



Rifka Schönfeld **STRATEGIES**

THE NEWSLETTER FOR OPTIMUM SUCCESS

TIPS ON SOCIAL SKILLS FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

Feedback: Why is it so hard to listen to?

Dear Readers,

This week's newsletter will discuss the topic of accepting criticism...

Rifka Schönfeld
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QUESTION:

Why is it so hard for me to accept criticism? I feel like it will help me grow, but I never want to listen once it is being said. Is there something I can do to change this about myself?



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ANSWER:

Harvard professors **Douglas Stone** and **Sheila Heen** argue that we “swim in an ocean of feedback” throughout our lives. As children, we get hundreds of grades each year; as young adults, we hear about our strengths and weaknesses in *shidduchim*, and we have performance evaluations throughout our personal lives and careers.

In their book, *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well (Even When It's Off-Base, Unfair, Poorly Delivered, and Frankly, You are not in the Mood)*, Stone and Heen note that when we give feedback, we notice that the receiver isn't good at receiving it. Conversely, when we receive feedback, we notice that the giver isn't good at giving it. They wondered what made feedback so difficult. And, they realized that the key player is not the giver, but the receiver. Therefore, they created a book whose primary purpose is to give you an understanding of why getting feedback is so hard. They also provide readers with some tools to help them recognize, digest, and grow from that any kind of feedback (unwanted and unwarranted included).

You might think that there are multiple ways that things can go wrong with feedback, but Stone and Heen have identified three specific triggers that make hearing and growing from the feedback more difficult:

- **Truth Triggers.** We can be thrown off by the content of the feedback itself. If the feedback is off, impractical or false, we can feel frustrated and wronged.
- **Relationship Triggers.** This trigger is generated by the person giving you the feedback. You might feel that the person has no expertise or authority in that subject and should not be addressing you, or you might feel that you deserve better than to be criticized by that person. In these instances, our focus shifts from the feedback itself to the person who is giving it.
- **Identity Triggers.** Identity triggers focus on *us*. They don't focus on the substance of the feedback or the person who is giving it. Instead, they cause us to rethink who we are. We feel unsure of ourselves – and feel threatened and off balance.

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