



# *Receiving Feedback your very own gold dust*

Someone is giving you feedback. You don't know what to expect. Sometimes their feedback has touched on sensitive areas for you. In the past you have not always been able to hear and act on what they say to you. This time is different. You are curious. You anticipate the learning that will come from this for you and for them no matter what they say. You know that this is gold dust and the glow from this experience will ripple out into your work and your life. Imagine if you actively sought feedback to make sure you could be the best version of yourself and create the highest standard of work?

"Someone's feedback is their truth ... be curious"

## Background

Choosing to model receiving feedback was my choice of modelling topic on the NLP Master Practitioner training with Sue Knight. I started to notice a pattern of behaviour each time I received feedback from my peers or trainers. Whenever I received any feedback that was not entirely positive, I would feel judged, embarrassed, and criticised. I would withdraw from conversations, hold back from fully participating in activities and would shy away from volunteering for exercises and demonstrations. I also noticed that this pattern would occur after challenging conversations with my partner. I would often feel unworthy, as though I was a failure and not good enough.

After sharing my experiences of feedback with my peers and fellow trainees, it became apparent that others struggled in a similar way.

We can be taught how to give feedback but rarely are we taught how to receive it

## The benefits of receiving feedback openly

Receiving feedback openly and freely is beneficial because although it may be specific to a piece of work or a specific process or occasion, the learning can be

transferrable into other areas of your work and personal life. We cannot know everything and by being open to feedback can result in personal growth and for some a deeper transformation. Feedback is at the very heart of innovation without which the world would come to a standstill. Actively seeking feedback ensures development, innovation, and growth whether in a business context or personal.

## Outcomes for using this model

- ✚ You welcome feedback
- ✚ Every moment of feedback is an opportunity to learn and grow
- ✚ You confidently and actively seek feedback
- ✚ You are curious about the feedback you receive
- ✚ You ask questions to deepen your understanding
- ✚ You feel empowered to decide how you will use it
- ✚ You put your learning into action
- ✚ You grow in confidence in yourself and your sense of who you are

## The people I studied

I met with three people some of whom were students of NLP and some from in my work in higher education (University of Cumbria). The common threads in their strategies (initially not consciously known by them) were that they all remained calm and relaxed when in a situation where feedback was likely. Each applied a filter or process of some description as a means of self-protection. They were able to evaluate the usefulness of feedback in the moment. All were open to receiving feedback and open to learning and self-development.

Interestingly, the people I met said that our conversation had prompted them to reflect further on how they received, accepted, and used feedback. In most cases they were recalling past experiences, in terms of their physical response (raised heart rate, flushing etc.) and their emotional response i.e. feeling embarrassed, angry, indifferent, and so forth. All said that they would be more aware of how they received feedback in the future and would be keen to try a different strategy.

## The steps of the model

- ❖ Prepare yourself, step into the present feeling relaxed and at ease.
- ❖ Be present and focussed by clearing your mind to allow you to actively listen to what is being said and to notice how the feedback is being given to you.
- ❖ Observe the other person's body language. Be aware of your body language and find a position you are comfortable with which is open, receptive, and curious.
- ❖ Breathe steadily and relax your posture.

- ❖ Imagine creating an opening in your head and your heart to let in what is being offered to you (*Vic*)
- ❖ Be completely open to receiving feedback by visualising a time when you have achieved something positive or heard praise from someone (*Vic, Vir, Air*).
- ❖ Ask for examples of when you have done or said something.
- ❖ Choose to believe that the feedback is being given with a positive intent.
- ❖ Say to yourself '*I am open, I am free, I am safe*' (*Aic, Aid*)
- ❖ Acknowledge the feedback by thanking the giver. This is their truth.
- ❖ Ask questions (open and clean if possible) to clarify the feedback, what does it mean?
- ❖ Ask 'what would I be doing to show you that I have taken this feedback on board?'
- ❖ Thank the other person and let them know you appreciate that they have taken the time to share this feedback with you.
- ❖ Take time to reflect on the feedback and decide how you will embody it, and commit.

#### Key: Coding Strategy

Visual External	An image we see externally	Ve
Visual Internal Remembered	An image we see in our mind that we remember	Vir
Visual Internal Constructed	An image we create in our mind	Vi c
Auditory Internal Remembered	A sound we remember	Air
Auditory Internal Constructed	A sound we construct	Ai c
Auditory Internal Dialog	Inner dialog (talking to ourselves in our head)	Ai d
Kinaesthetic External	A feeling we physically experience	Ke
Kinaesthetic Internal	An emotion we feel	Ki

## Learning from Exemplars

Recognising my behaviour patterns led me to observe how other people received feedback. It was fascinating to watch others embrace feedback no matter how critical, it gave me hope that I too could learn to welcome feedback. I was keen to step into each of my exemplar's shoes and try out different ways to receive feedback which would support my personal and professional growth. I knew wholeheartedly that I wanted to make changes and I was excited by the prospect of learning something new.

"To listen and receive feedback no matter how it is given is a powerful example to the world"

## Sharing the model

I have shared the 'receiving feedback' model with countless students, colleagues, coaches and others with this feedback!

*'I had not thought about how I receive feedback, only how I give it. This has made a real difference to how I think about feedback'*

*'I'm going to use this more often so that I don't get defensive with my line manager'*

*'I always get worried when I have an appraisal, and this will really help me'*

*'In the past I got really fed up when my assignment was not up to scratch but this has helped me think about feedback differently. I am going to be more curious'*

I continue to model receiving feedback, amongst other things, and recently supported a master's degree student who had struggled with her studies and personal challenges. Despite these challenges she always sought out feedback regardless of how critical it might be. I admired her thirst for learning and self-development and her unwavering tenacity. She was fearless and determined. Her questioning and curiosity always ensured she got exactly what she needed to make positive changes to her work. I felt incredibly proud to attend her graduation and to celebrate her success. Through studying and modelling others we can recognise, understand, and embody excellence.

## A Journey of Self-discovery

I originally created the model for receiving feedback during the Covid pandemic in 2020. At that time, I was struggling with low self-esteem and confidence. I believed that feedback was to be avoided at all costs!

Once I had this model the effect on my work and my personal life was profound. I started to live freely letting go of the shackles I had held onto for such a long time. This has enriched my personal relationships and my effectiveness in my work.

To live freely without self-judgement and to believe that those around me wanted to see me succeed in life and love has been life changing.

Sarah Allison  
June 2024