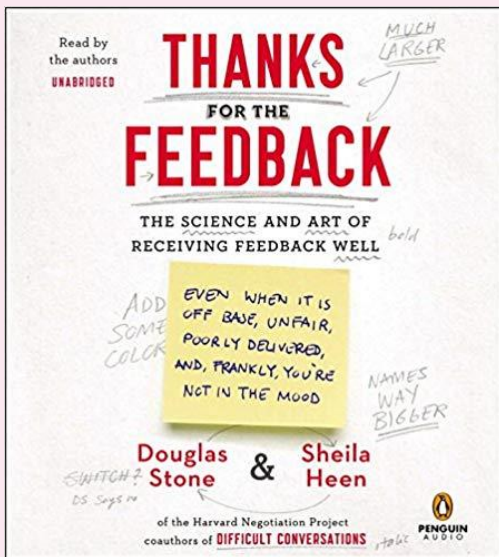


Book Review: Thanks for the Feedback – The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well



What's it all about?

This book is all about how you receive feedback and encouraging readers to grow with an open mindset. It is all about accepting both the negative and positive feedback given to you and how to act upon it to effectively. This novel teaches you that what you perceive is not always what others see and that feedback should be seen as the intersection of two realities.



Positivity and Acceptance – the key attributes this book encourages readers to adopt into their lifestyle, particularly when receiving feedback. Stone and Heen stress that positivity even when feedback is slightly negative, is essential to becoming a more effective worker as well as maintaining good self-esteem.

1. The 3 types of Feedback

Appreciation – one of encouragement that focuses on building a relationship; **Coaching** – helping someone grow, improve and change and **Evaluation** – comparing against a standard or another; aligning expectations. Understanding the differences between these types of feedback is imperative for those receiving it and for those delivering it.

2. **Receiving Feedback Well** – Heen and Stone state that managing your emotions carefully when receiving feedback is key. You must listen to understand and not listen to reply. They advise against “looking for what is wrong” in the feedback and over-analysing what is said. Engaging in the conversation is important as it shows you are keen to improve yourself.

3. The 3 Feedback Triggers

- Truth triggers – This means understanding whether the feedback is true or not. It is more complex than you think and most of *Thanks for the Feedback* is aimed at helping us understand how to skilfully analyse this feedback.
- Identity Triggers – Identity is personal and when someone challenges the idea we have of ourselves, it can result in an emotional reaction due to the destabilizing nature of the comment. Occasionally people refuse to accept the comment outright.
- Relationship triggers – More often than not, we react to the person giving the feedback as opposed to the feedback itself. We ask ourselves, do we trust this person? Is their opinion credible? In order to receive the feedback appropriately, we need to separate our feelings towards the person and focus on the feedback.

4. Roadblocks to Good Feedback

- Different data – majority of the time, varying data gives people different results or conclusions.
- Interpretation – how we perceive information differs greatly from how others perceive the same information.
- Blind spots – people that surround us often see the behaviour that we can't see ourselves e.g. body language and knowledge gaps.

Overall the authors state that there is no such thing as “objective” feedback and there is always a level of subjectivity. Even when feedback is based on a set of numbers or data, someone has had to select that data in the first place.

5. Feedback Profiles

- a. Blame absorbers – they fail to explore the intersection of the problem - how everyone is contributing. They always take the blame and it sometimes means they feel terrible about it (often related to self-esteem levels). Blame absorbers are also more prone to building resentment over time.
- b. Blame shifters – These people never acknowledge their roles in the problem. Shifting the blame to someone of something else is exhausting and is a weak way to approach life.

6. How Your Personality Affects Feedback Reception

- a. Baseline behaviour – People who are happy and content with themselves often receive feedback better than those who have low self-esteem and are generally unhappy.
- b. Recovery – Depending on your personality, you can recover from your feedback in one of 4 ways
 - i. Recover quickly from negative feedback
 - ii. Recover slowly from negative feedback
 - iii. Sustaining joy from positive feedback for a short time
 - iv. Sustaining joy from positive feedback for a long time

The ideal that Stone and Heen talk about is a person who can sustain joy from a positive feedback for a long time and recover quickly from negative feedback.

7. Strategies to get the most out of Feedback

- a. Be prepared, think about what the worst thing could be and accept it.
- b. Separating feelings from feedback, gaining perspective. Meaning you are bad at X, does not mean you are not good at Y or Z.
- c. Accept that you can't control how people see you
- d. Think in the long term, will this be affecting you in 10 years' time?

How did this book impact me?

This book has encouraged me to approach feedback with a more open mindset and to manage my emotions carefully. I am a defensive person and often see feedback as criticism. This book has taught me that negative feedback is a learning experience. Take it, accept it, understand it and learn from it. Then simply move on. Not only will this make you a more accepting person in all aspects from life, you can further yourself and improve your emotional management. Stone and Heen motivate readers to make a conscious effort to change the way they receive feedback permanently.

Any limitations to this book?

Quite often the points are repeated just using different vocabulary. It is repetition which helps engrain this mindset of acceptance and positivity into you. It is a clever way of doing it, but readers must understand this technique in order to not get confused over these repeated ideas.

About the Authors

Douglas Stone is a Founder of the Triad Consulting Group and a Lecturer on Law at Harvard Law School. He graduated from Brown University in 1980 and Harvard Law School in 1984. Before returning to Harvard as a lecturer, he practised transactional and banking law at firms in Boston and New York.

Sheila Heen is also a Founder of the Triad Consulting Group and Lecturer at Harvard Law School. She is a graduate of Occidental College and Harvard Law School. She works with high-end corporate clients and executive teams across the world including The Obama White House. She stated that writing *Thanks for the Feedback* has forced her to become a sharper observer of patterns, to push her own understanding and to accept the confusion and frustration of book writing.