

Guidelines for Giving Effective Feedback and Praise

Feedback is a mechanism for conveying to people how they're experienced and perceived by others. It provides the recipient with an opportunity to make decisions about whether or not they wish to change their behavior and the consequences of doing that. There are two parties associated with feedback: the giver and the receiver. Both may benefit from understanding and learning how to manage the dynamics of feedback.

Stances that Support Receiving/Giving Feedback

- Vulnerability – willingness to open up
“Being vulnerable takes incredible courage. It is a crucial mindset to master... Moreover, it's the partner and predecessor necessary for candor...So what is vulnerability? It is the courage to reveal your inner thoughts, warts and all, to another person...Vulnerability is admitting that you have doubts and fears—and that you need the support and encouragement of others to overcome what holds you back—and achieve your goals.”
- Candor – willingness to speak up
“The ability to engage in healthy, caring, purposeful criticism—as opposed to turf wars, nitpicking, or simply turning our backs and not communicating about issues at all.”
(Keith Ferrazi, *Who's Got Your Back?*)

There are three general target areas in which to give feedback. They are:

- Work products: forms, orders, written projects and reports, processes
- Performance: behavior in office and in the community when representing the office
- Personal: general attitudes, personality styles, interpersonal styles

As you move down this list, increasing skill and forcefulness in giving feedback is required because we are most easily detached from, and therefore open to feedback about, our products. We are most attached to the personal.

As you prepare to offer **constructive, honest feedback** to anyone, consider the following guidelines:

1. Ask the person if he/she would like some feedback from you. Don't assume that just because you have some feedback, the person wants to hear it.
2. Seek clarity - Be clear about what you want to say.
3. Emphasize the positive. Begin with what's right, rather than what's wrong.
4. Be specific - Avoid general comments and clarify pronouns such as “it,” “that,” etc.
5. Focus on behavior or work product rather than the person.
6. Refer to specific behavior or aspect of work product that can be improved. Express confidence in their ability to make this change. Seek to generalize behavior from existing strengths to remediable deficiencies.
7. Convey a vision for recommended change, using models, visualizations, examples, etc. Telling what to do is more effective than telling what not to do.
8. Be descriptive rather than evaluative.

9. Own the feedback - Use “I” statements.
10. Avoid generalizations - Notice when you use words such as “all,” “never,” “always,” etc., and try instead to be as specific as you can.
11. Be very careful with advice - People rarely struggle with an issue because of the lack of some specific piece of information. Often the best feedback comes in the form of a *question* that helps a person come to a better understanding of his/her issue, how it developed, and how to identify actions that address the issue more effectively.
12. Invite dialogue about the topic of the feedback. Offer to role-play specific situations.
13. When giving negative feedback, share confidence in their capacity to change and help them develop new strategies and a plan for change.
14. Agree on a timeline for change. If the feedback is not about a specific behavior or work product, but about a more global performance or personal attribute, agree on interim target goals.
15. State the consequence or outcome of change and of non-change.

Effective Praise to cultivate a Growth Mindset (see below) in others:

- boosts optimism, provides motivation, and promotes further development and refinement of behaviors, processes, and strategies that lead to success
- being specific and descriptive in your praise is just as important as in your criticism
- Process or effort praise (“you took such care with that project”) is more effective than trait or natural talent praise (“you’re good at that”, “you’re smart”)
- Effective praise requires that you name the specific strategy, effort, or skill that led to the good outcome
 - Praise for hard work and persistence, naming specific behaviors
 - Praise for changing strategy or plan of action when obstacle or setback encountered
- Naming the specific strategy accomplishes three things: it demonstrates that what the person was doing was important enough for you to be paying close attention; it establishes your praise as authentic and not something you say to everyone; and it illuminates the strategy that worked so that they can repeat the success.

Growth v. Fixed Mindset

- Growth Mindset: “Intelligence and talent can be developed”
byproducts: hard work, perseverance
- Fixed Mindset: “Intelligence and talent are static and they alone create success”
byproducts: lack of motivation, fear to try or try again
- Addressing mindset is a powerful strategy to improve motivation and productivity, and enhance relationships