

Effective Feedback

Giving and receiving feedback is all about preparation and practice. Below is an outline of some techniques for how to give and receive effective feedback, but practice and time is key to effectively providing it. Effective feedback is a skill and a style. Once you have the skills, you develop a personal style that separates you from others.

Skills Needed

- Teach yourself how to observe
- Be specific
- Prepare ahead of time
- Future focused and non-accusatory
- Balance feedback

To be successful with feedback, you need to be specific with your feedback. Saying “you did a good job” doesn’t specify what went well. The points below should be included in all feedback:

- WHAT is the observed action
- WHEN & WHERE the action happened
- WHY it is important to re-enforce/eliminate the given behavior
- HOW the actions affects others and the group

What if someone gets upset or emotional?

- Acknowledge that they are upset
- End the meeting and set up another time to talk
- Time will let everyone cool off and begin to think rationally

Constructive Feedback

Future Focus

When giving constructive feedback, do not dwell on the action you are talking about. Rather, keep the discussion focused on the future and how actions may cause problems. They made the mistake. Let them learn from it and do not destroy their confidence.

Ask Questions.

It is important to not come off accusatory when giving constructive feedback. Rather than beginning by talking about the correctable action, ask the person about the date and time. For example, “How did the meeting go last night with you residents talking about alcohol use?” Asking the question gives them control to tell their side. There may also be circumstances that you did know about.

Prepare and Practice

Pick a Location

Giving feedback to individuals often includes reflecting personal actions. Since you'll need to talk with this person about personal actions, be sure to pick a location that is quiet, private, and has seating for two. Sit directly across from the person to ensure direct eye contact.

Agree on Feedback

Many students and millennial generation employees have little experience giving or receiving feedback. As a result, many students are not prepared for it. Be sure to discuss how, where, and when they want to receive feedback. A team contract is often useful. Remember, you always want to give feedback in person, not over text, email, or phone. With asynchronous media, there is too much room for miscommunication (93% of communication is non-verbal).

Practice

When giving feedback, be sure to practice exactly what you will say and communicate. Brainstorm how the person may respond to your feedback and be prepared for those answers. Write down notes if needed, but go in confidently. If you are not confident, constructive feedback will not work. Remember your non-verbal behaviors say it all.

Observe Behavior

In order to give effective feedback, both positive and constructive, you must be able to observe the behavior and note it. Watch how others handle themselves under stressful and non-stressful periods. Specific actions to pay attention to are eye contact between people, how they say words in a conversation to others, body language, literal vs. figurative meanings of language, and behavior when the person is not supposed to be working.

Balanced Feedback

We all have been in meetings where everyone complains; no one likes those meetings. The same principle applies to feedback; no one likes someone who always is giving constructive feedback. Giving positive feedback as often as possible re-enforces good behavior, acknowledges that you care, and builds equity to challenge them later. As a general rule, give about five times as much positive feedback as constructive feedback.

The meeting is now over. Take time to follow up after the meeting. Giving a few days for both parties to think about the meeting is important.

You are on your way to success! Stop by the Campus Activities Office for more great ideas on how your team can achieve excellence!