

DIG IN

Giving and Receiving Feedback *Building Relationship for Impact*

"Feedback is like a gift from your mother. You don't have to wear it, but you can't return it."

We need input about how we affect others and we need to provide input about how others affect us. In communities, organizations, and individual relationships, feedback is a vital part of creating successful change in ourselves and in the world. Good feedback can...

- Clarify that we are on the right track in our work
- Strengthen a professional or personal relationship and build community
- Offer new perspectives and tools for how we create impact
- Bring up powerful feelings and challenge our ego
- Redirect our strategy, actions, and language

Guidelines for Giving and Receiving Feedback

<i>When giving feedback...</i>	<i>When receiving feedback...</i>
Make sure the timing is right for the feedback you are offering (and ask permission!).	Try your best to be open and non-judgmental about what is being shared with you.
Communicate your feedback in a simple, direct way.	Ask questions if what someone is sharing is unclear (rather than disputing what they say).
Talk about how the other person's behavior affected you...don't recommend changes or coach them.	You may/may not see the truth of what someone is offering. Try to acknowledge that it is true for them.
Go out of your way to make what you are offering beneficial (even if it is something difficult).	How you are reacting to the feedback: are you ignoring it, simply hearing it, clinging to it?
Check to make sure that what you are sharing is truthful for you (not a judgment about the person).	Can you see how what is being shared is affecting your relationship with the person providing feedback, with others, and in your work?
You don't need to cushion what you are saying, yet might find it useful to point out something that you appreciate about the other person.	Listen to what is being said about you, rather than forming a judgment about the person speaking.
Don't apologize (and don't say anything that you would have to apologize for).	Be gracious about what a person has shared. If the feedback is challenging, feel free to find a time to discuss it further with the other person or an ally.

Examples of Clear Feedback

"I wanted to thank you for getting me the event invitations on time...it will help with giving people enough notice and getting better turnout and more engagement."

"When you didn't show up for the event, it put extra strain on me and others who were coordinating. The day went well, but we could have really used your help."

"I remember agreeing that we were going to meet an hour earlier to go over the details before our meeting. I felt the meeting was awkward because we weren't on the same page."

"Thank you for sharing your feedback with me. What you offered was challenging, but I'm going to think about it and I'd like to talk more about how we can work better together."

Giving and Receiving Feedback Exercises

Using these approaches to giving and receiving feedback can help us practice this skill regularly.

- Always ask before giving feedback and ensure you have agreement (or give permission)
- Speak calmly and note your mood and why you are sharing particular feedback
- Think about or write down what you want to share before having the conversation
- Be prepared for different reactions based on what you are sharing

TALK: Preparing for Feedback Exercise (Individual)

- What is the current mood and environment...is this the right TIMING?
- Reflect on your feedback and why you are sharing it...is it AUTHENTIC?
- Is what you are sharing useful...will it promote LEARNING?
- How will you/are you offering this feedback...is it KIND?

Refining Feedback Exercise (Partners or Trios)

- Think of someone who you would like to give feedback (not too challenging)
- Describe this person (without directly identifying them) and the feedback to a partner
- Prepare what you would like to say in a single sentence
- Speak this to your partner, note how it feels, then ask for their reaction
- Practice 2-3 (or more) times to clarify what you are communicating
- Thank your partner for sharing/receiving the feedback
- If there is a third person, that person can act as an observer or coach

Reflecting on Feedback Exercise (Individual or Partners)

- Whether you have given or received feedback, how did it affect you? What are you feeling?
- What is your current mood? What (if any) story are you creating?
- What did you learn from getting or giving the feedback?
- Where is this leading you, or what actions do you need to take?

Handling Challenging Feedback

The information is always available; we're not always available for the information.

—David Allen

We can't always hear the feedback we get, and we don't always provide feedback gracefully. While we can practice how we improve communication, there will always be times that we need to deal with feedback that wasn't invited or shared awkwardly. In these cases:

- Do your best not to blame yourself or the other person—feedback is shared because someone cares. It might not seem that way, but they are invested in your relationship.
- Do something to clear your mind—go for a walk outside or do some other exercise, listen to music, or take a moment to sit quietly or write down how you feel.
- Share how you feel with a friend or colleague and ask for their support and suggestions
- Commit to trying again in the near future—don't let too much time elapse before re-connecting and clarifying your conversation.