

## Unit #5 – Handout #1 – DEALING WITH FEEDBACK

The first thing to know is: there WILL be feedback. No matter how carefully you plan and revise your outline, write the rough draft, song-spot with your collaborators, revise to incorporate songs, and condense your work to create a first draft, you will NOT experience the lovely fantasy moment when you present your work and hear the words “it’s perfect”. If you can’t live without those words – get into another line of work. Remember that, in fact, the better shape your draft is in, the more feedback it may engender. But there will be feedback. Writing is re-writing – get used to it now. Try to think of the feedback as your friend as it will help you focus your revising process.

Rules of thumb:

1. Don’t get defensive. There is no need to defend yourself against feedback. Your first draft will engender questions – but a good dramaturge doesn’t need to hear the answers to the questions. Your job is to revise your work so that it either answers the questions, or makes them go away. What this basically means is: LISTEN to your feedback, but do not RESPOND in the room.
2. Don’t make quick decisions about revisions. You will be tempted to come up with quick fixes at the very moment you are receiving feedback – don’t do it. Listen to your feedback, make notes, and then go on with your life for a few days (depending on how looming your next deadline is!). If you give the feedback a chance to filter into your subconscious, you’ll generally find that what resonates will stick, and what doesn’t will fall away. But you won’t be able to predict which will be which when you first receive the feedback. A comment that seems ludicrous to you during a feedback session may surface a few days later as the key to a brilliant discovery. Something you wanted to act on immediately when you heard the feedback may turn out, upon reflection, to have too many negative ramifications. Bottom line: everyone’s first response is defense. So do yourself a favor – and don’t allow yourself an audible first response.
3. If you are presenting only portions of your work at a time (as in the Full-Length Curriculum or General Workshop) – learn the ANMT mantra: MAKE NOTES, NOT CHANGES. You have a viable outline to which you are writing – keep writing until you reach the end of the project and get your first draft. Don’t try to implement revisions along the way – you’ll get yourself and your project into a total mess. The perfect solutions may not be apparent until you have completed the entire process, and the solutions that SEEM perfect initially may not ultimately be the best choices.
4. When you are ready to revise your first draft (usually after a completed first draft, public reading, and feedback session), do yourself a big favor and go back to the outline stage. Incorporate your planned revisions into the outline and revise that outline until you are happy with the plan. THEN begin the revisions.