Graceful Self-Promotion

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Graceful Self-Promotion

- What is graceful self-promotion?
- Why is it important?
- Why is it difficult for physicians (especially women physicians)?
- What are some strategies for graceful self-promotion?
What is Graceful Self-Promotion?

• Self-Promotion: Emphasizing your self (your best attributes) to others in a positive way
  • Goal is to be seen positively by the target audience

• Graceful: Doing it in an effective manner in your own professional context
  • Takes into account the culture of what you do and where you work
Why is Graceful Self-Promotion Important?

• Many of us were raised to believe in a meritocracy
  • Work hard (+ talent) = success

• In the real world, this does not always lead to career (or personal) advancement
  • If no one knows you are working hard and/or no one knows what you have accomplished, they will not think of you for promotion, leadership positions, etc
  • You can’t sit around waiting for someone to notice
    • Prevent “tiara syndrome!”
    • Avoid credit theft
Why is Graceful Self-Promotion Important?

• Research shows it is helpful
  • Those who self-promote have greater career satisfaction than those who don’t
  • Deans of US medical schools stated that the most common characteristic that differentiated “rock stars” from other faculty was self-promotion!

• Studies in the psychology literature show that:
  • People feel less close to and more insulted by those who hide rather than share success
  • People may feel insulted or infer that others have paternalistic motives when they hide their success

Lucey CR et al, Acad Med 2010; 85(8): 1269-75
Why is this difficult for physicians?

• We do not want to come off as aggressive or arrogant and do not want to turn people off

• Medicine is a hierarchical system; we assume that the longer we have been there the more credit/praise/opportunities we will have

• Can be especially difficulty for women and those from specific cultures
Independent versus Interdependent Cultures

- **Interdependent**
  - Traditionally more common in women, Eastern, African, Latino, lower SES groups
  - Focus on relationships with others; concerned about effect of actions on others
  - Look for harmonization in relationships

- **Independent**
  - Traditionally more common in men, Western, white, upper SES groups
  - Focus on individualism, uniqueness, and self-confidence
  - Look for control
Women and self-promotion

- Women face more difficulties in career advancement than men
  - Implicit (and explicit) bias; microaggressions
  - Societal/internal messages preventing graceful self-promotion

- Why are women afraid to self-promote?
  - Impostor syndrome, Tiara syndrome…
  - Traditional gender norms and fear of violating them
    - “Backlash avoidance model” (BAM): women insufficiently self-promote because they fear backlash for behavior that is incongruent with traditional gender roles
  - Focus on perceived weaknesses
  - Lack of self-confidence to apply for positions unless they feel 100% ready

Kosakowska-Berezecka N et al, Front Psychol 2017; 8: 1884
Strategies for Graceful Self-Promotion

• Reset your view of it
  • NOT: Egotistical, selfish, unprofessional
  • If done right, you are *educating* others about yourself, not *selling* yourself
  • It is your responsibility for your career!
Strategies for Graceful Self-Promotion

• Find networking/collaboration opportunities

• Practice an “elevator pitch”
  • 2-3 sentences maximum
  • Who are you and what are you passionate about?

• Create a “Power Map”
  • Identifies people who have an impact on your career
  • Those who have power OVER you
  • Those who you can work WITH to help one another
Strategies for Graceful Self-Promotion

• Strategies for networking
  • Look over meeting/conference agenda; target individuals that you want to meet
  • Proactively plan a time to meet
  • Know THEIR work (papers, contacts)
  • Follow up (send work of your own)
  • Join committees (local and national)
  • Be active on listservs/social media
Strategies for Graceful Self-Promotion

• Non-verbal cues
  • Take a seat AT the table (not on the side)
  • Lean in (literally); hands on the table
  • Eye contact and (sometimes) smile

• Verbal cues
  • Speak with confidence
  • Speak clearly/concisely
  • Avoid minimization
    • “I just wanted to say” → “I’d like to add”
    • “This isn’t my area of expertise but” → “I’d like to learn more about this area”
Strategies for Graceful Self-Promotion

• For interdependent people:
  • Speaking up does not mean you are selfish
  • Assume your input is as good as the rest of the people around the table
  • Look for mentors who are independent personality types

• For independent people:
  • Recognize need to adjust to others
  • Try to make your points/statements as interactive as possible – generate conversation
  • Recognize value of relationships (not just results)
Strategies for Graceful Self-Promotion

• Promote OUTWARDS
  • Find a network of colleagues (can be at different stages in your careers)
  • Promote each other to leadership ("Dr. X recently received an award for Y and I’m sure the division is very proud of his/her success")
  • Nominate each other for awards
Strategies for Graceful Self-Promotion

• Promote UPWARDS
  • Praise your boss/program director/chair for what they are doing for the division and why you appreciate it

• Promote DOWNWARDS
  • You will be seen as a role model, mentor, and sponsor
  • You will help others move their careers forward
  • They will be willing to help you in the future (letters of support for mentoring awards, letters for promotion, etc)
Strategies for Graceful Self-Promotion

• Align with your leadership/institutional goals
  • Your success is their success
  • “I know that one of the division’s priorities is research in XX, and I’m so happy that I just received a grant to study XX and hope that this will move our division’s mission forward”

• Share broadly
  • Local: within your group (online newsletter) and institution (webpage/newsletter)
  • Social Media: Post/Tweet about published articles, grants, talks, awards…
Strategies for Graceful Self-Promotion

• What NOT to do: Minimize!
  • “It’s only a small grant/award”
  • “I was really lucky to get this”
  • “Most of the groundwork was already laid when I started the project”

• Minimizing your accomplishments not only does YOU a disservice but also minimizes the person who is trying to offer praise
Be comfortable in your personal style, but also seek to improve

• Know your personality (introvert, extrovert, communication style)
• Ask trusted mentors/peers to give feedback on your style – both good and bad
• Be willing to make adjustments (but not radical changes) based on feedback
• Small steps at a time: “situational extrovert”
Resources

• Websites
  • https://connected.unmc.edu/infographic-tips-for-graceful-self-promotion/
  • https://www.figure1.com/post/graceful-self-promotion

• Book
  • Zaide Z, Rosenberg EI, Beyth RJ. Contemporary Challenges in Medical Education. 2019; University of Florida press

• Podcasts
  • Harvard Business Review “HBR IdeaCast” and “Women at Work”
QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION