The Feedback Dilemma
Sound familiar?
Do we even want feedback?

We want it but... 60%

We don’t really want to hear it, not really, but... >75%

We know we need it... 45%

<30%
Feedback can be valuable

“You seem intelligent, capable, level-headed and mature. That’s a shame because I was really hoping you’d fit in here.”
Sometimes really valuable

“You participate with enthusiasm during staff meetings and never hesitate to offer a creative suggestion or opinion. That has to stop.”
Negativity bias
When we receive criticism

Threat to our survival

Hits us at the lowest Maslow levels

We remember it, inaccurately
What about u?

1. You’re considering getting feedback on work you’ve produced. How likely are you to expect that any feedback will be negative?

(A) I usually expect to get good feedback because I perceive myself as generally competent.

(B) I’m nervous about a negative response but not paralyzed by it.

(C) I tend to assume feedback will be negative.
What about u?

2. When your boss points out 9 good things but 1 valid area where you could improve, what’s your reaction?

(A) I plan some simple actions that will ensure continued good feedback.

(B) I feel happy that the feedback was positive overall, but the negative comment irks me a little.

(C) The one negative comment bugs me for several days or more.
What about u?

3. How confident are you in your ability to cope with valid negative feedback?

(A) I can make necessary adjustments.

(B) I’d ruminate for a while, but I’d get through it after a quiet night in with a glass of wine and a Netflix marathon.

(C) I think I’d be so embarrassed I’d find it difficult to face the feedback giver if/when I see that person again.
4. How prone to personalizing negative feedback are you?

(A) I don’t tend to personalize feedback.

(B) I personalize but I have enough self-awareness that I usually catch myself doing it.

(C) When I get negative feedback it feels like the person doesn’t like me rather than doesn’t like the work I’ve done.
5. How likely are you to avoid getting feedback on work you’ve produced?

(A) I don’t avoid feedback; I see it as useful.

(B) I avoid feedback in some, but not all, areas of my life.

(C) I get feedback only if I absolutely have to; I’d rather go to the dentist.
Scoring

**Mostly A’s** - You generally think of feedback and criticism as helpful, and you’re not threatened by it.

**Mostly B’s** - You’re a bit prone to expecting that feedback will be negative

**Mostly C’s** - Receiving feedback is extremely anxiety provoking for you

Boyes, 2018
The emotions

Anger
The emotions

Fear
The emotions

Denial
The emotions

Tension
The emotions

There's still some jealous on your face.

Let me get that for you.

Jealousy
The emotions

Self-Sabotage
How do we view failure?

Failure is bad
Ask “What went wrong?”
Don’t do it again!
Write a report & distribute
What percentage of failures in your agency are blameworthy?
Blameworthy?

What percentage of failures in your agency are treated as blameworthy?
So what do we do?

Welcome it, it’s a gift
Change your mindset
Learn to adapt
So what do we do?

Reframe
Seek more
Respond appropriately
Wait, now I gotta give?

“Failure to give constructive feedback may actually be more about protecting ourselves than others”

- Jeffries
Givers are afraid too!

They worry about:

• Balancing professional and personal
• An emotional reaction
• Having to have a solution
The avoidance pitfall

Lack of honesty
Lack of transparency
Loss of trust
Not supporting
First steps

Understand the role of emotions

&

Shut up and listen
Do it for the right reason

central, sense of responsibility, mentor, support

got purpose?

defensiveness, moody, demoralize, condemn
Tips for giving feedback

- Make it timely
- Make it regular
- Be prepared
Tips for giving feedback

Ensure privacy

Focus on specific behaviors

Use “I” and “?”
Tips for giving feedback

- Positives are good
- Have suggestions
- Follow up
Most importantly

Make it a learning experience
It works both ways

we had to develop a culture where

feedback is a ...
Thank you

pmalone@american.edu