Residents’ perspectives on feedback, impression management, coaching, and mindset in residency training: a qualitative study

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I do not have an affiliation (financial or otherwise) with a pharmaceutical, medical device or communications organization.

Je n’ai aucune affiliation (financière ou autre) avec une entreprise pharmaceutique, un fabricant d’appareils médicaux ou un cabinet de communication.
Background
Tension

- Low stakes, formative assessments
- Support professional growth

- Residents perceive that their performance has implications for formal assessment, permanent record, and even their training or career

Impression Management

Purpose

- Explore how resident physicians perceive feedback during postgraduate training
- Characterize the effect of perceived tensions between assessment and feedback on impression management
Methods

Approach: constructivist grounded theory
Context: Mayo Clinic Internal Medicine Residency Program
Participants: 15 internal medicine residents
Data collection: semi-structured interviews
Data processing: open/axial coding
Data analysis: regular group meetings, analytic memos, theory development, constant comparison
Results—Mindset

“Some people want to get better all the time, and some people think they’re already the best... It’s a way of thinking.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Mindset</th>
<th>Evaluation-focused, performance-oriented: “You’re taking care of patients, but you’re also trying to get good evaluations.”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth Mindset</td>
<td>Task-focused, learning-oriented: “We’re always learning. I’m always trying to get better.”</td>
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Effects of Mindset on Impression Management

Fixed Mindset

• “I don’t want to show that I don’t completely understand it, so I just kind of nod my head and just pretend to understand.”

• “Fine line” between admitting what they could do better and appearing “inferior.”

• “I think you asking that question [out loud] makes you look more vulnerable and inferior or makes you perceived that way, and so I think that inhibits people from [asking those questions more].”
Effects of Mindset on Impression Management

- “The only way I can become a good doctor is to ask questions and learn as much as I can. Whether it goes on an evaluation or not, that’s up to the [supervising physician.]”

- “In residency, you want to ask clarifying questions when you don’t understand something.”

- “I ask as many questions as possible because we’re all in the process of learning. That’s why medicine is called a practice. Nobody knows everything, so ask questions.”
# Mindset and Impression Management

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<th>Mindset</th>
<th>Impression Management</th>
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<td>Fixed, Evaluation-Focused, Performance-Oriented</td>
<td>Displaying Competence, Hiding Weaknesses</td>
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<td>Growth, Task-Focused, Learning-Oriented</td>
<td>Displaying Weaknesses as Opportunities for Growth</td>
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Promoting Fixed Mindset

Permanence

• “Anything that goes in any evaluation is fair game to be referenced at any point.”
• “Although evaluations in essence are subjective, when you put them into a system, into the computer, and you’ve got [program leadership] pulling comments, putting that into your program letter, at that point they’re fact. They’re objective.”

Consequences

• “If your next job or raise depended on what that [evaluator] thought you were doing, you wouldn’t necessarily want to draw attention to your deficiencies and only just show them everything that you could do well.”
Promoting Growth Mindset

Trust
• “If it is somebody that I really trust, who I think is looking out for the best in me, I don’t shy away from feedback.”

Relationship
• “I’m going to take more to heart from feedback given from someone I really respect, who I’ve gotten to know over time, who I’ve seen interact with other people than maybe someone who I’ve worked with for only an hour and then gives me some flippant comment. It’s like ‘You don’t even know me, you don’t even know what I do or how I normally work or anything.’”
Fixed Mindset
Hides uncertainty

Growth Mindset
Admits uncertainty

Relationship
Trust

Consequences
Permanence
Discussion

• Context matters: constant assessment may promote a fixed mindset that could hinder resident professional growth

• Faculty relationship may affect resident mindset
  > Coach—trust and relationship, growth mindset
  > Assessor—permanence and consequences, fixed mindset

• The current formal assessment system may limit the ability of faculty and residents to build coaching relationships
Thank you.

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