Thanks for the Feedback Notes

Introduction
- Feedback happens a lot and it has been regularly shown giving and receiving feedback is generally considered a "hard conversation"
- The main driver of the outcome on both sides though is the receiver - as it's the receiver that must ultimately buy in and action it; they are the driver
- Despite it's importance, most people in the workplace loathe it

Chapter 1 - Three Triggers
- Truth Triggers are when feedback is off, unhelpful, or untrue
  - Be clear about whether feedback is thanks/appreciation, coaching (how to get better), or evaluation (here's where you rank)
  - Clarify feedback if not directly clear - specific examples (think STAR)
- Relationship Triggers are when feedback is when the feedback is inherently altered by the fact of who is giving/receiving it, rather than the contents itself
  - Be careful to focus on the substance rather than the rest of the situation, isolate the true feedback as other such details are generally separate
  - When you sense this reaction it's usually a sign teamwork is needed to undress the underlying problem / dynamic / system
- Identity Triggers are when feedback challenges one's identity
  - We are hardwired to respond to identity being challenged. When you recognize this feeling acknowledge it and try and "push past it" and focus on the substance
  - Seek to use feedback that triggers this as a way to better yourself; a growth mindset. You are malleable
- By recognizing these triggers and not letting them create a response that detracts from the value of the feedback conversation, we can get ourselves in a good position to really benefit

Chapter 2 - Separate Appreciation, Coaching, and Evaluation
- Three types of of feedback:appreciation, coaching, and evaluation
- Appreciation
  - Motivates
  - "Yes I see you. You matter"
  - Critical for happiness
  - Key tips: Be specific and don't combine with negative feedback, given in the right format (individual praise vs public praise vs $, etc),

and it has to be authentic (i.e. you actually want to)
- Coaching
  - Helping one grow, solve problems, etc
  - Sparked by:
    - Improve and learning more skills often triggered by coachee
    - Growth to address something being wrong triggered by coaching
- Evaluation
  - Tells you where you rank/stand
  - Aligns expectations; should be done regularly enough so people aren't speculating
  - Shouldn't be avoided, but can be difficult to couple with coaching given emotional impact
- Create clarity on both ends on what type of feedback is begin given; keep an eye on their needs and your own and what other's might be for you. Be clear about not just the feedback you're giving or want but the type as well
- Note that coaching and evaluation are often inevitably mixed
  - Start by discussing the purpose of the feedback first and explicitly and think about whether it is serving the right purpose for BOTH
  - This can even be explicitly checked in on and qualified during conversation
  - It can be very helpful to call this out explicitly as a receiver if unsure
- Separate evaluation from other areas when possible, including performance reviews

Chapter 3 - First Understand
- Feedback often fails right away due to not understanding the feedback. We can't always rely on givers to do a good job of that though - so it helps to be able to tease that out as receivers sometimes if we really want to grow (because the underlying feedback is most likely valuable)
- Give specific feedback and avoid generic labels, think STAR. Think about where feedback is coming from and where it's going
- The process is generally: Data->Interpretation->Label->Advice. You can reverse engineer that for a given piece of 'deficient' feedback to get the 'real picture'
- It's important that feedback be clearly actionable
- Often the root cause is differing data (due to things like access or perspective). Consider that and when possible clarify it explicitly
- Try and simplify feedback by avoiding falling into 'us VS them' traps, implicit rules, etc
  - Consider repeatedly drilling in

- It is generally always helpful to clarify
- It's likely impossible to make feedback objective, but by being conscious of the above we can come closer

Chapter 4 - See Your Blind Spots
- The Gap Map: My Thoughts & Feelings -> My Intentions -> My Behavior -> My Impacts on Them -> Their Story About Me..... and this then creates a feedback loop... but notice the multiple steps in between for gaps to arise
- Facial expressions, patterns, language, and tone affect how others perceive us, but interestingly & obviously not ourselves. This creates blind spots.
- Try and separate intent from impact - focus on impact
- Try and uncover your blind spots by being present with how you feel yourself responding to feedback (chances are if you have an intense response, there may be a blind spot)... likewise keep an eye out for patterns
- Consider explicitly asking "what do you see me doing, or fail to do, that is getting in my own way"
- You can try getting a second opinion, but a close friend often isn't ideal as they'll just agree with you. Seek an honest mirror and be conscious of the difference between that and a "supportive" mirror.
- Consider recording yourself

Chapter 5 - Don't Switchtrack
- Relationship triggers often create switchtrack conversations (topic changes that result in the conversation going nowhere, multiple folks giving feedback with no one receiving it). It essentially defeats feedback. It can also be hard to discuss multiple trains of thought at once.
- Often folks are unaware they are changing the topic. The short emotional response naturally leads one to changing the subject.
- This can be even worse when the switchtrack is kept in our own heads and it silently distracts us
- The formula is: We get feedback -> Experience a relationship trigger -> Change the topic to how we/I feel -> Talk past each other.
  - This really comes down to what we think about the giver and how we feel treated by the giver
- Often you can work past this by getting feedback from a stranger of those that you don't like or are least like you... but that isn't always practical. These are unique perspectives that are often devoid of relationship triggers.

- To help mitigate this:
  - Spot the relationship trigger and the switchtrack (i.e. awareness). Then give each topic it's own track. Acknowledge both and then prioritize and work through the topics.
  - Be aware of underlying relationships issues hiding behind the feedback that may not be said. Don't be afraid to dig deeper.

Chapter 6 - Identify The Relationship System
- What one person think is is constructive feedback and coaching, others can take as blame
- Problems exist in systems only when there are 2+ people. Therefore, it's important to realize that it takes two to create a problem and that each person in the situation is part of the problem (perhaps not to the same extent, etc, but certainly a part of it)
- View the problem from different vantage points to I understand it
  - One Step Back (you and me):
    - Think of this as viewing the people involved in the feedback as a 3rd party, like a pet watching a couple argue – focus on what each person is doing in reaction to each other than actual judgement
    - This can expose systemic issues (feedback loops, etc) that might be at the crux of the feedback
  - Two Steps Back (the system you and me are within and the roles we play, on the team for example):
    - This vantage point also includes the roles the people play in the system (child/parent, siblings, boss/employee, police/suspect, etc)
    - Often the role can be the cause for the feedback or friction
    - Issues often have to do with role confusion and role clarity
  - Three Steps Back (the big picture, the entire system and all it's structure such as a whole company made up of teams):
    - This vantage includes the entire universe the feedback is taking place within
    - The 5 whys can help with this question
    - Factors: Other players, physical environment, timing & decision making, policies and processes, coping strategies
  - Circle back to yourself at the end
- Viewing things from a system perspective helps remove blame and judgement
- Be aware of common blind spots
  - Always accepting blame

- It's never 'my' fault
- Fixing the systemic problems avoid false solutions and create solutions that last
- A good strategy is potentially telling/asking others – "here's what would help me change"
- If you find everyone in the system is against you, this may seem like a curse. But not necessarily, because you are at the crux of it much of the power of change lies with you

Chapter 7 - Learn How Wiring And Temperament Affect Your Story
- The 3 phases of processing feedback are generally as follows and they make up what 'temperament' is:
  - Baseline – how you generally are
    - Some are optimistic, pessimistic, etc – this affects our starting point on the scale and can be 0, positive, or negative. It can in theory have multiple dimensions
  - Swing – how far up or down you move from baseline when receiving feedback
    - This varies lots person to person, much of it is genetic
    - Everyone responds far more strongly to negative feedback though (for an evolutionary basis). We are programmed for a flight or fight response to past negative situations
  - Recovery/Sustain – how long the swings last
    - Negative and positive feedback reactions are actually different parts/halves of the brain; and they are not necessarily related/ functions of each other
    - Recovery seems to be controlled by the positive side
- Generally 50% of happiness is hardwired, 40% is how we interpret+respond, and 10% is circumstance; that 40% is our margin
- Every situation essentially has an emotional soundtrack/background playing with it – and it affects us.
- We create stories for ourselves as a result of feelings plus thoughts. We can change stories by changing feelings or thoughts.
  - Feelings exaggerate feedback and by being conscious of this and deconstructing it, we can learn
  - Common examples of the above are: magnifying negatives and makes the past part of the present, one thing starts to define everything else, the future can be extrapolated to be very bleak

Chapter 8 - Dismantle Distortions
- When we hear feedback we naturally distort it (biological response) and

the result can trouble us deeply, distract us, and prevent the feedback from working.
- We can workaround the above as follows:
  - Be Prepared Be Mindful
    - Think about it ahead of time to practice how you may react and work around or with certain triggers; rehearse
  - Separate The Strands: Feeling / Story / Feedback
    - Ask yourself, 'what do i feel?', 'what's the story I'm telling?', and 'what's the actual feedback?'
  - Contain The Story
    - Explore the story portion and make sure it's truly realistic
    - Try and break down each item and link it back to something concrete, without making jumps
  - Change Your Vantage Point
    - Imagine viewing the feedback from multiple different perspective to check yourself / bias
  - Accept That You Can't Control How Others See You
    - You can't completely control how others thing, so naturally no point in worrying about it too much; everyone else is just like you

Chapter 9 - Cultivate A Growth Identity
- Feedback naturally challenges our identity, but that's okay. We should pursue a growth mindset and improve ourselves and get better
- We should avoid 'simple' identity labels and aim for complexity, richness, and depth, although this requires a growth mindset ... it will all lead to you actually acting and growing from feedback — it can turn feedback from a fear to an investment/food-for-growth
  - If you ever find yourself not wanting to do or address something because it challenges who you are, then that's a red flag in terms of not pursuing a growth identity
  - The more you lean into your feedback and addressing why it came up in the first place, then you are that closer to not needing any more feedback

Chapter 10 - How Good Do I Have To Be
- There are sometimes you may want to and in fact is ideal to say 'no' to feedback
- You can make this clear in 3 ways:
  - Offer that you may not take the advice (i.e. you'll listen and consider it, but may not end up taking it)
    - When soliciting advice for such a situation, it helps to make that

explicit in the ask so the person realizes you're potentially rejecting the advice and not them as a person
- ◆ It can help to explain your reasons to reassure the giver
- ○ Offer that you don't want the advice right now (i.e. time based)
- ○ Stop giving advice or it will harm the relationships / I will leave the relationship
- ◆ This is the hardest boundary
- Some cases that may be indicators for setting the above boundaries:
  - ○ Attacking your character rather than just behavior
  - ○ Unrelenting feedback
  - ○ More demands after accepting/changing/applying said feedback
  - ○ Feedback is used to take the relationship hostage (i.e. for that person to get their way)
  - ○ Is the feedback a warning or a threat; avoid threats and realize the difference (i.e. a severe consequence)
  - ○ If in the relationship it is always you that needs to change and never the other person
- Personality types / behavior types that may be indicative of the above:
  - ○ Constant critic
  - ○ Love-hate relationships (dangling approval)
  - ○ Trying to completely change a person
- Be honest and graceful when turning away feedback, namely:
  - ○ Be transparent and actually tell them - if you don't they'll think you're rejecting them
  - ○ Be firm, yet appreciative
  - ○ Redirect unhelpful coaching to an area that may actually be helpful
  - ○ Rather than speak the above using 'but' use 'and' to defuse
  - ○ Be very specific, target explicitly: the request, the time frame, ask for their assent/confirmation
  - ○ Make clear consequences if they don't accept you're rejection
- Be careful of rejecting too much; it can help to inquire about the basis for said feedback to make sure you're actually understanding it and the motivations first
- Coach them to deal with the unchanged 'you', this will help de-risk and defuse future situations
- Consider working to solve the problem together

Chapter 11 - Navigate The Conversation
- You can use key 'waypoints' to help plot out a feedback conversation; it can't be totally scripted but you can/should have a rough guide. See the 3 key elements of such a conversation below

- Open: Setting the stage, giving purpose+context to the conversation
  - Start by clarifying the type of feedback (evaluation, coaching, or appreciation) and the fact that it's feedback at all — or try and understand if receiving. You can even say something 'can we take a step back to be clear on our purpose'
  - Be clear whether the feedback is a suggestion vs command and when agreement isn't necessary (i.e. a breakup)
  - Clarify if the feedback is final or negotiable (i.e. receiving a performance review vs a check-in)
- Body: The actual two-way exchange of the feedback conversation
  - Listening: Often one's internal voice will start to act as a body guard and impede listening. We are naturally wired to be empathetic, but only towards those we deem as 'behaving well'. Overcome this by being aware and having a perspective of curiosity. Prep the conversation ahead of time by 'having a chat' with your internal voice. Find and understand the trigger patterns and then negotiate with it. Remember the goal is understanding. Be careful to not let feelings leak into questions and manifest there.
  - Assert: Rather than respond to feedback with an "I'm right" attitude, think of focusing on "here's what's left out" as it frames things as more of a puzzle that the group is solving and less of a battle. This is usually: data, interpretations, and feelings. This helps working towards the point of why things might be seen differently.
  - Process: Keep in mind the high-level feedback conversation stages. It can help to bring up the meta-discussion, such as "we're both making arguments but not fully understanding reach other. Let's step back and reiterate what's important to each of us". Meta-discussion is rare and even awkward, but that's also what makes it effective.
  - Problem Solving: Create possibilities and options to solve the underlying issue. It helps show that the goal is working together to find a solution rather than just picking one of the person's requests/answers. Focus on the underlying interest rather than position (i.e. what's really being sought). There are generally 3 goals: helping you, helping themselves + the relationship, and helping the team/family/organization/etc.
- Close: Commitments are clarified, next steps, and any further follow-up
  - You can/should come up with an action plan (i.e. what does each party do net)
  - You can/should make clear the benchmarks and corresponding consequences (if any)
  - You can/should look for strategies rather than solutions

Chapter 12 - Get Going
- Name One Thing: Ask - What's one thing you see me doing that gets in my own way?: It forces a clear and prioritized answer. It can be a good opener
- Listen For Themes: Looks for themes rather than focus on one singular thing.
- Ask What Matters To Them: Ask - What's one thing I could change that would make a difference to you?: It forces focus and feedback that's personal to the person.
- Try Small Experiments: Test out feedback with small experiments
- Don't Decide, Experiment: Try out feedback you may find unconventional or even disagree with, it sometimes work, like random mutations in evolution
- Ride Out The J Curve: Use things like pre-commitment pacts to force yourself or others to make the right decision rather than rely willpower. Techniques include social pacts such as accountability check-ins or sharing progress publicly. Other fun mechanisms can be keeping score and things like that — gamify it. Or make monetary pacts to incentivize yourself (negatively often works best). The J Curve means that sometimes we have to sacrifice some unhappiness and comfort in the short term to take and act on feedback to end up in a spot that is much happier in the further future. As a corollary it can thus be helpful to pre-commit based on time rather than feeling to avoid this
- It can be helpful to discuss with your coach how you process things and what helps you the most. You want to help them orient their feedback for efficacy
- Ideally there is no hierarchy involved in coaching, but it is often inevitable. It can also be helpful in the reverse direction, as having someone coach you that is technically a subordinated has unique insight into the impact of what you do
- You may need to build a stronger relationship and share more and show more feeling in order for others to really coach you, if you feel like you aren't receiving enough coaching attention from others. Being open to advice can cause a two way information bridge, leading to more.
- Sometimes it can be helpful to discuss feedback you've received with others as they can see past blind spots you may have

Chapter 13 - Pull Together
- No feedback system is perfect
  - Focus on the trade offs of a system and understanding them rather

than just the benefits
- To do that you must understand the goals and costs
- Separate appreciation, coaching, and evaluation (ideally separate systems)
- Make the focus a growth mindset