

Giving and Receiving Feedback: Skills for Academics from Outdoor Education

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Motivation

- Graduate students and postdoctoral scholars receive technical training in their field's advanced methods and knowledge but are not trained in leadership and communication skills that are crucial for academic and personal success and wellbeing.
- As trained outdoor educators and academics, our project translates communication and feedback skills from outdoor education programs into a toolkit for academics.



Methods

- We used Anchor to host our 4 episode podcast and will make it available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.
- We recorded the podcasts over Zoom using the "Record Audio" feature. We enabled original sound when recording to facilitate later editing.
- We followed most of the procedures for recording the podcast over Zoom from this reference: Harris, E. October 19, 2020. "How to Record a Podcast over the Internet (Using Zoom)." *Sound Mind | The Blue Journal*. <https://blog.bluemic.com/podcasting/how-to-record-a-podcast-using-zoom/>
- To edit the podcast, we used GarageBand for MacOS.
- To compile the infographic and Podcast cover art, we used www.canva.com and Procreate for iPad.
- We disseminated both the infographic and the podcast through our own departments and social media as well as the Grad Studies marketing channels.
- We compensated our two interviewees with \$150 gift certificates to acknowledge the value of their time.

Project Goal

To address the lack of training graduate students and postdocs receive in leadership and communication, we created a podcast and infographic to provide graduate students and postdocs with a toolkit for giving and receiving feedback in academic contexts.

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK FOR ACADEMICS

(LESSONS FROM OUTDOOR EDUCATION!)

TONE

- BE POLITE
- BE CONSTRUCTIVE
- BE DIRECT
- USE "I" STATEMENTS
- EMPLOY PRAISE SANDWICH AS APPROPRIATE (BALANCE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEEDBACK)
 - "YOU FRAMED YOUR QUESTION WELL, BUT YOU MIGHT CONSIDER ... OVERALL, GOOD JOB."



SPACE

- MAKE SPACE FOR OTHERS TO GIVE YOU FEEDBACK ("DO YOU HAVE ANY FEEDBACK FOR ME?")
- MAKE SURE OTHERS ARE IN A SPACE FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK ("IS IT OK IF I GIVE YOU SOME FEEDBACK RIGHT NOW?")
 - IF THEY SAY NO, IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU
 - FEEDBACK CONSENT IS IMPLIED IN SOME SPACES (INFORMAL SEMINARS, ETC)

TIMELINESS

- MAKE SURE YOU GIVE SOMEONE FEEDBACK ON A TIMELINE THAT IS USEFUL TO THEM.
- GIVING FEEDBACK SOONER MEANS
 - THE RECEIVER CAN ACT ON THE FEEDBACK QUICKER
 - THE MEMORY OF THE TOPIC IS FRESHER
- HOWEVER, SOMETIMES PEOPLE NEED SPACE TO PROCESS BEFORE GIVING FEEDBACK



PEER FEEDBACK

- SOLICIT FEEDBACK FROM YOUR PEERS AS WELL AS PEOPLE WHO HOLD POWER OVER YOU (YOUR SUPERVISORS/ ADVISORS/ DEANS/ MENTORS)



POWER BALANCE

- UNDERSTAND THAT PEOPLE EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT BARRIERS TO GIVING FEEDBACK AND HAVING THEIR FEEDBACK VALUED
- MAKE SURE TO ASK FOR FEEDBACK FROM YOUR WHOLE GROUP (NOT SPECIFICALLY THOSE WHO HAVE SIMILAR BACKGROUNDS/EXPERIENCES TO YOU)
- DON'T BE DISMISSIVE OF THE FEEDBACK YOU ARE GIVEN
- FOR CONFLICT SITUATIONS, CONSIDER BRINGING IN A THIRD (NEUTRAL) PARTY TO MINIMIZE POWER IMBALANCES

TAKE THE NUGGETS

- YOU DON'T HAVE TO ACT ON ALL THE FEEDBACK YOU ARE GIVEN - REFLECT ON IT, BUT LEAVE IT TO THE SIDE IF IT DOESN'T SEEM HELPFUL
- CONSIDER THE INTENT WITH WHICH THE FEEDBACK WAS GIVEN AND THE EXPERIENCES OF THE PERSON GIVING THE FEEDBACK - THESE FACTORS MAY HELP YOU DECIDE HOW TO HANDLE THE FEEDBACK.



ACRONYMS

VOEMP:
VENT, OWN, EMPATHIZE, PLAN

SMART:
SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, AMBITIOUS, REALISTIC, TIMELY

DEVELOPED BY CHARLOTTE AMBROZEK AND OLIVIA WINOKUR
LISTEN TO OUR PODCAST: THE ACADEMIC EXPEDITION

Results

- We produced 4 podcast episodes, ranging in length from 25 minutes to 35 minutes, and one infographic.
- We provided listeners with a basic feedback toolkit in episode one.
- In episode two, we interviewed Mark Holton (Cornell Outdoor Education co-director) about lessons from feedback outdoor education for academia and feedback for situation with conflict.
- In episode three, we interviewed Sidney Woodruff (UC Davis Ecology PhD student, MUSE mentor) about feedback in situations with power dynamics and creating structures for feedback in academia.
- In our final episode, we recap the main takeaways from the two interviews and our initial toolkit, as well as identifying how different concepts from the episodes fit together. We also walk listeners through the infographic we put together – pictured at left.
- In our infographic, we distilled the main takeaways from the podcasts and toolkit and created a visual representation that can be displayed in an office or other communal space.

Special Thanks

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