

The gift of feedback

ME...? NEAT...? REALLY....?

You know that saying, "feedback is a gift"? Well, a friend I've known for years recently decided to share some with me.

"You're very neat. You're always neat - and sometimes it can be a bit annoying because I'm not."

My first thought was... Woah, hold on. Where did that come from? Neat? Me? Really? And why are you only telling me this now?

I briefly wondered what it would feel like to be a bit more messy. Not a thought I entertained for too long, if I'm honest – clearly that change felt like a step too far.

Then I found myself wondering why I was like that. What had made me that way. Maybe it was my Mum telling me to "clear as I go" when I was younger.

Or perhaps it came from the early days in my HR career - when you had to clear your desk every night, lock anything vaguely confidential away as soon as the dot matrix printer finished churning it out, or take five minutes to hide all the documents on your desk before going off for lunch or a meeting.

Whatever the reason, something has clearly stuck. And according to my friend, it's a part of who I am now.

It's funny how the things people teach us when we're younger stay with us for years afterwards. Things that become behaviours we don't notice in ourselves, but traits that are quite obvious to other people.

Anything like that happen to you?

And yes, if you're wondering, we're still friends. Although we've now agreed some principles around the timing and delivery of future feedback.

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