

The Power of Accepting Feedback (Part 2 of 4)

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In the previous article we examine what is feedback. We ended with the message that feedback when given under good intentions is a highly useful tool for personal self improvement. However feedback is a highly under-utilized tool in the Malaysian culture as it is deemed highly un-Malaysian in nature due to its directness. Therefore many of us are unfamiliar with it and do not know how to react when feedback is given to us. In this article we are going to discuss what are we to do when we are given feedback.

Feedback can be given under many conditions and circumstances. Therefore we must practice this 4 simple steps to receiving feedback; openness, clarification, evaluation and action.

OPENNESS: Openness here signifies our attitude towards feedback. We must accept that feedback is beneficial to us and our development. Therefore when feedback is given, we should listen with openness and without comment. This is not the time to accept, deny and rationalize the feedback. This is the time to listen to what the person is saying without judgment and eliminate any emotional factor coming from the person giving the feedback.

CLARIFICATION: When the person giving the feedback has finished, don't make any statements, but do ask questions if we need further clarification. Once we are certain we understand the feedback always thank the giver for the feedback. This can be just a simple but sincere "Thank you". Such a response takes courage and is great for character building.

EVALUATION: Next we must allow ourselves the time to process the information given in the feedback. Take no action yet to change our perceived behavior yet. Use the evaluation time to watch our actions, behaviors and attitudes that are mentioned in the feedback. Simultaneously observe how others react to us. We need to evaluate for ourselves if there is any validity to the feedback given. If need be, discuss the feedback with friends or others whose opinions we respect. Ask them for their opinions as to the validity of the feedback but not their reactions to the feedback. Ultimately if the feedback holds true, we need to accept. If it is not valid, then we have learnt more about what we are not.

ACTION: Once the feedback is validated and accepted, we need to consciously find ways to improve ourselves and be aware whenever this behavior or attitude of ours' arises. Additionally we can always get support from our friends in reminding us whenever we slip back to old our old ways.

Initially this whole process may be difficult. However with practice and perseverance, feedbacks will become less painful. We will learn to appreciate the value of feedback and learn how to put it into a larger perspective to allow it to help us achieve our dreams.