

Giving and Receiving Feedback: Building Person-Centered Relationships

What is feedback?

Feedback is information that we give someone about the impact of their past behavior that may (or may not) affect their behavior in the future.

Your Experience with Feedback

Try to think of a time in the past when you gave someone feedback. Why did you choose to give the feedback? How did the person respond to the feedback?

Four Rules for Giving Feedback

1. Be clear and direct about the behavior you want to address

For example: “Amy, when I asked you if you had time to help me with this report, you sighed and rolled your eyes.”

2. Use objective language that is free of blame or judgment (especially if giving critical feedback)

Continuing with the above example, subjective and blaming language would be: “Why do you always have such an attitude?”

We often use blaming or judging language if we haven’t taken the time to ***pull back*** from our emotions before giving feedback.

3. Describe the impact the behavior had (this can include how it made you feel)

Continuing with our example (added to the feedback above): “I felt hurt. I also felt anxious because I really needed your help.”

4. Get Curious about the other person’s perspective

Consider this: You know the impact of the receiver’s behavior. But you don’t know why they behaved that way in the first place. People usually behave with the best of intentions. Get curious! Ask open-ended questions.

Continuing with our primary example, “What was happening for you when I asked if you could help with the report?”

One productive way to think of giving feedback is a two-way conversation where you first describe the behavior and the impact it has had on you and then you get curious about the other person’s intentions.

Feedback Practice Scenario

Situation: Yesterday, your team was working short staffed when a co-worker unexpectedly left one hour before their shift finished. You got behind on your work and weren’t able to answer all the Elder’s call lights.

Original Feedback Statement: “How could you leave early yesterday? Don’t you care about the rest of us?!?”

Re-write this feedback using the four rules for giving feedback:

Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

Most of us have experienced difficult emotions when receiving feedback. These feelings are uncomfortable, and they can get in the way of receiving feedback effectively.

Guideline #1: Be aware of your listening blocks

It can be difficult to *actively listen* to feedback. Often, our *listening becomes blocked*.

For example, we may:

- Spar— interrupt the feedback to argue about why it’s not true

- Judge—discount the feedback based on who the is giving it
- Filter—only listen to the parts of the feedback that we want to hear
- Mind read—try to figure out why the other person is giving us the feedback in the first place (making assumptions about their intentions)
- Rehearse—think about how we’re going to respond to the feedback instead of listening to it
- Dream— “tune the feedback out” by thinking about something else

Guideline #2: Be aware of “all or nothing” responses

When we get emotionally triggered by feedback, we sometimes over-react. One way of over-reacting is to *reject the feedback without thinking about it*. We may:

- Get defensive
- Get angry at the person who is giving feedback

Another way of over-reacting is to *accept the feedback without thinking about it*. We may:

- Blame ourselves
- Feel hopeless, like we’ve failed
- Feel vulnerable and scared

We do have other choices! For example, we can:

- Agree with part (but not all) of the feedback.
- Put feedback “on the back burner” so that we can think more about it.
- Get more information by asking for more feedback (perhaps from other people).

Guideline #3: Prepare a *Pull Back* strategy

Pulling Back can help you overcome your listening blocks and your “all or nothing” responses.

- Remember to breathe!
- Take the time to paraphrase the feedback-- this will help you make sure that you're hearing it accurately.

What do you think you can do to receive feedback more effectively?

Worksheet For Giving Feedback In The Future

You can use this worksheet whenever you want to provide someone with feedback about their behavior in the future.

Think about:

- What is the feedback you need to give someone?
 - This could be a family member, friend or co-worker.
- What is the feedback scenario... what's happening?

Use the four rules for giving feedback to write your statement.

1. Be Clear and Direct
2. Use objective language that is free of blame and judgement
3. Describe the impact of the behavior (on you, other team members, on residents, on the organization, etc.)
4. Get curious about the receiver's perspective.

Practice writing your feedback using the following questions.

What feelings might you need to *pull back* from before giving this feedback? How can you *pull back*?

What is your *intention* in giving this feedback?

How can you describe the person's behavior, clearly and directly and without blame or judgment?

How can you describe the *impact* of the behavior?

How can you get curious about the receiver's perspective?
