really help. So let me turn to those now.

Okay so number one is to pay attention to positive feedback. We just learned all of these really wonderful things about how positive feedback encourages growth, it expands your mind, all of these wonderful things. So if you haven't been doing this already, I would invite you and encourage you to listen to what others say about you. Listen specifically to what they say about you.

Are they saying that you're an excellent writer? Are they saying that you're really good on your feet? Are they saying that you're really gifted at handling difficult clients? What is it that they're saying? Starting paying attention to what they say about you because chances are they're giving you clues as to what some of your unique zones of genius are.

Now on the flipside, I would also start paying attention to what you say to others. Now for all the parents who are listening, I use this a lot with my kids. It's a work in progress, but it does work. Also skipping ahead to the

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next one, I also use it with myself. When you see behavior, now I'm thinking of children. I don't know that your clients necessarily behave.

When you see conduct or performance in others whether it's a colleague, whether it's a client, whether it is your child. When you see somebody else doing something that is truly excellent in your eyes, I would invite you to point that out. Because that may be something that they're not fully aware of. This may come going back to this quote that I read out earlier, it may be really easy for them to do that. So they don't necessarily value that as a skill. When you point that out to them, then they might start to see that in themselves and how that is something that is valuable and a way in which they can excel.

Finally when it comes to paying attention to positive feedback, I would invite you to start giving yourself some positive feedback and to paying attention to that, right. That internal dialogue that's going on, let's make sure that there's some really great feedback come up. Because what you might realize is that you can learn a lot from the internal narrative that is going on within your own mind.

So where you feel like you did a particularly great job, maybe it was a piece of written work. Maybe it was a presentation that you gave. What is it that you enjoyed about it? Even situations where you just feel good. You might start asking yourself what it was about that particular piece of work, that particular performance, whatever it was that you did that felt good. Then analyze that. Because chances are you're going to start identifying the clues to your own excellence. I know. Sounds really fun. It is, trust me.

So step number two is to adopt an appreciative inquiry approach. So I mentioned this a minute ago. The difference between being a problem solver and being one who practices appreciative inquiry. Let's use as an example speaking. Let's say that you have to give a speech. You're worried because you stutter, but you also know that you have a gift for storytelling.

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From the framework of problem solving, you might be fixated on your stutter, right. From the appreciative inquiry perspective, you might be interested in building on your story telling ability to that you're so captivating that nobody even notices the stutter. So if you're problem solving, you might look at the cause, right. Why am I stuttering? You might get all into that versus appreciative inquiry where you might say how do I appreciate what is working? So what is it about these stories that are compelling? How is working?

Another thing that you might explore is blame and division. So from problem solving, you might be looking at who's fault is this, right? Maybe it was that grade three teacher you had who told you you are terribly at public speaking, and now anytime you go in front of a group you start to stutter, right. Blame, there. Or maybe in the case of appreciative inquiry, you take ownership and collaboration. So maybe it's how can I work with others to develop stories that are even more compelling or that speak particularly to the group that I'm about to speak to?

A third example is from the problem solving approach analysis of possible solutions. So here maybe you're really fixated on stuttering. Okay well what have other people done to stop stuttering? Maybe you run your presentation a few times with, I don't know, marbles in your mouth, whatever it is you might do to stop stuttering. So you can fix the stuttering, but you're not building anything else, right. You're just excising that one problem.

Versus if you are taking the appreciative inquiry approach envision what might be is part of the exercise. So how amazing could this presentation be if I was able to weave in story telling to bring it to life, to really connect with my audience.

So that's just an example of problem solving versus appreciative inquiry. I would invite you to look at a problem that you're having or a system or even

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something that is personal to you where there's a problem, but then there's also this counterpoint and how those two different analysis lead you to different outcomes. That was number two.

Number three is to be strategic in eliciting feedback. So feedback, again, I think it's a topic that we don't really spend enough time thinking about or talking about. So I'm going to give you a few pointers here for the next time you're dealing with feedback. The first is to set the goal ahead of time, and then asses it in relation to those goals.

So for example, I mentioned that if I'm working with somebody on a project then I ask them ahead of time what they want for that project. Because that gives us a goal to work on when we are then evaluating our project and our performance on the project.

If you are working on something in particular for somebody else, you may think about what kind of feedback am I seeking? What is it about this project? What do I need to note from them in order to be able to assess the feedback, assess the progress?

So the second is to be granular. Now this, again, kind of goes along with that idea. What is it that you want feedback on? So let's say that you're giving that presentation and you want feedback on how many times you stuttered, and you want feedback on how compelling your stories were, right? You might think of a list of questions for the person who you're going to ask feedback from so that they aren't kind of left with this very loose open ended question like how did it go? Right? How did it go?

Well, they will tell you what they think, but they may not be guided. They may not be looking at the same criteria that you're looking at. So give them some specific markers, right. Did I intonate my stories properly? Did my stories have a compelling narrative? Did the story relate to the point that I

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was trying to make? Think of questions that you can ask that person and then you'll get their opinion based on those questions. It's really helpful.

Another tool that you can use is using a scale. So, for example, you might use a scale of one to ten where why don't you rate my stories? If you had to rate them on a scale of one to ten where one is terrible and ten is excellent, where would you put me? If that person provides a number, maybe it's a six. You can say fabulous. So what is it that got me to a six? They will tell you. Then the next part is what would have gotten me to a 10, right? What in their view would have gotten you to a 10?

Then finally if you are asking someone for feedback and you're giving them these relatively specific asks at the beginning, I would invite you to ask a general question. What am I missing here that you would like to share? Because they may have feedback that you never would have thought to ask for that can be extremely valuable.

Now I've just described these strategies in relation to feedback from somebody else, but you can also use this for somebody who is seeking feedback from you, right. You might say hey listen, I'm going to give you feedback on whatever it is that they've asked for feedback on, but can you set it up for me? Can you be specific in terms of the questions that you want to ask me. Maybe give them some guidance.

Finally maybe that feedback is coming from yourself. So maybe you're about to give a presentation. You give yourself a few criteria that you're going to work towards, which I recommend. I recommend having some goals for yourself because it gives you some focus during your presentation. Okay well if I'm focused on having a clear voice, intonating my words, being enthusiastic, whatever it is that is going to carry you through your presentation.

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Having those criteria in mind is going to be helpful to you in keeping your energies channeled on that as opposed to oh I hope I don't stutter. Right? Okay so that's the third set of pointers is be strategic.

So we've now said in terms of our practical strategies pay attention to positive feedback. Adopt an appreciative inquiry approach. Number three, be strategic in eliciting feedback. Number four, this one's important is learn how to deal with negative feedback.

So when it comes to dealing with negative feedback, you may be like my son and have the gift of switching on the daydreams. In which case, you tune it out completely, and that's your approach. Which I guess is maybe less painful, but I don't know that you're going to get the benefits that you could get if you actually tried to engage with that feedback.

So when it comes to receiving negative feedback, I think about how that might show up for you, right? It could be a number of things. Maybe it's a performance review and you've had some positive feedback, and then there's the part of the feedback that is negative and it may be difficult for you to hear. It may be that you made a mistake on a file or you said the wrong thing to the client or you missed a deadline or you did something and now you're receiving feedback on that.

It could also be that you lose something, right? I mean if you're a litigator, you may lose an application. You may lose a court case. That might feel terrible. So what I would invite you to do is when you do experience that negative feedback to really recognize in the moment that you are experiencing negative feedback.

Going back to that second thing that you may not know about feedback, the idea that constructive or I guess it's more criticism. That when you're experiencing that negative feedback that your body is going through a physiological response. That your ability to think is actually impaired.

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If this has ever happened to you, then you know exactly what I'm talking about. This has definitely happened to me where you are speaking and something happens. It's almost like your brain becomes myopic. It really shrinks. I've had that situation. I'm really struggling to find my words and figuring out what to say next. Allowing that wave, whatever it is, to pass so that I can then continue on in a more intelligible way.

So if you're there and you're receiving feedback, you may just be listening, right. In which case I would just encourage you to take in as much information as you possibly can, right. What is that person saying to you? Do you need to ask questions? Do you need clarification?

If you are one of those people who can really respond in the moment, then maybe you're going to respond in the moment and have something that you're comfortable sharing. If you're not one of those people, I know for myself if I'm really receiving feedback and I'm deep in thought about it, I don't always process it in the moment. I need time to reflect on it and to come back.

So my approach to this if I'm receiving negative feedback is to listen, to note, and then to allow myself the opportunity when I'm no longer in that conversation to think about it, right? So that might be what you do if that's helpful for you is to first of all, recognize that if you're feeling a certain way that that's totally normal. That that's your body's way of dealing with a perceived threat. Be curious. Take notes. If you are receiving negative feedback then the next step is to learn how to process it.

So that's step five is learning how to process feedback. I would invite you to process feedback whether it's good feedback or whether it's bad feedback. I say bad sort of just like that, but I don't know that bad is the right word because we can always learn from it. Good feedback, well it's feedback that makes you feel good. Let's put it that way. What can you learn from that? So I would ask yourself some questions.

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Next time you receive feedback positive or negative, you might ask yourself what happened. What did I do that was really great in that situation? What did I do that didn't work out so well? Ask yourself what you learned? So in a situation where things did not go the way that you had planned, chances are there are some learning opportunities there. Similarly if you're getting closer to your version of excellence, there might be some learning there as well.

How will you do it differently next time based on the feedback that you received? Again this is feedback maybe from somebody else. Maybe this is feedback that you're giving to yourself. How would you do it differently next time? How are you going to use that feedback in a way that is constructive?

Finally what changes do you need to make? So it may be that there are external changes that need adjusting. Maybe there is a flaw in the process or the system. It may also be a flaw in terms of the way you're thinking about a problem. So I would just invite you to think about what is it that you might need to change going forward.

So this processing feedback, again I've invited you to think about it from the perspective of somebody else giving you feedback, but think about it also in terms of what if you were the one giving the feedback? So what would that conversation look like? I mean if somebody that you were giving feedback to receive the feedback from you, you might then follow up that conversation with questions that are like that or similar, right.

Maybe it's okay so what happened here, right? What did you learn from that experience? What might you do differently next time? What changes do you think you need to make or what changes can I help you make? This doesn't have to be, in fact I would encourage it not to be a conversation where it's an attack on the person. These are questions that you can turn around and ask of somebody else that will help them process feedback.

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Of course this is equally applicable to the feedback that you give yourself. So if you're ruminating and you're thought spiraling and you keep having the same thought over and over and over. Or something happens and you are beating yourself up and you're giving yourself this feedback. This might be the process that you go through. You might sit down and ask yourself these questions in order to really understand what it is that's troubling you and how you want to move forward.

Number six, and this is how to give feedback, right. This is probably a pretty practical tool. What I would suggest here is number one to start with your mindset. I have this lovely story that came from an experience I had after attending a session actually about how to give feedback.

One of the lawyers that I was speaking with told me that she received recognition at her organization for being an excellent mentor. I asked her what she did to be such a great mentor. We were talking about one of the fact patterns that we were given in that exercise, which involved a young lawyer who really messed up on a file.

She said, "Well, what I would do is whenever I go into a conversation with a junior lawyer, I always imagine what things are going to look like in the end. My goal for these conversations is to help that lawyer develop and to preserve my relationship with that lawyer. So I approach my conversations with that objective or with those objectives in mind."

So I would invite you to think the same way. When you go into a conversation where you're going to deliver feedback, good or bad or both, think about what your overarching goals are and what mindset you would like to adopt in going into that conversation.

I would invite you to go to an earlier podcast episode that I recorded. It's called Elegant Approaches to Difficult Conversations. It's episode number

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15. It's all about getting into the right mindset for conversations that may be challenging. So that's number one.

Other suggestions for providing feedback is you might ask the person who you're giving feedback to where they would like to have feedback. What would they like to know about? Again, going back to what we discussed earlier, that can be really helpful to them. They may want to know, "Oh so how was my story? Did you catch me stuttering?" They may have something that's on their mind, and you get to the be the person that can give them feedback.

Now another tool that you might use is to ask them to self-evaluate. Now I never fully appreciated the value in self-evaluation before I became a coach. Whenever I would see that part of a self-evaluation on any form or I was asked to evaluate myself, I always thought it was a little bit silly and cue inner eye roll. That was me.

But now that I'm a coach and I have a different way of viewing the world, I think that self-reflection is probably one of the best forms of feedback that you can give yourself. Because when somebody else, again going back to the bias and the criteria that other people are evaluating, they may not be the same as what really matters to you.

So I would encourage you to ask others, right, to evaluate themselves. If you're evaluating yourself, take that exercise as seriously as you can because there are some really good lessons in there that you might learn about yourself. Here I would invite you to ask them what they think.

Now be careful when you do this because I've had this done to me before. Sometimes it can really feel like you're scolding a child. You know when you ask little Billy, "Now Billy, how do you feel about hitting your sister on the head with a baseball bat." Now this is not my son. His name isn't Billy.

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He's never done that to my daughter. It's almost like the question begs the answer, right? Seriously.

So when you are—and not that you would ever do this—but when you are asking the other person how they would view the situation, I would be really mindful of making sure that it's done in a delicate way so that the person doesn't feel like they're setting themselves up in a trap. I don't think this would ever be your intention, but I think that there is a risk there that if not done delicately, that may inadvertently be one of the feelings that might result from the person who is being asked.

Finally when you do provide feedback, I would invite you to use really specific language that describes your impression of what it is you appreciated or the constructive feedback that you have about their presentation. So there's two pieces here.

Number one is to be descriptive. So if you have somebody do a presentation and you're like, "That was a great presentation. Best I've ever seen." That might make them feel good, but what does that mean exactly? What was good about it? What did you like? Maybe that person will ask you. I think at this point, I probably would ask because I'd be curious to know. What did you like because I'll do more of it next time.

That sort of high level compliment might not really serve them. So you might say to them, "Well, noticed that you use stories really well in your presentation. I thought the timing of them was great. Just when you had passed your really dense part of the presentation where it was really technical and my brain was starting to hurt, you moved into a story. It lightened the mood. It was totally on point. It really solidified what you had just said. Then it gave us a little pause, a little break before we moved into the next one." Maybe that's the feedback you give.

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Then the person who gave the presentation now knows wow, okay. That story was really effective the way that I placed it. Awesome, I can do that next time. You're giving that person fuel to excel in their own way of excelling.

The other piece that you want to be mindful of is how you phrase it. So you might just pay attention to making your feedback based on your impression of what happened as opposed to fact. So you might say that is the best presentation ever versus that is the best presentation I've ever seen. So what you're doing is you're acknowledging that your opinion is your opinion, right. That you can't speak for the whole world that that was the best presentation that ever happened, but in your experience this is what it was.

So my friends, we've now talked about a few things here. We've defined feedback and I've asked you to think about what feedback means to you in your practice. We've talked about some of the things that you may not have already known about feedback, namely that it's biased. Maybe you knew that already. That negative feedback really does have a physiological and neurological impact on the person receiving it, and that excellence is unique to individuals and that it's easy for that person, which is wonderful.

We've also talked about how to make use of feedback. In other words, pay attention to positive feedback. Feedback that comes from others, that you give others, and that you receive from yourself. Adopt an appreciative inquiry as opposed to a problem solving approach. Be strategic in eliciting feedback. Learn to deal with negative feedback. So understand when you're receiving negative feedback, what's happening. Learn to process feedback and be intentional about how you give feedback.

So when you do these things and pay attention to feedback in this way, you will find success because you're not trying to criticize your way to success. There's a wonderful quote. "There is no happy ending to an unhappy journey." That's from Abraham Hicks. So you don't want to be miserable

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the whole way through. You want to have some levity there. You really want to focus on the positive, where your strengths are.

This may be different from what you're currently doing. But if you apply these things, if you start seeking out that feedback, if you start giving yourself that feedback, if you focus on what's really working and lean into your strengths, you will find that overtime you develop your own unique form of excellence.

To do this, you'll need to be intentional. This may not be second nature to you. So I'd invite you to be really mindful of feedback and where it shows up, how it shows up, and how you can leverage it. This may mean trying something new. You may need to start having conversations with others where you're asking them for feedback. You might start having to have those conversations internally.

Ask yourself what went well in a given conversation, what didn't go so well, how you might do things next time. Ultimately it's curiosity. Curiosity for creating something that maybe doesn't exist right now. To really move into a zone of genius that you haven't fully been developing. Not because there's anything wrong but just because it wasn't something that you were aware was available to you.

The results that you'll create, number one is I think you will find that you have a very different relationship with feedback. It won't be this ambiguous, amorphous thing that you don't really know how to use. It's a tool that you now have on a daily basis that you can use in whatever way is most convenient and productive for you.

You may find that your relationship with yourself is improved as you get to know yourself better, as you get to know your strengths and your weaknesses and how you want to grow, how you want to speak to yourself. You now have incentive to really be kind of yourself, right. You want to

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really leverage your ability to think and to think creatively. What you might find is that as you practice this, you open up to new possibilities, new creative ideas, and solutions instead of simply looking at where to fix problems.

So that, my friends, is today's episode. Thank you, again, for joining me. Speaking of feedback, I always love hearing from you. Just a quick shoutout to my nephew who gave me some really positive feedback on this podcast episode. I am so delighted to have him here tuning in every week. Thank you. For all of you who are listening, thank you for being here.

If you would like to provide feedback, I'd encourage you to rate and review the podcast. It helps other people find it. That would be fabulous. If you have questions for me or you want to reach out, send me an email. Connect with me on LinkedIn. I do work one-on-one with clients. If that's something you're interested in then by all means feel free to reach out. Thank you again. It's been a slice. I look forward to reconnecting with you next week. Bye for now.

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