

FEEDBACK LOOPS

EP #51

“Do I need a life coach?” You’re listening to Episode 51, with Rhiannon Bush

Welcome to the Do I need a life coach? Podcast. We’re here to discuss the ins-and outs- of the life coaching industry and give you tools to use, to see for yourself. I’m your host, Rhiannon Bush. Mother, management consultant and a passionate, certified life coach.

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I have a really good friend of mine who on occasion I've asked questions of and she's reacted in a way that may has made me feel like I've almost offended her.

And the reason I want to talk about this is because I've spent a lot of time analysing this and overthinking it and with this particular friend I've come to the conclusion that it's not that I'm being too forthright in a way that she couldn't handle because while I'm honest and sometimes blunt and lacking tact, I've also experienced her that same way. But she seemed to do it in a way that had finesse. I've always admired her for her quick wit and tongue and how fast her brain works. She can work incredibly fast from a mental standpoint and I have always found that to be so impressive. Add to that her ability to have a definite opinion on things, plus her sense of humour, she's an absolute force to be reckoned with and I've always adored her. We've been friends for well over half our lives. I was a guest at her wedding and we see each other more frequently now because despite the fact that we've both gallivanted around the world, we've both come back home to Tasmania to raise our children and have our families.

But her reaction when I have made odd, off the cuff comments has led me to believe that I have either a] offended her, or be] that we may not be as close as I feel we are. So it feels a bit like a one-sided relationship, where I feel like I can be honest with her and I can really ask her big questions, whereas I'm not 100% sure she feels the same way. I don't believe she feels that level of safety and comfort with me, that I feel with her.

Now, do I know whether any of this is true? No. I don't. Because I've never asked.

But if either of my assumptions were correct based on the reactions she's had in the past, and i mean the recent past, then I would advise her on a few things. The first would be that if my questions offend her or she finds a bit forward, to simply tell me that. And having that conversation with me requires an openness and a safety zone, whereby I can absorb her feedback in a way that I feel safe enough to validate, and clarify anything I am not clear





on, and also to share my side and how I feel about things. This can't be done without psychological safety and trust.

To really kick that conversation up a gear, I would ask for her to give me some time and whether that's a few days or a few weeks depends on the honest feedback, but I would like that time to actually think about all the things she is said, and absorb how she's feeling about it, to just have the time and space to calibrate in my own mind and for myself, whether I believe that to be true or false. Because if I believe it to be true I'll be able to see where she's coming from. But if I believe it to be false, then at least by having the time and space to consider it thoroughly, I'll be able to put the emotions aside long enough to get some really great clarifying questions, to then continue on with the flow of the conversation and find resolution in an amicable way.

This type of feedback loop is really important where you care about the other person's feelings. In some instances, you may or may not care about the relationship. As I say this, I know I want a relationship with her. For all the reasons I spoken about. She's someone I consider to be a very good friend and an amazing person. Somebody I really enjoy spending time with, and someone I have always enjoyed being around. But if that's not how she feels, then what I want may not be viable. It may not be achievable. Because while I'm all in to find resolution, I'm not all-in for feeling judged, misunderstood and like I'm walking on eggshells. There are boundaries. And in the case of those boundaries repeatedly being breached (my rule of thumb as I've aged is 3 strikes you're out), what I would ask is that we respect one another's' feelings and where we're both coming from, and move along. Which would break my heart a little bit but sometimes I question whether it's best to hold on which would be for the purposes of enjoyment, sentimentality, and longevity; or whether it's best to move on and create new space in life for different opportunities and new energies.

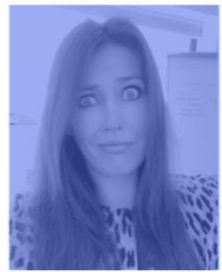
This is applicable to friendship, work colleagues, leadership, family...

If this is something that resonates with you, if you have, for instance, friendships where you think your definition and their definition of what a 'friend' is and how a 'friend' should behave differ, is there a way to bridge that gap or is it too wide? Only you can answer this question. Should you stay or should you go?

If it helps, get really prescriptive about it. Consider how you behave as a friend, leader, colleague, sibling, parent. Things you do, conversations you have, and how you hope others feel with you based on that. Let that guide your boundaries and expectations of how others treat you and communicate with you.

At the end of the day, as long as you have clear boundaries – with yourself and with them, remembering that you can't expect them to be a mind reader so boundaries must be communicated, you'll be able to identify when and if those boundaries are breached. And from there, any corrective action that





may need to be taken. Whether that 4th breach, for example, is the catalyst for a conversation, an intervention, mediation, or walking away.

It doesn't have to be a dramatic, emotional ordeal but it might be. Depending on the relationship and depending on what you think you're attached to.

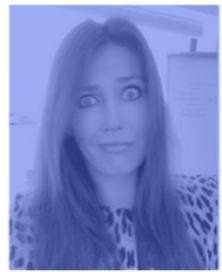
I'll never forget where I was sitting, in a classroom with a big yellow wall, listening to an interview panel where a CEO said "I don't want your feedback". It was a huge lightning bolt moment for me because I'd never considered that perspective before and I found it incredibly powerful. He was making the point that if you aren't striving for what he was striving for, and putting yourself out there the way he was, and getting a similar or better result, he didn't have the time to listen to what you had to say. He didn't want it. And why would he? And it was profound for me.

Whether it was because I've always thought respecting your elders was important, and having compassion and kindness for people which caused me to behave in a way that meant I listened to others to, at the very least, consider their opinion before agreeing or counter arguing, has instilled the thought that others opinions matter, and that everyone is entitled to their opinion is something I believe to be true. So this new concept of "thank you, but no thank you I don't want your feedback", was an abrupt awakening for me. I've since heard Brene Brown also talk about being in the arena and unless you're in it, from the spectator seating you don't get to comment.

It's also a great way to shut a conversation down when you're not open to discussing it with that particular person. I was talking to one of my best friends recently about how when you have a baby, everyone feels entitled to give their opinion. And she was giving me an example of one of her family members who feels like she can weigh in on how one should live their life and the choices they should make. And we were saying how the simple use of the line "thank you, your feedback's been noted" not only shuts down the conversation, but leaves the other person feeling heard but with a clear line in the sand that the conversation isn't going to continue. Obviously, it depends on your delivery, because that can be an incredibly patronising sentence when delivered that way, but said with grace and a smile, it's a very clear way of saying thank you, I've heard you, and I we're not discussing this anymore. It's a great line – feel free to use it.

It's taken awhile but I no longer fear receiving feedback. I actually welcome it. And what I have learnt is it when you maybe have a bad apple or someone who is toxic in say an organisation that otherwise is fairly culturally sound and aligned, more often than not, it's not only the organisation that isn't happy, but that individual person isn't either. And that doesn't need to be a nasty conversation that involves attacking or reprimanding or shaming. Instead, it needs to be a factual conversation about performance outputs, and what those performance outputs mean for them, for the broader team, and for the organisation and stakeholders. The impact of when those KPIs aren't met. And then a plan can be developed to support that individual and re-





evaluate to allow space and time and support for improvement. And so there's a choice to be made - stay and commit and improve, or leave. And again, it shouldn't be harsh or said with judgement, it just has to be factual and said with grace and a smile.

That doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be received that way. And all you can do your best to prepare for the conversation, show others the same courtesy you would expect to receive in the same situation, and respond with your clear boundaries and expectations for what needs to change to bridge the gap and make it work. Anticipate and have strategies in place to manage the worst possible reaction.

I'd read a lot about CEOs who would start at companies and do big clean-outs of legacy staff, systems and processes. And then I was working for organisation where a new CEO stepped in and the restructure that took place and the redundancies that were made and for the first time I understood why. And the majority of it is conformity. As a new CEO trying to make waves, they want staff who are at their inception as well, not resistant to change or holding on to the way things were. I want fresh energy, full of enthusiasm who are also moldable to the CEO's way of doing and being.

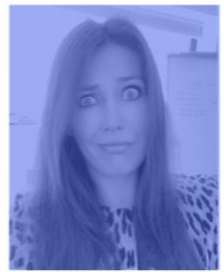
The thing about that new CEO and the way they want to run things I think is similar to how most of us want to be in relationships. We're not necessarily looking for conformity, but we're looking for comfort and for relationships where we can be our authentic selves. And if being ourselves requires justification or clarification for the things we do or say, that can often lead to a feeling of being misunderstood and misinterpreted which doesn't lay a strong foundation for psychological safety and trust. If anything, it feeds into fears we're all biologically hardwired with which is that we're not worthy or lovable.

Get clear on how you like to be treated and how you treat people in relationships. That may include the five love languages just applied in a workplace instead of an intimate relationship. But by taking the time to work this out logically, and even doing some self-reflection on where your strengths and weaknesses lie, you'll be able to get clear insights as to what triggers you when accepting feedback, or receiving a negative reaction from feedback you've provided.

Either way, doing this work can only make you clear on what you want and clearer in what you will and won't tolerate. It will make your relationships stronger and it will make you a better communicator.

If it's been a while since you've received feedback, or done something outside of your comfort zone that will cause you to grow and change, decide on three people you could ask for feedback from right now. Desired ahead of time what it is you're looking for. Not necessarily what you want as an outcome, but what do you want clarification about and why? And remember, to only





ask people for feedback whose opinion you feel is valid based on their current title, current results or other form of achievement that gives them the authority to provide accurate and valuable feedback for you.

Have a great week my friends, I'll see you soon.

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Also, if there are any topics you'd like me to cover specifically about life coaching or the life coaching industry, visit rhiannonbush.com to contact me. Thanks for joining and I'll see you in the next episode of Do I Need A Life Coach?!

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