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USE BADLY DELIVERED FEEDBACK TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

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Hello, there. Welcome back, all of you who are just out there, working your asses off, trying to get it done, trying to figure out how to love what you do, be awesome at it, and be the success you know that you are totally capable of being. I want you to know you are in the right place.

Today's topic is one that is near and dear to my heart. That is about how to deal with feedback, specifically, what I'm calling, how to use badly delivered feedback to your advantage. Because let's be honest, a lot of it is not really well structured in terms of feedback. Not everyone is very thoughtful about how they give feedback. And that really is unfortunate because feedback is important. You can definitely benefit from feedback. We need to hear how we're doing. We obviously have a perspective on how we're doing. We have goals. We think we're doing great, we think we're not doing great, or whatever.

Feedback helps us gauge how other people are seeing us, whether or not that matters to us is a different thing. But it's another data point that we can use to manage our performance, help us get to where we want to go, and how to grow as quickly as we want to grow accelerating our growth. Fortunately, most people suck at giving feedback. Mostly because they're doing it in a way to not really help you get better. But in most cases, particularly if it's your boss, it's about how to get the work done faster or better, not how you get the work done faster or better.

A lot of the time when we get feedback, it is served up as criticism. It sounds critical, it is delivered critically or passive-aggressively, or on the fly, not very thoughtfully, let's say. So what happens is, that the person receiving the feedback often takes it really personally, and can't really hear the feedback being delivered. Moreso is focused on how that feedback is making them feel. So it's really unfortunate, the way people give feedback. I have done it badly, too.

The way we give feedback today, in this really busy world without giving a lot of thought really is a true tragedy and a big opportunity for us to help our team grow in the future and an opportunity for us to get better at it. But that's not really what I want to talk to you about today. I don't really want to focus on how to change how other people give you feedback. My job is to help you deal with the realities that you're dealing with so that you can

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enjoy your job, be really great at it, and get to where you want to go faster. That's my job as a coach is to really help you not only manage the feedback in terms of your mindset but also help you perform at your best.

What I really want to talk to you about today is how not to make other people's really messy feedback into a mess for you, into a mess for how you show up. Because like I said, feedback is a good thing. Unfortunately, not all feedback is relevant, and not all relevant feedback is delivered effectively. Those are the two things we're really going to cover today. Not all feedback is relevant so how do you really understand what feedback is relevant or not? And not all relevant feedback is delivered effectively.

I used to think about how we deliver feedback in a way people can hear it. If you are a boss of people, you should definitely think about that. I've done podcasts on that. I am going to talk about that in the future but I'm not really going to be covering that today. Because there is a responsibility for the person giving feedback, they really should ideally be focused on how to give it in a way people can hear it. But as I said before, that is not the case most of the time. If it is for you, you're really lucky. It's not the case most of the time.

Rather than trying to change other people, the thing that you can control your job is to learn how to hear all of the feedback, learn how to weed through it, decide what to keep, and avoid using it against yourself by taking any of it personally. Your job is to listen to all of it. Then you can decide what you want to keep, you're going to weed through it, decide what you want to keep, and also decide what you're going to discard. That's a big part of this. And the whole time, you really need to avoid using it against yourself by taking it personally. That's something you control.

I know that's a pretty big ask. It's a pretty big ask to not take feedback personally, particularly if the feedback is really direct. Let's just call it really direct, served up critically, coming from someone with authority. That can be a really hard thing to not take it personally. When that happens, it is so easy to make the feedback mean, *something's wrong with me, I'm not good enough,* and really beat the crap out of yourself. But we all know, that even though we do it constantly, I'm the queen of doing it sometimes.

We all know that beating the crap out of ourselves never works and leads to all sorts of other messy bullshit behaviors that are a giant waste of your time and a giant waste of your talent, which is why I really wanted to help talk about today how to use all the feedback, even the badly delivered feedback to your advantage and be able to figure out how you want to manage it. I want you to be able to go from maybe using the feedback against yourself sometimes, to someone who really has no problem with any kind of feedback. Bring it on.

However messy you are with it, *I can take it, I can deal with it, I can figure out what I want to use, and I'm confident enough to put aside the stuff that I don't agree with. I don't care who you are.* That is where ultimately, we want to be able to get to so that we don't see feedback as a problem.

When I worked at McDonald's, there was a man, Jacques Mignault, who is the president of McDonald's Canada now. He's a fantastic guy and he would always say, feedback is a gift. Then we would jokingly say, *yeah, and every day is Christmas around here.* Because feedback was coming at us from all different directions and not all people were using it well. They would say things like, *Well, I'm just trying to help you. I'm just giving this feedback. You can do with it what you want to do with it.* Almost like if you don't listen to the feedback and use the feedback, something's wrong with you. And there's nothing wrong with you.

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I want you to know that right now. You do not have to use all the feedback given to you if you don't want to. But you want to make sure that if you're not going to use it, you know why you're not going to use it. The reason being, *I don't like that person, I don't care what they have to say* isn't always the best reason, or *they made me mad, and that hurt my feelings* isn't a great reason not to hear the feedback. That's the part where we don't take it personally. And we can actually see beyond who's giving it and how they're giving it to see if there's a nugget of truth in there that's actually really useful to us.

If you're able to do this in a calm way and be able to cut through all the other person's bullshit, this is going to help you grow faster and it's going to help you build relationships within your organization because people are going to see they are open. And that you are not only open to hearing the feedback, but also confident enough to know who you want to be, and which feedback you're going to use, and not really be a fuss about what it means and how it makes the other person feel if you don't use their feedback.

They think that you have a good strategic rationale as to why you're not going to take it now and maybe it's something that you think about later. Knowing how to hear the feedback, use the feedback, and which feedback to use is a skill that will serve you the whole of your career. The very first thing you want to do in all of this, regardless of feedback or not feedback is get really clear on what you believe about yourself right now. What are your rock-solid beliefs about yourself? Just list them out. What do you know about yourself to be true regardless of what anyone says about you? That's really going to set you up to be clear about how well you know yourself, and how well you believe in yourself.

If you say, *I'm a really smart person. 95% of the time, I got my head screwed on straight.* So that if anyone ever challenged your strategic thinking or your smartness, let's say, your intelligence, you could be like, *No, I'm good. Let me hear what you have to say. But just because you're thinking that I'm not smart, doesn't mean I'm not smart.* If you believe you're someone who truly has the best intentions for people, and you really believe that about yourself, when someone tells you that maybe you communicated something without thinking or you hurt someone's feelings, or whatever, you don't have to freak out about it because you know that your intentions were good.

You can listen to the feedback, you can try to understand what they're saying, and you can decide whether or not you agree with it because you know that your intention was always to help and not hurt. You don't have to take it personally because you have a strong belief in yourself. And I would suggest that really kind of goes through in the areas where maybe you get a lot of feedback or where you know your strengths are, where your growth opportunities are that you know of, write down in all cases, what you really know about yourself, and what you really believe in yourself.

If someone challenges you, you want to be like, *No, that's not true. That's not where I'm coming from.* Write all those down, and get really clear about that. I think that we're not clear enough in general. And we're always looking to say, *Oh, maybe I was wrong.* A lot of people will kind of default to *I'm getting this feedback so I must be wrong.* That's not always the case. Sometimes it's the way the other person is seeing it. They've mistaken something, or they're misunderstanding something, or their way of doing is not the same as yours. And that's okay. It doesn't make you wrong.

Just get really clear on what you believe about yourself. And you can get really clear too on the areas where you want to grow and within those areas that you want to grow, what you already are doing well, and where you want

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more feedback so that when you're hearing the feedback, and someone says something in an area that you know you want to grow, you can listen more attentively, and listen from a place of curiosity, not defensiveness. You can still decide later whether or not you want to actually implement that feedback. But listen from a place of pure curiosity, and ask questions like, *Oh, why would you say that? Give me the example. And why did you think that? Okay. Let me think about that. Thanks for sharing that.* Then keep going.

It doesn't have to be a big drama show, even if the person is coming at you like it's a drama show. That's kind of what I want to talk about next. But for so many reasons, it's really great to have like a one-pager. You can have it on your iPad, your tablet, or whatever of the things that you really believe about yourself where you're great, where you're growing, where you want feedback so that you have a really good understanding of who you are and what you believe about yourself.

I've already said that when most other people give you feedback, they don't think about it. It's a reaction to something or they're not really being thoughtful about it, or they have an agenda for giving you the feedback. That's not everyone. There are bosses out there, peers out there who are thoughtful, who know where you want to grow, who want you to succeed, and who are giving you feedback from a true place of supportiveness. The thought in their minds when they're giving the feedback is *I really, truly want to help this person grow.*

And you know when you're getting the feedback if that's the person's intention, versus if the intention is, *you're going to make me look bad.* That's another one or *you're not doing it in the way that I think you should do it.* That's another way people think. It's when someone's thinking, *you're not doing it the way I think you should do it or the right way.* When they're coming from that place, the feedback that they're giving is often a criticism, not universally.

Just think about yourself for a second. If you're thinking, *you're not doing this right*, what kind of feedback do you think that you would give someone with the mindset of *you're not doing this right? You're not doing this the way that I want you to do it. You're going to make the team fail.* If you were thinking those things, what kind of feedback do you think you'd be giving?

A lot of the time, people give feedback from those places because they're not really thinking about what's best for you. They're thinking about it and what's best from a bigger picture. And you can decipher those things. Sometimes you weren't thinking about it like *you're not doing it the way that I would want you to do it.* And you can sort of tell too, when you're getting the feedback, if that's what they're thinking. The first thing I would say to you is when you're getting feedback, think about where that feedback is coming from. What must they be thinking? If you're not sure, probably it's always good to ask because you don't want to make any assumptions.

You can ask the question, *where is this coming from?* Ask questions, and try to define where this is coming from. Then you can make a more informed decision whether or not you're going to use this feedback because depending on who gave it to you, and where it's coming from, you can actually have more data points to help you decide if this feedback is useful to you or not. I think the thing to remember in that is when people deliver feedback from that kind of a place like *you're not doing it right,* or *you're not doing it the way I would want you to do it,* or *you're going to blow this up for the team* or *get your shit together*, or whatever is going through their head, it's important to remember that the way they're delivering the feedback is about them, not you.

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I'm not saying you don't have to listen to the feedback. I'm not saying that their feedback isn't relevant. But the way they're packaging it up, whether it's too direct, not very generous, as a criticism, or whatever; it's about them, not you. I tell you that so that you understand not to take it personally. Because when someone is freaking out about *you're going to blow this up for the team, you're not doing this and it's going to fail, and we're all going to fail*; if someone is giving you feedback from that kind of a mindset, they're giving you feedback from fear.

They're afraid of failing. They're afraid they have anxiety. It's about them. If they were in a calm mindset, they might sit down with you and talk about like, *This was the objective. Here's where we are right now. What's going on? What's getting in your way of being able to get there?* They might actually have a conversation with you about it, and help you get your own feedback, which is obviously the best way. It's way better to sit down with someone and have a post-mortem conversation, where you as a leader ask questions than it is to give them direct feedback at first. It's always better that way.

But if they're just spewing feedback at you, I want you to know that it's not about you. It's about them. There might be things in there that you need to do, and that's okay. But you know what, they're being critical. They're being stressed out, or they're being held, because they're having some kind of thought and emotion that's making them act that way. They're being messy. It's their mess. They're stressed out about the way their boss is going to handle it, they're stressed out about the way the clients are going to react, they're stressed out about having to work late, I don't know, they're stressed out about something.

They don't like the way you're doing it because it's not the way that they would like to do it. And they think they are the smartest person in the room. Whatever the reason is, it's their mess. We're all humans, we all have a mess. I'm not suggesting that you judge them for their mess. I just want you to know, it's their mess. You don't have to own it. It's not on you to take it personally. This is where I say, let their mess be theirs. Don't make it your mess.

The way you make it your mess is when you then get angry and you think *Oh, this is so mean. I can't believe they said that to me. I was trying my best. They don't want to hear my opinion…* When all of those thoughts are going through your head and you get angry, resentful, or hurt, then all of a sudden, you're becoming messy. And you don't have to. I want you to realize that you have a choice. Just because someone is being messy doesn't mean you have to get messy.

You can actually, in that moment, realize *this person is being messy right now. But they are trying to tell me something. So I'm going to get past the mess and I'm going to have two or three questions. I'm going to ask this person to really get underneath why they're giving me this feedback. I'm not going to buy into the mess*. You can actually act that way. I'm not saying it's always easy. I'm not saying you'll get there every time. Maybe even if you got there 50% of the time, that's going to be awesome. That's 50% less drama than you have right now when you get feedback.

So yes, I totally encourage you to try and practice. Just start with things like, *Oh, this person's being messy. I wonder why. I wonder why they're giving me the feedback this way. I guess they're having some drama of their own.* Just defaulting to their first is going to make your next action, the next thing that comes out of your mouth calmer and less at the effect of you taking something personally. So think about it that way. Their mess is their mess. Don't make it your mess.

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And within that, once you know what you believe about yourself, and you know that sometimes the messy feedback is from the other person's mess, not your mess, and you're willing not to take it personally, then you can from a place of calm and rationality say, *Is this feedback important to me?* You don't have to debate with the person at that moment. You can just take the feedback, you can think about it, and you can get back to them. Sometimes you don't have to get back to them at all. It really just depends on who's giving you the feedback.

But if it's your boss, your boss's boss, or a peer that you work with really closely, like every day, across departments or whatever, then you might want to say, *Listen, I thought about what you said. Here's what I think. Here's where I am now. Here's what I'm working on, and here's what I'm going to take from that feedback*. Or you might want to say, *Here's what I think your objective is by giving me this feedback. So here's how I'm going to do it that works for me. What do you think?*

I think that's always a good thing, too, because people give feedback with actions. Let's say, you just gave a presentation, or you just made a recommendation for the department or whatever. Let's say, you were giving some information on behalf of a group of people with an audience. Instead of your boss coming to you and saying, *How do you think that went?* And you say, *From my perspective, here's how I thought the audience took it and had a discussion about it.*

Instead of talking like a post-mortem, *here's how I think things went, which was your objective, what would you do differently next time*, instead of having that kind of good rich dialogue with you, more strategically, and sort of a two-way dialogue, they might just come to you and give you actions. *Listen. Next time, I really think that you need to practice more and you should have spent more time on this point or this slide. I'm not sure that everyone got the message so you better circle back with X, Y, Zed person, and make sure that they understand what they need to do next.*

There are speaking actions versus strategy. They just want to get it out. They have all these things that they were thinking in the meeting, and they just want you to know what they're thinking and they want to dump it on you. Then they think, *Work done, check, check, check. They know what I want them to do. See you later.* That happens a lot. And because the other person is speaking in actions, we think, *Oh, they want me to do these specific things.* But really, they're speaking in actions, but there's an objective behind the actions.

They just aren't clear enough or thoughtful enough to speak in objectives. Their objective, of course, was to make sure certain points got across. And let's say that everyone knows what they need to do. Those were the two objectives, but they didn't say that to you. They gave you this laundry list of things that you need to go and do now.

When someone speaks to you in actions with their feedback, if they spoke to you in objectives, like *I wanted to make sure these points got across, I'm not sure that it did. And I want to make sure everyone knows what they need to do.* If they spoke to you in actions, then you could recommend the way that you want to handle it. But they've not spoken to them. They've told you how they think you should handle it specifically, for next time. *I just thought it was helpful, because the way that they would handle it may not be the way you would want to handle it.*

That's where a lot of people get caught up with like, *I can't be myself, I can't do things my way. I'm not being authentically myself.* If someone isn't going to give you the space to figure out how you would handle it, don't

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complain about it. Don't whine about it. Don't go home and complain to your spouse or your friend about it. Create the space for yourself.

You can take it back to the objectives and you can say, *So are you telling me this because you're worried that people didn't understand certain points and that you really want to make sure everyone knows exactly what to do?* And they say, *Yes, that's really what I'm worried about.* So you say, *Let me think about that because you've got some really good ways of handling it. I'm also thinking X Y, Zed. Can I have some latitude to think about the best way to handle it?*

You don't even have to ask that last question. It depends if it's coming from your boss or your boss's boss or someone senior to say, *Oh, can I have some latitude?* But you can actually always bring it back to the objective and get past the actions because people like to talk in actions. They think, *let me not only tell you what to do, but how to do it* and it's up to you to create your own space. Don't look for other people to create space for you.

What I'm saying to you with feedback is, to be really clear about who you are, what you're great at, where you want to grow, and where you really want the feedback. Understand that you don't need to take it personally, even if it's delivered in the shittiest way possible and the most thoughtless shitty stressed-out way possible. You can still know that it's not about you, it's about them. Their maths is theirs, don't own it. Don't take it on for yourself. And people will speak in actions to you. People will tell you how to do things.

You can create your own space by bringing it back to the objectives, understanding what's going on, and saying, *Let me think about that. Here's where I think I would go with that. Do I have the space to do that? I hear what you're saying. There are some good ideas in there. I'm going to make sure that we've resolved this by the end of the day. I'll follow up with you, and I'll get back to you.*

I guess the last thing I really want to suggest to you is to remind you that we're all a little afraid of failure. I am, you are, your bosses, the president of your organization, the chairman of the board, and everyone is a little afraid of failure, different levels of failure. I may not be afraid of the same things and failing at the same things you're afraid of failing at but we all have it. The reason we all have it is because we're wired to have it. Our brains evolved to have it.

We have what I call the *survival* brain. It's your animal brain. It's the oldest part of the brain that is wired to avoid danger. And so when we feel that in today's world, most of our failures are not going to cause our death, basically, it just means that we're going to maybe be embarrassed, learn something, or not get the result that we were hoping to get. That's really what failure means. Maybe in the case of work, it's going to cost money. Maybe it's going to hurt our reputation sometimes. But it really just depends on the situation.

I just want to say everyone is afraid of it. The reason I'm telling you this is because oftentimes when we get feedback, our brain automatically feeds us this thought, *Oh, I've done something wrong. Someone is giving me feedback, which means they don't like what I did. I'm in danger.* That's the way our brains are wired to respond. That's great because it helps us from stepping off cliffs and running into traffic and all that kind of stuff. But just because someone gives you feedback, you can actually retrain your brain when it thinks, *Oh, it's wrong to actually respond with no.* This is just feedback. Everyone gets to have their own opinion. *Only my opinion matters. Let me listen to what they have to say. And then I get to decide what to do next.*

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For example, for the longest time, I would send emails out to people to work with me, make an offer, or whatever it was, and I would never look at the results. I would never look at the open rates of the emails, the click rates, or any of those things, the conversion rates of sales pages, or all that kind of stuff because I was afraid to see that I might not be doing as well as I hoped I would. It's just normal stuff. Then I was like, if I actually want to do well in this company, if I actually want to do well in what I'm doing, I have to look at the numbers.

It's the same at work when I was in marketing. Of course, I would constantly be looking at share numbers. I would constantly be looking at the performance numbers of projects we had, and all that kind of stuff. That for me sometimes wasn't scary because it wasn't personal. But this is my business, my content, my creative that I was putting out there. And I was like, *If people don't open it, they don't like it. That means I'm not good at what I'm doing. That means they don't like me.* I was taking it personally.

But really, the truth is, if I don't look at those numbers, if I don't see how often people are opening my emails, clicking on my links, taking up my offers, or the conversion rate between someone who lands on a page and signs up, if I don't look at that, then one, I'm never going to get better at what I'm doing. I'm never going to learn anything. And two, I'm not going to be able to give my audience what they need. I need to know what people need to be able to decide if I want to make a change.

I know. I get it. I totally understand when you don't want to look at something or when you take the feedback personally, but I want you to know that you don't have to. It's within your control not to. Other people's mess isn't yours. Really, at the end of the day, feedback, I think Jacques was right, feedback is a gift regardless of the packaging, regardless of how beat up the boxes, there is a nugget of value in there that you can decide to keep or not. But not looking at it, not listening to it, and making it messy for yourself isn't going to get you anywhere, my friends. I want to make sure that you all hear that.

If you have questions about feedback, you should just email me back, and ask me some questions. I love responding to listeners because those are the people who really want to get better at what they're doing. So please do send me an email at mel@melsavage.com. I'd love to hear what you're thinking about this, and what else you need help with when it comes to feedback. I also want to offer you to come and have a free 45-minute career strategy session with me.

As I said before, my job is really about helping you enjoy what you're doing. Because sometimes we fall off and sometimes we think, *I don't love this as much as I used to love this.* But that's just our brains getting in our way. We get started to convince ourselves that we want to start over. We want to either quit this job or quit this industry altogether and do something else. I know that happens 10 to 15 years into your career. *Is this really what I want to do? Isn't there a passion out there for me?*

I want to tell you that you can be in love with what you're doing right now. I know it feels like you're not in love with it right now. But believe me, falling back in love with your career is totally possible and so much easier than starting over. You get to love whatever it is you want to love. And I want to be able to help you with that, not only help you enjoy your job again. When you enjoy your job, you perform better. So I'm all about performance, optimizing performance, and helping you really love what you're doing.

If you want to talk about that, then come book a free 45-minute session with me. At this session, I basically, hear what's going on with you, where the problems are, and what you've tried so far to make it work. Then I'm going to

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tell you why I think what you're doing isn't working. And I think that's the most important thing because it's such an important piece of information to know why what you're trying isn't working in any situation that you have, especially at work with a boss or with a role or with a trying to love your job or whatever it is. Why isn't it working?

Once you understand why it's not working, your brain just wants to do it anymore, which is amazing. That in itself, that insight alone is worth the 45 minutes of your time. But of course, I'm not going to leave you hanging there, I'm also going to recommend to you what you can do about it in the future and how you can make this work for yourself. So if you want to have those discussions for your career, then just book a 45-minute session with me. It's at melsavage.com/chat. You should do it.

If you're serious about your career, and you really are struggling right now with not having as much fun as you want to have at work, and is starting to impact your performance, this is going to be 45 minutes well spent, my friends. So I encourage you to take the time to have the session at melsavage.com/chat.

I look forward to talking to you next week because we're talking about accepting feedback this week. Then next week, what I'm going to talk to you about is where to go for feedback. I was just having this conversation today with a girlfriend of mine that I reconnected with. And we're talking about who to ask for what kind of feedback and really soliciting the feedback for yourself is so important. People give you random feedback all the time but going out there and soliciting the feedback that you want from the right people is so important.

I'm going to talk about the difference between mentors, coaches, friends, and spouses. Who to go to for what? All three of those things are really important in your career. But sometimes we go to the wrong person for the wrong thing and that creates some messiness for us. I'm going to talk all about where to go for the kinds of feedback that you need.

I will talk to you next week. And if you want to talk about where you are with your career right now, make sure you book that free career strategy session at melsavage.com/chat. Okay, my friends, have a great week. Bye for now.

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