

60 I Like, I Wish

Featuring the work of Julian Gorodsky,
with inspiration from George M. Prince and Rolf Faste

This is probably the single most powerful assignment in this book. If practiced regularly, this assignment is the soil in which a culture of openness and excellence can emerge and grow. If you want to make just one change to improve your work, your family, your team, or your organization, consider this.

Once you've completed a project, it's easy to move right on to the next thing without taking a moment to reflect. But debriefing an experience is a powerful developmental tool that helps you make just about anything better. A good debrief propels you into an active approach to learning and improving.

You can append this assignment to almost anything: a meeting, a class, a project, or a family reunion. It helps you create space for constructive feedback, regardless of how skilled the group is at creative work.

This activity demonstrates the value you place on making the work better. If you're leading it, you show this value by listening, not talking. It helps you avoid defensiveness and shows that you're not threatened by the ideas of others—including participants or people who have less decision-making power than you. You express through your actions that you believe everyone's ideas can

make the work better. This has a profound impact on the culture of your group.

At the close of any shared experience, dedicate fifteen to thirty minutes to collect and hear feedback. If you make this a ritual, your group will become accustomed to thinking and sharing in this way, and the check-in can even become a five- to ten-minute quickie.

Organize the participants in a circle if that is possible.

Describe your commitment to improving—your relationships, your work, the class, your team meeting, and so on.

Invite everyone to reflect on the experience they've just had and to offer feedback using a statement that begins with "I like . . ." or "I wish . . ." You might give an example, such as "I liked how our teams were interacting with experts today" or "I wish the pace of activities had allowed for more time to pause and document what we were absorbing." (It's not necessary for people to offer *both* an "I like" and an "I wish.")

Allow anyone to start, and avoid going around in a circle. People process their reactions and are ready to share at different speeds. Some people will be more active; if

you're leading, it's your job to understand the right moment to pause and ask folks who have already spoken to hold off until you get to hear from a few new voices.

You may need to gently encourage participants to stick to the format at first. Sure, it's a little awkward, but the framing really helps people stay succinct and constructive. You might find that you need a third category that affords people the opportunity to offer a semi-formed solution, such as "What if?" or "How might we?" Encourage people to snap their fingers if they hear something they want to echo—this helps avoid duplicate comments.

Record the feedback using a method that's visible to everyone. For example, you might have someone type each comment as it's being shared and project it on a screen that everyone can see. People value knowing they've been heard.

If you're the formal leader of the group, you have a hard job throughout, and it's

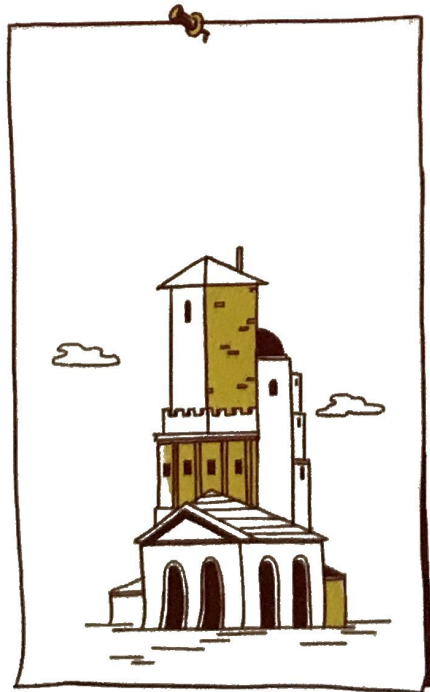
imperative that you take the role seriously. You cannot respond to the feedback except to say thank you. You may ask for clarification, but your job is to hold the space for the feedback to emerge, not to deal with it in the moment. You can, however, participate and offer your own feedback—be sure to stick to the regular format!

When the group has finished, you'll know it (this comes with a little practice).

Later, you can privately review the likes and wishes and decide what you're going to act on. Separate the act of soliciting and receiving feedback from the act of evaluating and selecting what feedback to use. You'll get much better advice.

You can also adapt this assignment into a personal practice you do solo: jotting down a list of personal likes and wishes after a meeting or an experience gives you a habit of viewing everything as both valuable and improvable. You can even solicit likes and wishes anonymously. But the magic »

I LIKE



I WISH



of this assignment comes from creating and holding the space for a group to do this live, together. It is the essence of creative collaboration: making a space for change and iteration to occur is doing the work, not something separate from it.

I Like, I Wish was very important to the way the d.school itself evolved. It works because it's not *I Like, I Hate!* It helps everyone hear positive feedback where it's warranted, and negative feedback as a constructive opportunity for improvement. That balance is very important. Too often organizations hear only one or the other. But things are never that binary: there's always good and bad, and different people see and experience things differently. Using this assignment regularly helps you hold space for those differences to become visible and to coexist in the same space.

During the very first course at the d.school, students would sit through a class period, and at the end be asked to say what they liked and wished about it. It was mind-blowing to the students that they could comment in real time. Their opinions were taken seriously. The teaching team would respond to the feedback and make changes that affected the next class session. It was very exciting, and it helped us move quickly to make things better.

We didn't just use this method with students; we used it with everyone. When I started at the d.school, it was led by a group of established faculty members. Everybody was a founder. There were a lot of sensitivities about collaborating; faculty members were used to teaching alone and being the stars. It was hard for people to put their significant and well-deserved egos aside to work collaboratively. But here we were, teaching students to take risks and share their own creativity. This activity spoke strongly to me as a way to walk the talk in how we were creating a safe atmosphere.

In California, we let it all hang out. But not all cultures are wide open. Some people needed encouragement to say something that may be perceived as critical in front of an authority figure. This means a little more hand-holding or a willingness to demonstrate how you do it. If you want to hear direct feedback, you have to meet people halfway. I Like, I Wish can help with that.

—Julian Gorodsky

WHAT IF

