

Why is feedback important?

How do we know if we are doing the right thing? And equally, how do we know we are doing it well?

Without feedback, we are cut off. We behave in a way that we think is right while remaining ignorant and in the dark.

Positive feedback, rather than telling us where we are going wrong, helps us enhance our best qualities. It tells us to keep going as we are – and perhaps more so.

While negative feedback might suggest a focus on our worst, it creates an immense opportunity for improvement when viewed in the right light. After all, an insightful critique provides a chance to grow and excel (Chappelow & McCauley, 2019).

Critical versus Constructive Feedback



Whether giving feedback to a staff member, peer, client, or service provider, it is crucial to understand how to make it valuable.

Indeed, **feedback can be constructive when either positive or negative, as long as it encourages growth.**

On the other hand, critical feedback serves little purpose other than to tell someone they are not very good.

We must, therefore, begin by considering the goal of feedback: improvement. The recipient should be clear about what has gone well and what needs to be rectified or progressed.

They should understand what they need to change and have a clear path to learning the skills required.

What should we consider when it comes to feedback?

There are several points to think about before we tell someone what we think:

1. Harsh feedback may be counterproductive.

Deliver feedback carefully and respectfully. If given too frequently and without regard to feeling, the person on the other end will revert to defense mode – possibly losing confidence, self-esteem, and motivation.

2. Feedback isn't always negative.

Don't persistently focus on what isn't working or isn't being done right. Attending to what is going well can support someone's growth and steer their development in the right direction.

3. Feedback isn't always positive.

On the other hand, don't always focus on strengths. If you only address the positives, the listener will return to what they were doing, believing they have nothing to improve. Nevertheless, they will be delighted as they appear to be doing almost everything right. The balance between points two and three is essential.

4. Providing a fix may not be the answer.

Ask questions that encourage reflection. Such open support can lead the person to understand what they did well, or poorly, while stimulating exploration and reflection.

Negative feedback in a nutshell

Chappelow and McCauley from the Center for Creative Leadership teach an approach called **Situation-Behavior-Impact**. It is a simple yet potent model for work-based situations.

Both strengths and weaknesses must be communicated clearly and specifically, in a professional and caring way by making clear:

- When and where the behavior occurred
- What the behavior was
- What the outcome of the behavior was (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and actions)

At the same time, when you are giving feedback, make sure you are not:

- Being judgmental – *You should not have said that*
- Overgeneralizing – *You always say that*
- Assuming the thoughts behind the behavior – *You have no respect*

When delivered appropriately, feedback is more likely to be heard, thought about, and acted upon.