Becoming a Resilient Scientist
SERIES

Workbook IV:
Developing Feedback Resilience

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**This workbook is intended to accompany *Becoming A Resilient Scientist*
Unit 4: Developing Feedback Resilience**

It is most effective when it is used after attending/watching the workshop lecture. The exercises in this workbook are designed to help you process and solidify what you've learned in the lecture and to provide you with additional resources. Although it is encouraged that you complete the exercises, it is not required.

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Part 1

COMMUNICATION STYLES

COMMUNICATION STYLES

WHAT IS MY APPROACH?

Communication style refers to the general approach that a person takes in communicating with others. It includes both **verbal and nonverbal** communications.

Below is a list of communication style descriptors generated by participants in a Feedback webinar. *In the left-hand columns, check any descriptors that may apply to you (column A). In the right-hand columns, mark those that apply to someone whose feedback matters to you, such as a PI, advisor, or mentor (column B).*

Person A:

Me	Communication Style Descriptors	A
	Direct	
	Proactive	
	Straightforward	
	Well-articulated	
	Upfront	
	Strong	
	Clear	
	Bold	
	Blunt	
	Abrupt	
	Demanding	
	Pointed	
	Micromanaging	
	Unashamed	
	Honest	
	Thoughtful	
	Careful	
	Specific	
	Detailed	
	Curated	
	Indirect	
	Diplomatic	
	Seeking to understand	
	Introspective	
	Understanding	
	Supportive	
	Empathetic	
	Encouraging	
	Sensitive	
	Open	
	Personable	
	Friendly	
	Mollifying	
	Overthought	
	Hesitant	
	Passive	
	Avoidant	
	Absent	
	Vague	

Person B:

Me	Communication Style Descriptors	B
	Useless	
	Ignorant	
	Silent	
	Shy	
	Reluctant	
	Short	
	Measured	
	Non-confrontational	
	Timid	
	Scared	
	Not confident	
	Guarded	
	Anxious	
	People-pleasing	
	Submissive	
	Sparse	
	Roundabout	
	Excessive	
	Confusing	
	Talkative	
	Verbose	
	Wordy	
	Repetitive	
	Rambling	
	Longwinded	
	Angry	
	Frustrated	
	Sarcastic	
	Passive-aggressive	
	Shames in public	
	Rude	
	Abrasive	
	Narcissistic	
	Hurtful	
	Insensitive	
	Condescending	
	Indirect	
Other:		
Other:		

REFLECTION   As you look at this list, what do you notice about yourself? What did you notice about your PI/boss/advisor?
What do you notice in comparing the two of you?

COMMUNICATION STYLES

FOUR WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION STYLES

The webinar discussed **four** particular workplace communication styles. They are based on two factors (both axes on the chart below):

1. **Responsiveness:** the degree to which one is perceived by others as attending to their needs in the interaction.
2. **Assertiveness:** the degree to which one is perceived by others as attempting to prevail and get one's way in the interaction.

Responsiveness ↑

AMIABLE/SUPPORTIVE	EXPRESSIVE/EMOTIVE
• Easily reaches out • Listens attentively • Uses warmth to connect • Avoids using power • Decisions are slow and people based	• Fast-paced and uses gestures • Takes initiative • Controls flow of a discussion • Has trouble listening / interrupts • Encourages informality • Shares emotions and feelings
ANALYTICAL/REFLECTIVE	**DRIVER/DIRECTIVE**
• Easily reaches out • Listens attentively • Uses warmth to connect • Avoids using power • Decisions are slow and people based	• Gets right to the point • Lacks outward emotion • Interrupts a lot; not a good listener • Likes to control agendas • Makes quick decisions

Assertiveness →

What is your **dominant** style(s)? _____

NOTE: You may notice that you are not just one style but have components of multiple style. We are all are multifaceted and complex.

Bolton, R. & Bolton, D.G. (1996). People styles at work. AMACOM Div American Mgmt Assn.

COMMUNICATION STYLES

COMMUNICATION STYLE EVALUATION

*What are some of the **strengths** and some of the challenges **(liabilities)** of my preferred or dominant communication style?*

Strengths	Liabilities

*When does my dominant or preferred style(s) **work well** for me?*

*When might my dominant style **pose challenges** for me?*

COMMUNICATION STYLES

MY PI & ME: THEIR STYLE & MINE

*My **dominant or preferred** communication style is: _____*
My PI (or another important person in my life)'s style is is: _____
*When does my dominant style work **well for me** in communicating with them?*
*When does it **not work so well** for me?*

*How might I **adjust/adapt** to the style of this PI?*
*What might I **ask them to adjust** to my more preferred style?*

*What would it be like to **have a conversation** with them about this?*
*What **might help me** talk to them?*

COMMUNICATION STYLES

COMMUNICATION STYLE & SOCIAL IDENTITY

Social identity(ies) may sometimes influence how communication styles are expressed and/or how they are **perceived** or **experienced**.

Social identities include race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, (dis)abilities, religion/religious beliefs/spirituality, social class/socioeconomic status, nationality/nation of origin/citizenship, age/generation, or any other identities dear to you.

REFLECT: *Might any of my social identities influence **how I perceive** or experience the communication style of my PI or a similar figure? If so, how?*

REFLECT: *Might any of my social identities influence **how others perceive** or experience my communication style? If so, in what ways?*

Part 2

FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK

*We need feedback to **grow and learn**.*
*We also need to **give feedback to others***
so they can grow and learn.

· ·

Reflect on a time when you received useful feedback, but you **didn't react well**. What happened?

Reflect on a time when you were providing a useful feedback, but **the other person didn't react well**. What happened? What did you tell yourself?

FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK PREFERENCES

The way that the feedback is delivered may influence how we respond to it.

I appreciate feedback that involves: *(Check all that apply)*
- ☐ Information about what I am doing well
- ☐ Information about where I could improve
- ☐ Information about how I have progressed
- ☐ Information about where I have progressed, AND where I still could improve
- ☐ Information about how I can improve in specific, relevant areas
- ☐ Accuracy and directness
- ☐ A warm and supportive delivery
- ☐ Letting me know where I stand, how I am doing, and why
- ☐ The giver's preferences about what I should do, when they differ from what I am currently doing
- ☐ Other: _____

I do not appreciate feedback that involves: *(Check all that apply)*
- ☐ Berates, criticizes, intimidates, embarrasses me
- ☐ Doesn't acknowledge areas of strength or progress made
- ☐ Is insensitive to my cultural or social identities
- ☐ Is harsh
- ☐ Is delivered in an angry or negative tone
- ☐ Is vague or lacks substance
- ☐ Is too focused on being warm and fuzzy
- ☐ Is ambiguous or lacks clarity
- ☐ Is inaccurate or untrue
- ☐ Is delivered at too fast a pace to process
- ☐ Is overwhelming or is too much to process at once
- ☐ Feeds my cognitive distortions
- ☐ Focuses on my identity or personal attributes rather than on my work and work performance
- ☐ Contains trigger words, such as _____
- ☐ Other: _____

Feedback **modalities that I respond best to** include: (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Written
- ☐ Verbal
- ☐ In-Person
- ☐ Virtual

- ☐ Formal
- ☐ Informal
- ☐ Multimodel
- ☐ Other: _____

FEEDBACK

Feedback occurs in **three dimensions**:

THE PAST	THE PRESENT	THE FUTURE
What **happened** to bring us to now?	What is going on **right now**?	What should I do **moving forward**?
Two components: *Data* & *Interpretation*	Triggers: *Emotions* *Physical sensations* *Distortions*	Two components: *Behavior change* & *Follow-up*
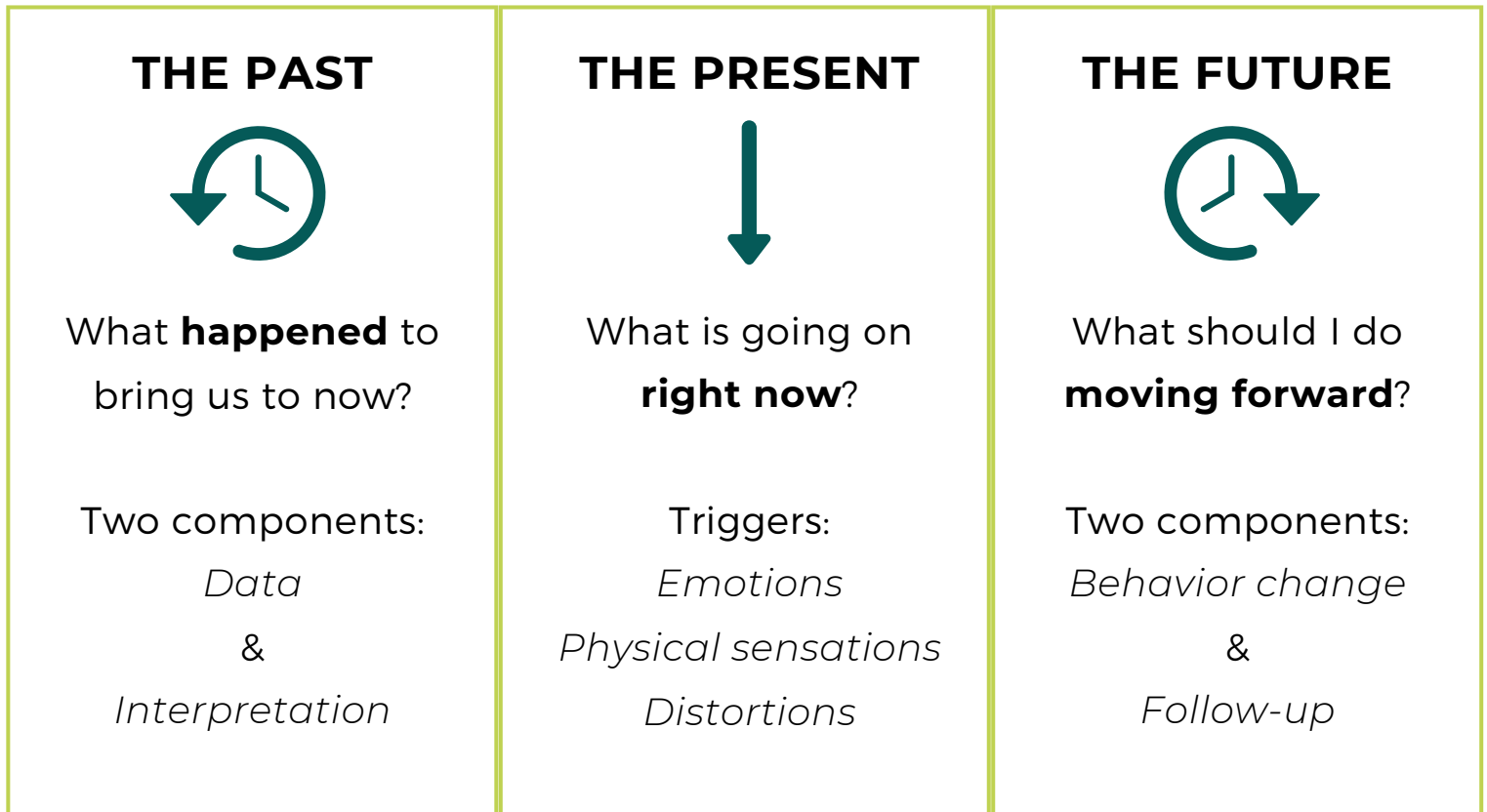
Focus on the present so you can **learn from the past** and eventually get to **discussing it in the future**

FEEDBACK

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE STRATEGIES

Understand the PAST	Stay in the PRESENT	Look to the FUTURE
Remember truths such as: • We are all works in progress • Like everyone else, I have strengths and areas of growth • This is not a reflection on my character, my values, or how the feedback provider feels about me • _____ Use active listening: • Pay attention to body language (yours and theirs) • Use eye contact and non-verbals • Paraphrase, summarize, and ask questions throughout • Respond with respect and curiosity • _____ Ask clarifying questions, if safe to do so, such as: • "I believe you said ___. Did I hear that correctly?" • "Could you please repeat that?" • "Could you provide examples?" • "What is another way that you would approach ___?" • Don't get caught up by gross over-statements or generalizations • _____ Provide context when appropriate: • If the feedback seems unfair or inaccurate • If you need to explain context to get more information • _____ • Offer apology, if warranted	Mentally prepare, if possible: • Reflect on who is providing the feedback (relationship, style...) • Remember your triggers and plan for mitigating them • Think of clarifying questions, active listening skills that you may want to exercise during the conversation • _____ Calm yourself: • It is normal to react when the feedback is hard to hear • Use calming/grounding techniques • Focus your breathing • Relax the tension in your body • Practice mindfulness strategies • Hold off on responding if you are angry or upset • Ask for more time if you need it • _____ Manage unhelpful thoughts: • Acknowledge and identify perfectionist self-talk and cognitive distortions – then set them aside • Focus on the value of the feedback and the content you are receiving • Remember how communication styles and personal contexts can impact how we perceive things • Avoid reading into things and making unwarranted assumptions • Avoid taking it personally • Try to find your curious self • _____ • Thank them for their feedback	Ask for suggestions to create behavioral change: • "I heard you say____. I'd love to get your thoughts on how to go about this?" • "I am reflecting on your comment about____ and was wondering if you had any suggestions for action?" • _____ • Offer suggestions for behavioral change: • Discuss the feedback process • Work together to strengthen the trust and flow between you and the feedback provider • _____ Request a follow-up meeting: • Find a date/time • Determine specific areas in which you would like detailed feedback • Use follow-up to help ensure that you are on track • Discuss roles (what, by who, when), if needed • _____ Create a personal plan of action • Base it on the feedback that was most useful and pressing • Remember to use a growth mindset (not a fixed mindset) • Accept that there are things you can't control

FEEDBACK

ATTRIBUTIONAL AMBIGUITY

Attributional ambiguity is *uncertainty* about whether the feedback you receive is based on your social identity/group membership, your personal ability, or something else.

Attributional ambiguity is, by definition, **impossible to prove or disprove** that discriminatory, prejudicial, or even sympathy-driven feedback has taken place. This leaves the feedback recipient unsure how to evaluate the feedback or whether it is effective to adjust their own behavior or performance in response.

Both givers and receivers of feedback can make intentional efforts to minimize the risk of attributional ambiguity and thus reduce the potential for harm to individuals, relationships, and outcomes. The reflections laid out below are a good place to begin when receiving feedback.

NOTE: A separate list of reflections related to giving feedback can be found later in this workbook (Part 5: Providing Feedback).

Reflection Questions:
- *Am I basing the feedback I receive on historical context, society, social identity and past experiences in other contexts more so than on this particular discussion?*
- *How does the language, content and tone of this feedback compare to my prior experiences with feedback that was more unambiguously stigmatizing, stereotyping, discriminatory, or sympathy-driven?*
- *Is the feedback clear, specific, and accompanied by concrete examples that are appropriate, relevant and accurate? Is it a valid response to my performance?*
- *Does the feedback, good and bad, align with my current performance needs?*
- *Are cognitive distortions or assumptions impacting my they way I receive this feedback?*
- *Is there a culture of trust between the feedback giver and myself?*
- *Do I believe that the feedback giver is dedicated to my success?*
- *Is the feedback giver open to dialogue, questions, and my viewpoint?*

Crocker, J., Voelkl, K., Testa, M., & Major, B. (1991). Social stigma: The affective consequences of attributional ambiguity. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60(2), 218.

FEEDBACK

TAKING IN FEEDBACK

How we receive, process, and respond to feedback is dependent on a number of factors, including:

Stress response: how our body and mind typically respond to discomfort or situations that may cause distress

Cultural lens: how we were learned to view feedback, communication, and hierarchy

Emotional regulation: how we cope in the moment with uncomfortable or potentially emotionally situations

Cognitive distortions: the stories our brain tells us when we perceive criticism from others or even from ourselves

Communication style: the interplay between the dominant communication styles of the sender and the receiver

Feedback triggers: general and contextual triggers that may arise and hinder our ability to soak in the important data points that we receive (triggers can include setting, people involved, tone, semantics, points made, how we're treated, etc.)

Stress Response

Feedback Triggers

Cultural Lens

Communication Styles (Mine & theirs)

Emotional Regulation

Cognitive Distortions
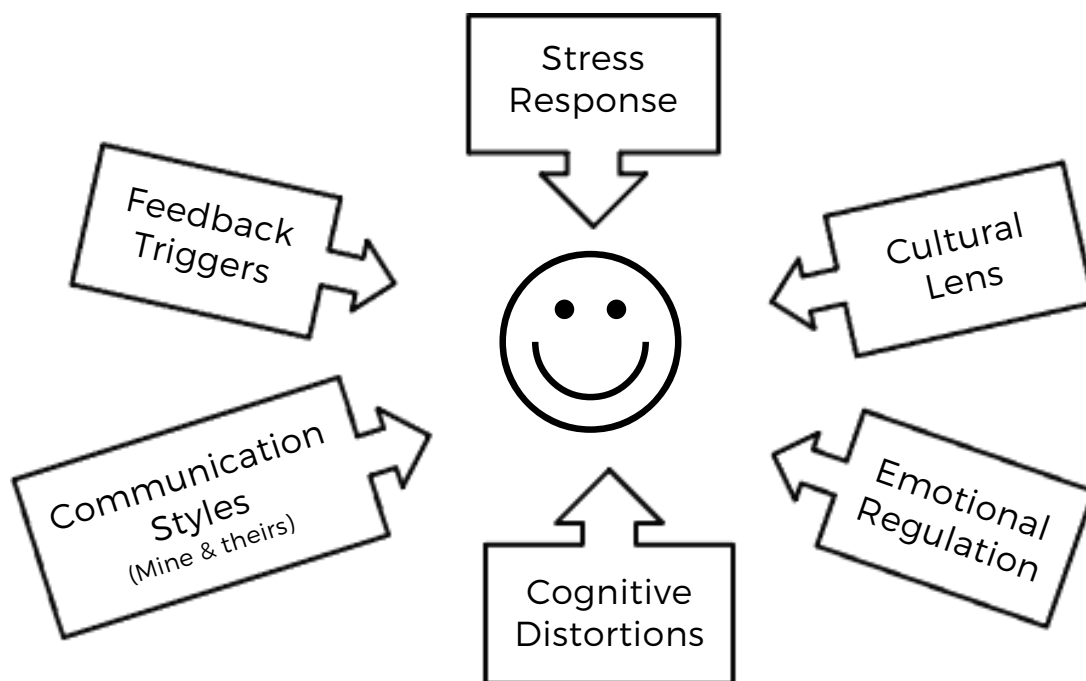
FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK REACTION REFLECTION

Think about a time when you were given feedback that was **challenging for you** to hear.

What role do you think each of these areas played in **your reaction** at the time?

Feedback Triggers	Stress Response	Cultural Lens

Communication Style *(mine & theirs)*	Cognitive Distortions	Emotional Regulation

Other

FEEDBACK

PREPARING FOR A FEEDBACK CONVERSATION

To prepare for an upcoming conversation based around feedback, think about your response to the following:

- *Is this a discussion involving feedback, coaching, evaluation, or a combination of sorts? Have I clarified this with the other person?*
- *What would I like to come away with? What are my goals for this conversation?*
- *Do I have any clear asks?*
- *Aspects of myself that might impact how I receive this feedback include:*
    - *My preferred communication style:* _____
    - *My go-to cognitive distortions:* _____
    - *Potential feedback triggers:* _____
    - *Stresses affecting me:* _____
    - *My emotional regulation strengths and challenges:* _____
    - *Potential attributional ambiguities:* _____
    - *Other:* _____
- *What do I know about the other party, including their communication style?*
- *What strategies will help me listen and stay focused on the content of the feedback?*
- *What are some ways I can clarify or verify what I hear, throughout the discussion?*
- *What are some strategies to help me adapt/adjust as needed during the conversation?*
- *How might I create pauses, time for processing, reflection or to regroup, if needed?*
- *What can I do if I get triggered, overwhelmed, angry or confused?*
- *What might help me extend the benefit of the doubt and assume good intentions (unless shown otherwise)?*
    - *What would I like included in a clear plan for moving forward after the meeting?*

FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK IN RETROSPECT: INITIAL STEPS

We sometimes spend more time ruminating over the experience of a feedback conversation than we do the feedback itself. In moments like this, it is helpful to break down components of the conversation to help us to process it and move on.

Think about a recent feedback conversation you were involved in. Use the appropriate quadrants in the graph below to describe your experience.

	For feedback give in a manner that worked well for me	For feedback given in an unhelpful or triggering manner
Negative Feedback		
Positive Feedback		

Now, move on to the NEXT STEPS page to determine how to best move forward.

FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK IN RETROSPECT: NEXT STEPS

Using the information you entered in the four quadrants on the previous page, now reflect on how you can use these insights to move forward.

Answer the reflection questions at the top of each column in the relevant squares underneath.

	For feedback give in a manner that worked well for me	For feedback given in an unhelpful or triggering manner
Reflection Questions	• *What did I learn from this feedback?* • *How will it make me a stronger scientist?* • *Using this data, what action steps can I take moving forward to advance myself and my work?* • *Are there other ways that I might use this feedback, too?*	• *What about this feedback was unhelpful or triggering?* • *If the feedback was triggering, was the cause internally-based or based on the other party?* • *Would a follow up discussion to share and repair be possible, productive, or helpful?* • *What personal work / resilience building would help?* • *If the feedback was unhelpful, how can I follow up to gather more, useful information?*
Action Steps		

FEEDBACK

MY FEEDBACK BARRIERS

Take a look at the **potential feedback barriers** below. Check off those that most fit for you, both as a receiver and a provider of feedback.

You may return to this chart to better analyze barriers that arose during specific feedback experiences; This data can help you to create action plans to overcome these barriers.

As the Feedback <u>Receiver</u>	As the Feedback <u>Provider</u>
☐ Fixed mindset ☐ Level of wellness in the 4 quadrants ☐ Low distress tolerance ☐ Perfectionist tendencies ☐ Defensiveness ☐ Shame or embarrassment ☐ Fear of provider's thoughts/opinion of me based on feedback ☐ Imposter syndrome ☐ Truth trigger ☐ Relationship trigger ☐ Identity trigger ☐ Differences in communication style from the feedback provider ☐ Emotional regulation ☐ Overwhelmed and unable to focus ☐ Lack of knowledge as to what to do with feedback ☐ Confusion over the purpose of feedback ☐ Other: _____	☐ Lack of feedback training ☐ Lack of experience in providing productive, useful feedback ☐ Lack of clear goals or next steps ☐ Lack of direct observation or knowledge of the receiver's work ☐ Lack of clarity in my feedback ☐ Communication style differences ☐ Fear of receiver's response ☐ Fear of rejection or of "burning bridges" ☐ People pleasing tendencies ☐ Imposter syndrome ☐ Low distress tolerance ☐ Lack of awareness of social cues ☐ Level of wellness in the 4 quadrants ☐ Lack of positive communication ☐ Poor relationship ☐ Relationship trigger ☐ Identity trigger ☐ Time or other constraints ☐ Other: _____

FEEDBACK

POST-FEEDBACK REFLECTION: MY RESPONSE

After you have received feedback, use this chart to better understand the feedback process, consider possible explanations, and think ahead for future feedback conversations.

Thinking about my response...

If the feedback left me...	This may be due to...	Next time, I could...
Physically • Uneasy or uncomfortable • Tense • _____ • _____	• Being tired or 'hangry' • My level of self-care • My level **of distress tolerance** • _____ • _____	
Emotionally • Feeling negative emotions • Emotionally detached • Discouraged • _____ • _____	• Amygdala hijack kicking in • Feeling a lack of control • My level of emotional regulation • _____ • _____	
Relationally • Feeling unseen or alone • Feeling under-appreciated • Feeling undervalued • Distrustful of feedback giver • _____ • _____	• Relationship with feedback giver • My own cognitive distortions • Lack of positive feedback • Inaccurate or partial feedback • Deficit in support from others • _____ • _____	
Unhappy with myself for • Questioning my abilities • Feeling inadequate • Feeling ashamed • Being filled with self-blame • _____ • _____	• Leaning more towards a fixed mindset than a growth mindset • My own cognitive distortions, including perfectionism • Focusing on the negative • Discounting positive feedback • Holding onto unhelpful feedback • _____ • _____	
Other:		

FEEDBACK

POST-REFLECTION: FEEDBACK PROVIDER

After you have received feedback, use this chart to better understand the feedback process, consider possible explanations, and think ahead for future feedback conversations.

NOTE: If your PI or feedback provider has an approach or style that does not align with yours or is unhelpful, do you feel that it would be safe to discuss this with them? If so, consider how you could have those conversations. If not seek out support for yourself. In either care, you may always avail yourself of program and university leadership and resources for support and guidance in your relationship with your PI or boss or advisor.

If the feedback provider…	This may be due to…	I can have a more constructive experience next time by…
Used harsh statements	• Their own cognitive distortions • Their own issues (lack of sleep, "hangry"…) • Their feelings of burnout or work frustrations • _____	
Used overgeneralizations or over-statements, ('always' or 'never')	• Inexperience in providing meaningful feedback • Lack of training in effective feedback • Lack of observational examples • _____	
Was unclear, wishy-washy, or unable to provide specifics	• Inexperience in providing meaningful feedback • Lack of observational examples • Lack of preparation on their part • Communication style differences • _____	
Seemed annoyed, angry, or disinterested	• Was asked for feedback at an inopportune time • Their own issues (lack of sleep, hangry, work or personal stresses…) • Communication style or personality differences • _____	
Other:		

FEEDBACK

MY FEEDBACK SUPPORT TEAM

Remember:
RESILIENCE = PEOPLE + PROCESS + PREPARATION

We've thought about the process and the preparation, now it is time to think about the people.

My support team: *Who is in it? Who do I want to add? Are there any gaps?*

*Who can help me prepare if I want to **ask someone** for feedback? In what ways can they help me?*

*Who can help me prepare if I am going to be **getting feedback**? In what ways can they help me?*

Who can help me after I have gotten feedback? In what ways can they help me?

FEEDBACK

Is there something you **need feedback on**?

Practice your ask below:

Be clear and precise in your "ask." Consider this strategy: What am I **doing well**? Where do I **need to improve**? Is there anything you want me to do that I am **not currently doing**?

Part 3

EMOTIONS
&
FEEDBACK

EMOTIONS & FEEDBACK

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO FEEDBACK

Our first response to feedback is often **emotionally-driven**. It is common — and normal — to feel **uncomfortable, embarrassed, hurt, frustrated, angry, shocked,** or disbelieving following feedback.

Reacting to those uncomfortable emotions by becoming defensive, aggressive, self-flagellating, or by shutting-down is also common. However, these behaviors are usually **not helpful or productive**.

In order to better handle feedback and learn and grow from it, we need to be able to address the emotions elicited by feedback in more constructive ways.

Remember **RABBITS**:

R –   Recognize one's emotions

A –   Acknowledge them

B –   Breathe deeply

B –   Be with them, don't suppress them

I –   Interpret them accurately

T –   Take action (or know when not to)

S –   Seek support and guidance when needed

See Workbook II: Understanding Cognitive Distortions & Imposter Fears for more on emotions and emotional regulation

EMOTIONS & FEEDBACK

EMOTIONS OF DISCOMFORT

In the space below. write about what **frustration, irritation, and/or anger** might look and feel like for you.

Use imagery or **reframing strategies** to process your emotion(s). (e.g., "*Is this worth getting heated about?*", "*Is there another approach?*", "*What would I tell my friend?*")

FRUSTRATION, IRRITATION & ANGER
View these emotions as a rheostat and an early-warning system

These emotions can be **helpful** if they prompt us to take *constructive action*, but they can also be **unhelpful** if we *act out* and do more damage,

Remember **AIR**:

Accurate **I**nterpretation & emotional **R**egulation are key

Emotion Tolerance

Emotion tolerance is our ability to withstand or endure uncomfortable or unpleasant emotions while still taking helpful actions.

Emotions are a crucial component of the **thinking-feeling-doing triangle,** but they don't get to run the whole show.

With emotion tolerance, we can:
- Accept uncomfortable feelings, such as frustration, irritation or anger
- Persist in tasks that are important to us
- Put slights and hassles into perspective so that they can be addressed or let go of
- Appropriately address obstacles and delays

EMOTIONS & FEEDBACK

This is a *learned* skill!

- Starts with self-awareness
- Best to practice in a low stake situation
- Requires us to embrace letting go
- Requires us to develop our assertiveness skills

Some helpful strategies:

- Journal about what frustration **looks & feels like** for you
- Find ways to **pause & regroup**
- Use **imagery** and/or **'if–then' questioning** to lead you to ask questions such as: *'Does this really matter?', 'Is there another approach?', 'Would a break help?', 'Is this worth getting heated about?',* and so on.

EMOTIONS & FEEDBACK

ACKNOWELDGE EMOTIONS

Use the grid below to help you track emotions that may have come up for you when you received feedback.

This process will lead you through acknowledging feelings, seeing them as useful data points, and finding ways to soothe/calm yourself. When we do these things, we can better to respond in productive and constructive ways.

	Emotions that tend to rise *(proud, happy, empowered, embarrassed, unsure, uncomfortable...)*	**What is this emotion telling me?** *(Decoding the message i.e., what am I upset about? how is this important to me?...)*
Negative Feedback		
Positive Feedback		

(continued on next page)

EMOTIONS & FEEDBACK

ACKNOWELDGE EMOTIONS (CONTINUED)

	Self-talk to remain calm *(affirmations, mantras, challenging distorted thoughts, reminders...)*	Actions to remain calm *(pause, A.I.R., self-soothe, recognize warning signs, breathe, mindfulness...)*
Negative Feedback		
Positive Feedback		

EMOTIONS & FEEDBACK

Think of a time when you received difficult feedback about something you **really cared about**. What happened for you? If you were able to stay calm, what **strategies** helped you in the moment and beyond? What is generally **not as helpful** to you, and why do you think that is?

Think of a time when you had to **give someone you cared about difficult feedback**. What strategies did you use so that you could **stay calm** as you talked with your friend/colleague/collaborator/PI? What went well; what did not go well, and why do you think that is?

EMOTIONS & FEEDBACK

WHEN FEEDBACK IS A SHOCK OR HARD TO HEAR

There are times when feedback comes as a total surprise to us; We did not see it coming—and may have even expected something very different. There are other times when we may have anticipated it, but it was still very hard to hear.

Either of these situations can be **emotionally charged** and **challenging to navigate**. However, some refection, planning, and preparation in advance can help minimize the emotional impact of such moments.

What do you do in the moment when **feedback is a shock** to you?
- How would you like to be able to respond?
- What might help you do that?

What do you do in the moment when **receiving challenging feedback**?
- How would you like to be able to respond?
- What might help you do that?

How do you **manage your emotions** before, during and after difficult feedback interactions?

What **supports** do you use after receiving shocking or challenging feedback?

Part 4

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

A TRIGGER is something that causes a strong emotional response.

Different types of feedback have different triggers:

- **Truth triggers**: We question the accuracy of the feedback[1]

- **Relationship triggers**: We question, or don't like/trust, the person providing the feedback[1]

- **Identity triggers**: We question the feedback because of our identity, the identity of the giver, or a combination of both[1]

- **Attributional ambiguity**: We are uncertain whether the feedback we received is based on group membership or actual performance[2]

. . . .

[1] Stone, D., & Heen, S. (2015). *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well (even when it is off base, unfair, poorly delivered, and frankly, you're not in the mood)*. Penguin.

[2] Crocker, J., Voelkl, K., Testa, M., & Major, B. (1991). *Social stigma: The affective consequences of attributional ambiguity.* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60(2), 218.

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

FEEDBACK TRIGGER REFLECTION

Think about a time when you received constructive feedback but **did not react well**. This could be the time you wrote about earlier in this workbook or it could be a different instance.

REFLECTION

What did the feedback trigger in you, and why?

Ask yourself:
- *Who was the person telling me this? What is our relationship?*
- *Was this about me or "ME" or a bit of both?*
- *What part of this feedback might have been driven by identity issues and/or potential bias?*
- *What part of this is simply feedback that I would prefer not to hear?*
- *What is the truth in the feedback?*
- *Does this feedback cross any of my boundaries? If so, which ones?*

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

TRIGGER MANAGEMENT

When feedback generates a strong emotional response, we may have to address that response **before we can focus on and benefit** from the substance of the feedback. The process on this and the next two pages is useful for investigating and addressing feedback triggers.

Do I think/know I am being triggered?

Where am I feeling it in my body?

Can I pinpoint my emotions?
(sad, hurt, angry, embarrassed, frustrated, ashamed...)

Pause, breathe.

What can I use to give me a pause or break?
(eg, step away, look away, take a sip of water...)

What might help me calm, self-soothe, ground myself?
(breathing, mindfulness, tense-and-release muscles, tuning into input from my senses...)

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

TRIGGER MANAGEMENT (CONTINUTED)

What is triggering me?

What words, behaviors, actions, or themes are triggering me?

Am I being triggered by the sender, their delivery (including time, setting, tone...) or the content of their feedback message?

Is this a truth, relationship, or identity trigger?

The next pages lay out specific strategies for the **three types of triggers.**

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

TRUTH TRIGGERS

If it is a TRUTH TRIGGER:

- Distinguish between what parts of the feedback are accurate and which parts feel inaccurate.
- Remember to focus on the general accuracy and not be caught up in "always" and "never" comments.
- Clarify: Make sure that what I am hearing is the message that the sender meant to deliver.
- "What I heard you say was _____. Is that correct? Did I miss anything?"
- "Could you help me to better understand what you meant when you said_____?"

REFLECTION

Some other clarifying questions I could ask:

If you still feel that what they are sharing is unfair or inaccurate:

- Calmly ask if you can discuss your perspective with them.
- Explain what you see the differences are between their perceptions and yours
- Offer to provide content or explanation
- Request further discussion (if needed) in order to move forward

REFLECTION

Some statements I might use in this situation are:

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

RELATIONSHIP TRIGGERS

If it is a RELATIONSHIP TRIGGER:

Separate the feedback from the sender in my mind.
- Try to push the person sending me the feedback out of my thoughts
- Focus on the content of the feedback in the moment.
  - Is the content of the feedback helpful, accurate, and fair?

REFLECTION

Imagine if someone I trusted gave me the same feedback, how would I hear it coming from them?

If the delivery of the message is triggering:

- I may choose to have a separate discussion with the feedback provider/sender of this information.
- I may want to let them know that I appreciate their feedback, but that I find my ability to fully take in and benefit from feedback when it is provided in a specific manner.
- Clarify what I need when receiving feedback in order to reach an understanding for future feedback moments.

REFLECTION

What are some things I could do if the way feedback is delivered is triggering?

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

RELATIONSHIP TRIGGERS (CONTINUED)

If the dynamics between the sender and myself cause conflict:
- Considering having a separate discussion about this.
  - Work together to identify where the discord lies (differences, preferences, trust, credibility, roles, history each other, views of each other, approaches to work situations, etc.)
  - Work together to create a plan for moving forward in a manner that works for both parties with the goal of providing and gaining useful feedback in mind.
- If I would prefer not having these discussions, then I can try to again separate the feedback from the sender.
- I can filter out the delivery methods and any unfair, inaccurate, or "bad" (not negative feedback, but bad feedback).
- I can consider asking for feedback in writing
  - So that I can return to it and analyze it when it is outside of the person and when I am in a prime state to take it in.

REFLECTION
What are some things I could do if the dynamics between us is triggering?

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

IDENTITY TRIGGERS

If it is an IDENTITY TRIGGER:

I can reflect on how I am wired:

- What is my temperament and how long does it take me to recover from reactive moments?
- How do I perceive and react to comments and actions related to my work?
- What is the story I tell myself about myself?
- What is the story I tell myself about what others see in me?
- How are these pieces impacting me right now?

REFLECTION

What are some of the ways that aspects of myself that are vulnerable to being triggered?

How do distorted thoughts impact my perceptions?

- Am I able to distinguish what is said about my work performance from who I am as a person?
- What cognitive distortions make it harder for me to make that distinction.
- How are my cognitive distortions fed when I am triggered?

REFLECTION

What more accurate, helpful stories could I tell myself?

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

TRIGGER TYPE 3: IDENTITY TRIGGERS (CONTINUED)

After thinking about all of this, ask yourself:

Is this a **"ME"** thing or a **"THEM"** thing?

REFLECTION

Is my identity, their identity, or a colliding of the two, coming into play?

If this is a "ME" thing:

- Step back to better understand why these words are triggering me.
- What is it about my wiring, my story, my distorted thoughts, and my ability to compartmentalize that is causing this?
- Consider asking to receive the feedback in writing so that it can be reviewed it at a later, more private time, or consider asking to receive it in different manner that better suits any specific feedback needs.
- Work to develop more of a growth mindset, to check any "faulty" wiring or distorted thoughts at the door, and to determine how to reframe in order to grow from feedback received.

REFLECTION

What are some strategies I could use to proactively take care of myself, foster more of a growth mindset, or in other ways mitigate identity triggers?

Part 5

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Is there something you need to *provide* feedback on?

Practice your feedback below.

Keep these in mind:

- Focus on the **behavior(s)**, not the person
- Be **specific and descriptive**
- **Describe**, don't judge
- SBI feedback – **Situation, Behavior, Impact**
- Think **"I"-statements**
- Think **giraffe**, not jackal

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

WHEN OUR FEEDBACK RECIPIENT IS TRIGGERED

Sometimes, despite any of our best intentions, the person to whom we are giving feedback may have a strong emotional response or may be feeling triggered and we will need to adapt and modify what we are saying or doing.

We may learn that the feedback recipient is feeling triggered by:
- They tell us
- We observe the change in their affect or presentation
- They are unable to continue the discussion

Pause once we are aware that the person receiving our feedback to is triggered.
- Allow them time to pause and breathe and take care of themselves
- I may need to take a break and come back to the conversation.

If the person wants to share what is going on for them:
- Allow the receiver to share what triggered them, without judgment, defensiveness, or debate.
- Listen wholeheartedly, with empathy, and try to understand where they are coming from.
- Do not argue or try to dispute. Respect that this is about their reality and their experience.
- After listening, summarize what was heard and clarity anything misunderstood or missed
- Pause again to allow myself time to self-reflect.

We need to apologize for our part in what led to their being triggered.
- Offer an authentic apology; acknowledge your own words or actions, without any excuses or "buts"
- Be succinct and specific when explaining what you are apologizing for.
- Let your words and actions demonstrate safety, that you hear the receiver, and that you want to take this opportunity to grow with them.
- Think about ways you can work to make amends and try and rebuild trust.

Share your hopes for the outcome of this conversation.
- What do you hope the two of you can accomplish by discussing these triggers and how to mitigate them?
- What do you hope for in your workplace relationship as a result of listening, validating, apologizing, etc?

FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

MORE ON ATTRIBUTIONAL AMBIGUITY

Attributional ambiguity is uncertainty about whether the feedback one has received was based on one's social identity/group membership or on one's personal ability.

We discussed attributional ambiguity earlier in this workbook from the perspective of the feedback recipient being unsure about the feedback they are receiving.

Below are some things to be mindful of when you are the one **GIVING** feedback.

REFLECTIONS for the Feedback Giver:

- *Am I taking into account the implications of social identity and group membership differences between myself and the feedback receiver?*
- *Am I taking into account how those difference may be affecting my perceptions of the recipient?*
- *Am I aware of my own biases and/or desire to overcompensate with any group that the receiver of my feedback is a part of?*
- *Am I taking into account how historical context, society, and personal experiences may impact how my feedback is received?*
- *Have I established a culture of trust between myself and the receiver of my feedback?*
- *Is my feedback clear and detailed enough (while avoiding interpretations and sticking to the facts) to avoid as much uncertainty as to its roots as possible?*
- *Am I providing "wise" feedback (clearly stating high expectations, my genuine belief that these expectations can be met)? m I providing feedback that offers ways to meet these expectations based on individual strengths?*
- *Anything else?*

Part 6

ONE LAST TOOL

MY COMMUNICATION **CHEAT SHEET**

Feel free to share this information with your PI/supervisor, lab mates, colleagues, peers, etc. and ask them to complete and share as well!

My dominant communication style is:

Which means:
(brief description of the style)

When communicating with me, please consider:
(what works for you/your style)

Topics I can be sensitive about:

My level of sensitivity to feedback:
(scale of 1-10, with 1 being not at all sensitive and 10 being extremely sensitive)

How to interpret my reaction(s):
(e.g. I just need time to process; I'm not angry. I'm just thinking. etc.)

You'll know I'm struggling with feedback if I...

NOTES