

Giving Feedback

To give feedback is to share with another person our thoughts, impressions and feelings on his/her behavior. It is a way of mirroring, with the personal bias of our perception. It is a valuable way to show how the other's behaviors impact others—us for example—and provide information that the person may not be aware of, so that she/he can change behavior.

What is feedback? Constructive Feedback is defined as “information that helps people decide whether their behaviors have had the intended effects”.

Positive feedback will reinforce more of the same.

Negative feedback will discourage it.

WHEN TO GIVE FEEDBACK

Be sure the recipient is open, let them know how you were impacted (using “I”) make sure they understand your message, and encourage them to check with others. Describe behaviors that can be changed; offer some suggestions if your intention is to be helpful.

HOW TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK

If you ask for feedback, be specific in describing the behaviors in question. Summarize your understanding by paraphrasing and asking questions. Remain open, rather than defensive. Aim for a least one feasible actionable idea.



How to Conduct a Feedback Session



1

Descriptive rather than evaluative

By describing one's own reaction, it leaves the individual free to use it or not to use it as she/he sees fit. By avoiding evaluative language, it reduces the need for the individual to react defensively.



2

Specific rather than general

To be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as to be told that "just now when we were deciding the issue you did not listen to what others said and I felt forced to accept your arguments or face attack from you."



3

Accounts for needs of receiver and giver

Feedback can be destructive when it serves only our own needs (our catharsis) and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end.



4

Directed toward changeable behavior

Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of some shortcoming over which she/he has no control.



5

Solicited rather than imposed

Feedback is most useful when the receiver has expressed the interest for it, when she/he has requested it.



6

Well-timed

In general, feedback is most useful when given at the earliest opportunity after the behavior in question, depending of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, and the presence of support available from others.



Checked to insure clear communication

One way of doing this is to have the receiver try to rephrase the feedback she/he has received to see if it corresponds to what the sender had in mind.



Validated by others, if possible

When feedback is given in a training group, both giver and receiver have the opportunity to check the accuracy of the feedback with others in the group. Is this one person's impression or an impression shared by others?



Not always change focused

Feedback is a way of increasing one's self awareness, clarifying one's identity and answering, "WHO AM I?" Feedback does not always lead to change but can be a corrective mechanism for those who want to learn how well their behavior matches their intentions.