



Common Responses to Feedback

It is only human to have an emotional reaction to feedback and that even if we all react differently, some of the most common reactions happen in stages. SARAH is a time-tested acronym that describes how feedback can be experienced:

REACTION/STAGE	Common thoughts/paradigms
SHOCK / SURPRISE (+/-)	"This is not what I expected..." "Whaat?!"
ANGER	"These people are out to get me!" "How dare they? They don't see the full picture!"
REJECTION	"The people who rated me don't know me well" "They obviously didn't understand this question" "This report is completely wrong"
ACCEPTANCE	"I know this part is true..." "Let me try to understand what they are trying to tell me here" "I'm good at my job in general but I need to focus on this..."
HELP	"I'm not sure what they meant with this response, let me ask questions" "X is really good at this competency, let me ask for advice" "Let me ask my mentor for more feedback on this..."

These are all normal human reactions. It's important to work through your feedback and to seek additional information if there are things you still don't understand. By being open to the feedback you will be able to move through the phases and into acceptance and your self-development plan will be well informed and effective.