



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

Characteristics That Deans of U.S. Medical Schools Believed Differentiate Rock Stars as a Group From Other Faculty, 2008*

Distinguishing characteristic	No. (%) of deans who selected characteristic
Are self-promoting [†]	47 (73.4)
Are hard working [†]	44 (68.8)
Are narcissistic [†]	43 (67.2)
Are opportunistic [‡]	41 (64.1)
Are charismatic [†]	38 (59.4)
Are politically savvy [†]	33 (51.6)
Are arrogant	31 (48.4)
Are insecure	19 (29.7)
Are good time managers	16 (25.0)
Have leadership ability	15 (23.4)
Are self-aware	14 (21.9)
Have strong social skills	12 (18.8)
Are collaborative	10 (15.6)
Have integrity [‡]	6 (9.4)
Are loyal [†]	4 (6.3)
Show self-control [‡]	3 (4.7)
Are flexible [‡]	2 (3.1)
Are empathic [‡]	0 (0.0)

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

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://drexel.edu/~/media/Files/medicine/drexel-pdfs/programs/program-elam/APS-articles/ELAM-APS-Graceful-Self-Promotion-Its-Essential-Morahan-2004.ashx?la=en>
- <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