

When Feedback Feels Like a Slap: Teaching, Critique, and Growth

Hello and welcome to Mediumship Matters, with me, Hannah Macintyre. Today's subject is a genuinely interesting one for me, because it's triggering me by way of triggering my students.

I've noticed I'm attracting more advanced mediums lately — people who've listened to the podcast, learned with me, then signed up for advanced training. And it's split the room right down the middle. Some people come to me expecting straight-talking, opinionated, direct feedback — which is my personality, no doubt about it. Others find that same directness devastating. It's been breaking my heart a little, and it's pushed me into a lot of self-reflection about my teaching style.

The problem with “nice”

What I think is happening is that a lot of people teaching mediumship don't actually know how to teach well. People are learning in very lovely, very nice groups — and nice is wonderful at the beginning. We all want nice. But once you're stepping into the real world and taking money in exchange for readings, nice stops being the point.

I'm aware of the irony here, coming right after an episode about not needing to be a professional medium — but this thread follows on regardless. The flip side of choosing to put your readings out there is opening yourself up to critique and opinion. You know that empathic dread when you can feel someone's disappointed with the reading you've given them.

A lot of people come to train with me wanting validation — don't we all — but they don't really hear the validation when it comes. They hear the parts where I have to say something needs work, especially in an advanced group. That's triggering for people, and I'll admit it's triggering for me too.

Teaching beginners is a different energy entirely — you're coaxing, encouraging, creating a space to try something for the first time. It's lovely watching someone light up realising they could do it after all. But advanced mediums working with the public need to be held to account. They need to be told where the gaps are. Most people, understandably, don't want to hear that. It's a genuinely tricky balance, and it's made me reflect hard on what I'm offering, right in the middle of yet another transition with spirit.

Closing the Gateway

At time of recording, it's February 2026, and I've just dissolved an offering I thought was here to stay — which makes me feel uncertain, because I worry it looks like I don't stick at anything. But it served its purpose for a couple of years, and the energy moved on.

A few weeks ago, heading into the new year, I felt the energy behind my Gateway membership had completely gone. Sue, who co-teaches with me, was creating brilliant content — we were deep into trance

work, and I loved teaching it — but the life had gone out of it. I wondered if I was simply burnt out; between Spirit Social, the Gateway, readings, teaching, and writing, it might finally have caught up with me. So I asked spirit to show me. Since the start of the year, over 60% of the Gateway's members had already left. Energy doesn't lie — they'd felt it too.

That sent me back to look properly at the difficulty of teaching beginners and advanced students in the same space. I've written before about getting frustrated when beginner questions came up in circle for the fourth time, and feeling like the bad guy for that. But there's a real lesson in it: you genuinely can't teach beginners and advanced students well in the same room. Beginners get overloaded and stuck in their heads instead of moving into spirit. Advanced students need the nitty-gritty, the specific feedback — and even Elevate, marketed this year as intermediate-to-advanced, turned out too tough for some at that level. So from 2027, Elevate will be clearly advanced only.

Spirit and I went back to the drawing board and landed on mediumship clinics — demonstration opportunities run as and when I have time, structured across three levels: Foundations (beginner), Clarity (intermediate), and Mastery (advanced). That structure means something like a contract with each student: sign up for a level, and the feedback will match the energy you're calling in. It's not that I expect advanced students to struggle — if anything, they'll get the toughest lessons of all, because that's what preparing to work with spirit actually requires.

Why growth needs friction

Out of all this — and yes, it's left me a bit angsty — there's real growth for me too, and an evolution in how I'll teach: more online coaching and courses built for specific areas, specialties, and levels, rather than one ongoing membership trying to serve someone who's been with me three years alongside someone who joined last month.

What I want to say to all of you, wherever you're at, is this: once you set the intention to grow and deepen your mediumship, you will get feedback that's hard to swallow. Being told you're amazing feels wonderful. But vague praise doesn't actually help you. Growth needs friction. Development needs refinement, not just validation.

As a teacher, I believe in you — and because I believe in you, I'll give you the tough lessons rather than sugar-coat things or hold back the truth. It's rather like how spirit works with us, isn't it? We'd all love a bump-free path, but growth requires the bumps.

I wouldn't be the teacher I am without the genuinely horrible lessons I got from some abominable teachers of my own — the ones who belittled me with no explanation of how to improve, or why what I'd done was wrong, just a flat put-down. That's exactly why I always try to explain the why: why something matters, and what impact it has on the energy of the sitter, and therefore on the reading itself.

Take a phrase like “they have a loving presence around you, they're proud of you.” Comforting, lovely — I say things like that in readings all the time. But it isn't the backbone of a reading, and it isn't evidential. It's true that all spirit loves us, is proud of us, is around us — so comfort like that fits everyone, which

means on its own, it isn't mediumship. Comfort is not proof. Proof builds trust. Trust builds healing. You can't skip those steps.

Knowing the difference between a bad teacher and a hard lesson

If a teacher makes you feel small or belittled as a matter of course, you shouldn't be in that space — full stop. But if it's the occasional piece of tough feedback, try to ask yourself: are they trying to help me, or hinder me?

I'll admit I'm not immune to finding feedback hard myself. Recently at the gym, an instructor called me out over the mic in front of everyone for putting my bar down mid-set instead of pushing through with the heavier weight — and the whole room joined in cheering me on. I wanted the ground to swallow me. I still don't love being the centre of attention, oddly enough, for someone who works platform mediumship for a living.

But she was right. I'd been putting that bar down for over a year, telling myself I couldn't manage it the whole way through — when actually, I could. I'd just been carrying an old story about my own strength and resilience long after it stopped being true.

That's the same thing that happens with mediumship feedback. When a teacher critiques your reading, they're not erasing what you've already achieved — they're doing exactly what you asked them to. If you join a mediumship clinic or sign up for Elevate, you're telling me: my mediumship is at a certain level, help me make it better. The only way I can do that is by telling you honestly what isn't working. I don't expect anyone to find that delicious.

There's a real irony in mediumship training too — most students will never quite show their teacher what they're truly capable of. I did exactly the same with my own teachers: every time I sat down in front of them, I somehow reverted to a version of my mediumship five years out of date. Nerves, probably, but also perhaps just the nature of a learning space. If you brought your absolute best work into that room, you wouldn't really be learning — you'd just be performing.

So: chin up. And it's fine to move between advanced, intermediate, and beginner work depending on where you're at — there are seasons in mediumship, just as in anything else. Sometimes it's time to push and grow, sometimes it's time to coast and heal. Both are valid.

If you're on an advanced course, stick with it and take the knocks — it means your teacher believes in you. Endless “very nice, very nice” doesn't mean that. The same goes for readings: I'd rather get the occasional no from a sitter, because it means they believed there was a chance to get it right. Nothing but yeses all the time usually just means people have switched off. And if your teacher's feedback never makes you squirm a little, never gets a reaction out of you — are they really teaching you, or just being kind?

If you take an advanced course and think, that was brutal, I'm not sure I even want to keep doing this — that's your sign to step back to a beginner or intermediate course and let yourself coast for a while. It's not a sign to give up. It might be a sign to rest. Just be aware of what you're signing up for — it really is a bit

like a contract. Advanced course, advanced feedback. Beginners' course, and I'll take you gently by the hand.

I hope this helps you make some big leaps forward. Be brave, hear the critique, and try not to take it personally — it's medicine, meant to help you grow. Thank you so much for listening, and I'll catch up with you again soon.