

# Taking the “difficult” out of difficult feedback: understanding generational differences that matter

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# Disclosure of relationships with industry

I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

# Have you:

- ever given difficult feedback?
- ever had a feedback session not go the way you intended it?
- ever wondered if you are having an intergenerational difference?

# Learning objectives

- To review common challenges and best practices in giving feedback
- To discuss intergenerational differences and how they impact feedback
- Cases

## The bottom line

Generational differences lead to highly-problematic issues in perception and important assumptions that result in communication breakdown.

Understanding these differences may enable more effective communication, i.e. when giving feedback.

# Feedback: best practices

- Honest
- Systematic: highlight (+) and constructive
  - avoid the “hit-and-run”
- Frequent: more like a running conversation

# Feedback: SATNA

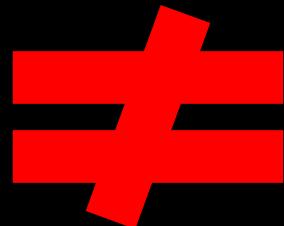
- SET IT UP: time, location, emotional level
- ASK: ask how things are going
- TELL: tell your feedback
- NEXT STEPS: offer suggestions on how to improve
- ASSESSMENT: set a time to assess how the improvement plan is going

# Feedback: common challenges

- Time/ timing
- Honest
- Emotional responses

Why do people get so emotional?

What you say



What they may hear

# Example

“I will supervise you while you freeze Mr. Smith’s AK’s.”

What you say

You need to be watched at all times, like a child.

What they may hear

Intergenerational differences contribute to misunderstandings, communication breakdown.

What you say



What they may hear

# Where did the “generations” come from?

- defined by age, shared events, cultural forces
- differ in their approach to the workplace
- have important traits and values that may be helpful to remember when it comes to giving feedback

# Introducing: Dr. Baby Boomer

Age: 1946 – 1964



Key traits:

- witness to change
- loyal
- seek security

Work values:

- workaholics
- step-by-step promotion
- collaborative
- leader w/ credibility

# Introducing: Dr. Gen X



Age: 1965 - 1977

Key traits:

- Grew up with job insecurity
- Focus on results
- Technical excellence
- Pragmatic

Work values:

- Self-reliant, entrepreneur
- Work-life balance (slacker)
- Like feedback
- Leader w/ credibility

# Introducing: Dr. Gen Y & Z (Millenials)



Age: Y (1978 – 1990)  
Z (1991 – 2000)

## Key traits:

- Over-parented
- Can do
- Everyone gets a trophy
- Leader who listens well

Work values: “How does this organization fit in MY life story?”

# What is Gen Y known for?

- High demands & expectations
- Disagree openly re: mission, decision-making, reward system
- Less likely to heed hierarchical organization

# Is Gen Y lazy? No.

- Have respect for structure, authority, rules, reward systems
- Don't want independence
- Will do grunt work (as long as it is being noticed)
- Want responsibility before ability
- Have close relationships with prior “boss” (aka parents)
- Need close mentoring (+ their iPhone)

# Focus on Gen Y

- most productive generation in the workforce
- generation in the workforce that needs the most guidance
- high-performance requires high-maintenance management

How can we give them feedback to help them succeed?

# Cases

## Case 1

Program director notices that resident Y only sees 4 patients during an afternoon clinic (compared to 8 seen by other co-residents).

The PD approaches the resident after clinic.

# Case 1

“You need to pick up the pace in clinic. Your colleague Z sees twice as many patients as you do.”

What you say

“You are lazy.”

What they may hear

Issue: judgement of work ethic

# Analysis: what are they really thinking?

This resident needs to work on increasing clinic efficiency.

What you are trying to say

I can't believe my PD just told me I am lazy. I feel like I am working as hard as I can. And I am stressed about mock boards. Why are my efforts not being recognized?

What they think

# Feedback session

SET-UP: not busy (ie not in clinic)

ASK: How is your clinic going?

TELL: You are seeing fewer patients than your colleagues. I'd like to help you become more efficient in clinic. What do you think is going on? How can I help?

NEXT STEPS: improvement plan (be specific)

ASSESS: Let's check in at the end of the month to see how it's going. We can review your patient schedules using EMR.

What you could say

# What about the feedback sandwich?

- Feedback sandwich may not work
- Positive to constructive feedback: 4:1
- Highlight the (+):
  - shows that you notice what they do well
  - reinforce what they should continue doing
  - value their strengths and their weaknesses
  - conveys commitment to them as an individual

## Case 2

Senior faculty member notices that resident Y is using her iPhone throughout the lecture.

The faculty member approaches the resident after lecture.

## Case 2

“Please stop texting your friends during my lecture. I wish you would participate more in the discussion.”

What you say

What?! I am being accused of not paying attention in lecture.

What they may hear

Issue: role of technology

# Analysis: what are they really thinking?

Assumption: why does this resident pay more attention to their iPhone than to me? I am the world expert on psoriasis and this is disrespectful. Why are they always texting?

What you are trying to say

I am hearings lots of clinical pearls and want to write them down in Evernote. Why do they always think I'm posting on FaceBook? This guy could benefit from some 21<sup>st</sup> century technology.

What they think

# Feedback session

SET-UP: private

ASK: How are things? What did you think of my lecture?

TELL: I notice that you are using your iPhone a lot during my lecture. I'd like to figure out a way for you to be more engaged.

NEXT STEPS: improvement plan (be specific)

ASSESS: Let's check in at the end of the month to see how it's going.

Given your tech savvy, maybe you could help the department come up with dermatology-specific smart phrases for the new EMR?

What you could say

## Case 3

Senior residents send an email to the PD asking for more academic time. They state that their academic time

has been taken over by patient care issues, looking for jobs, charting on the new EMR.

They offer to revise the master resident schedule to help identify clinics that don't require as many residents so that seniors can have extra academic time.

## Case 3

“We should be able to revise the resident clinic schedule to create more academic time for senior residents. We will do all the hard work to make this happen.”

What they say

“We want to be the master of our own schedule.”

What you may hear

Issue: decision-making, hierarchy

# Analysis: what are they really thinking?

The old schedule is antiquated.  
The clinics could run more  
efficiently with fewer residents.  
We are willing to work (ie revise  
the schedules ourselves) to  
make more academic time.

Residents

Who do these people think  
they are? Why must they  
always be seated at the  
table? What are they  
doing with their academic  
time?

PD

# Feedback session

SET-UP: in private (PD + senior residents)

ASK: How are things going? Can you help me understand what is happening with your academic time?

TELL: Acknowledge/ Active listening. Explain why things are the way they are now = institutional memory.

NEXT STEPS: Speak to their primary concern(s)

ASSESS: Let's check in at the end of the month to see how it's going.

What you could say

# Do you always have to say yes?

- No: Don't lose control and hand it over
- Key reminders:
  - Gen Y needs structure
  - Respect for rewards system
  - Need limits or reframing (context)
  - Need to be heard

# What does Gen Y think about being a resident?

- Highly motivated
- Highly productive
- Will work hard if noticed and clear career trajectory
- Seem independent but they're really not

# What does Gen Y need from us?

- ongoing guidance (n.b. parenting style)
- to be noticed – both (+) and (-)
- structured approach: teach them how to be managed
  - tell them what you need
  - teach them how your organization works
  - be honest
  - be consistent

# Conclusions

- Best practices of feedback are still true.
- Understanding important generational differences may help to work more productively with and better manage Gen Y. Feedback is a key tool for this.
- Gen Y residents make unique contributions and bring incredible potential for growth to your department. How can you harness this potential?

# NOT EVERYONE GETS A TROPHY



HOW TO MANAGE GENERATION Y

BRUCE TULGAN

Bestselling author of *IT'S OKAY TO BE THE BOSS* and *MANAGING GENERATION X*

# The Dermatology Foundation

**has supported & advanced  
my career.**



