

How to Receive Feedback

A Practical Guide to Staying Regulated During Critique

You can practice how you take in feedback the same way you practice any clinical skill. The urge to argue, explain yourself, or go quiet when someone corrects you isn't a character flaw. Your brain reads the correction as a threat to your standing before you've had a chance to think it through. This tool gives you a way to work with that response instead of getting swept up by it.

Recognize Your Signal

Everyone has an early warning sign that feedback is about to become a threat response. Knowing yours is the first step to working with it instead of getting pulled under by it.

When I receive critical feedback, I notice first in my body:

- My chest tightens
- My jaw clenches
- I stop breathing normally
- My face feels hot
- I want to interrupt or explain immediately
- I go very still and quiet
- Other: _____

When my threat response activates, I tend to:

- Argue or explain why I was right
- Shut down and go quiet
- Agree just to end the conversation, without actually processing it
- Dismiss the feedback internally even while nodding along
- Other: _____

The 5-Second Reset

The moment you notice your signal, pause before you respond.

1	2	3
Breathe Inhale through your nose, then exhale slowly, about twice as long as the inhale. This calms your nervous system in real time.	Feet Press your feet into the floor. This brings your attention back to the present moment.	Reframe Silently: "This is about what I can improve, not about who I am."

Five seconds is enough to shift from a threat response to a thinking response.

Receive With Intention

Let the feedback land before you respond. Don't build your answer while the other person is still talking. If you feel the urge to explain before they finish, that's the threat response talking. Let the feedback end first.

Paraphrase before you respond. "***So what you observed was [behavior].***" This confirms you heard what was actually said, not what your threat response interpreted.

Separate the behavior from your identity. "***I did [one specific thing] in that moment.***" Naming the one behavior in that one moment is what keeps it from turning into a verdict on your future competence as a nurse.

The One Question to Ask Yourself

- ☑ Close every feedback conversation with: "What's one thing I'm going to do differently next time?"

This turns the conversation from evaluation into action, and it gives you something concrete to do instead of something to replay in your head.

After the Conversation

If you leave still activated, angry, humiliated, or dismissed, the feedback hasn't been processed yet. Give yourself a few minutes, then come back to these three questions:

1. What was the specific behavior that was named?
2. What's the actual patient safety or professional implication of that behavior?
3. What's one concrete change I'll make next time?