



# Improving the Giving and Receiving of Feedback

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## **What is feedback?**

Feedback is focused, specific and helpful information given to a learner by a teacher/mentor/coach with the intent to support performance improvement.

Clarify the performance goal, and the feedback request:

- ? reassurance,
- ? comparison of performance to peers, or
- ? feedback information to improve performance.

## **Feedback is hard to give**

- Most people are conflicted about giving feedback because they don't know how the person will react.
- Sometimes we incorrectly view feedback as 'giving bad news' rather than as conversation to provide advice about how to improve performance or outcomes.

## **Feedback is hard to take**

- Feedback can trigger intense (negative) reactions on the part of the learner/receiver IF they view it as an attack or judgment on their personal worthiness, instead of a conversation to support improvement.
- Some have an unhelpful fixed mindset and believe their success is based on innate talent (i.e. I am not good at X so not able to improve) rather than a growth mindset, believing hard work and feedback are key to success.
- Emphasizing the concept of "you are not at that level yet" in feedback conversations can encourage a growth mindset and reduce negative reactions to feedback.

## **Data is not feedback**

- Scores and comments are data.
- We have +++data available, but to improve feedback performance data needs to be collated and integrated into information.
- Feedback is information that you know how to act on.

## **Feedback requires data**

- Effective feedback involves providing coaching information based on data that is collated and integrated into information.
- Data gathered over time is the best approach to provide an accurate view of the trends of performance.
- Data should be compared to performance expectations such as goals, standards or expectations, so that accurate coaching information can be provided.

## **Feedback is MOST effective in improving performance when the conversation occurs within a trust relationship**

- A positive, cooperative trust relationship assists the sender and receiver in the giving/receiving of accurate and honest feedback – both the easier positive coaching information about what is working and the more challenging coaching information about what needs to be done for improvement.
- Trust facilitates the receiver's ability to integrate and act on challenging coaching information.

## **Better not to ask for feedback if you're not going to act on it**

- Learners need to GENUINELY want feedback to improve performance when they ask for it.
- If someone gives feedback information for improvement, use it. It is an investment in you.
- If you don't want to act on feedback, don't waste their time and ask for it.

## **Do no harm; better not to give feedback than to give it in the wrong way**

- Poorly delivered feedback can compromise the credibility of the giver and/or impact the learner's motivation and learning.
- Poorly delivered feedback can undermine or damage the trust between giver and receiver.
- Done incorrectly, givers are transmitting 'data' rather than feedback to improve performance.

## **Feedback mechanics are important**

- How the feedback is delivered is VERY important.
- The details about the mechanics matter, including engagement, timing, location, preparation, focus and coaching.
- See BACK for details on feedback mechanics.

*"I take the responsibility of training competent people very seriously."<sup>1</sup>*

*"Although I perfectly understand the need for feedback, I'm too sensitive... When it's harsh, I take it very personally."<sup>1</sup>*

# Feedback Mechanics



PREPARATION



- 1 Ask if feedback is wanted (yes/no, now/ later)**  
Sample wording: Is this a good time to talk about your performance? Do you want some feedback on your performance? Is there any aspect of your performance that you're working on that you'd like feedback on? Do you want to talk about my ideas on how you can improve your performance?
- 2 Consider performance and educational goals**  
HINT: Giver/receiver need a shared understanding of expectations. Is the activity/experience a 'required' activity with established goals and specific performance expectations? If yes, have learner find/share that info to build shared understanding, inform feedback and guide coaching advice.
- 3 Allot sufficient time for feedback**  
HINT: While providing quick bits of data don't require much time, both the giver and receiver need sufficient time for a feedback conversation that effectively supports improvement of performance.
- 4 Choose a private setting**  
HINT: Receivers are usually self-conscious about receiving feedback so find a location that doesn't allow team members, fellow learners or patients to overhear.
- 5 Label activity as "feedback"**  
HINT: Ensure the learner realizes that they will be getting 'feedback'. Allow the learner to get in the right mindset (i.e. to welcome coaching advice)

*"They may have been off on the wrong track and one little nudge in the right direction and they completely turn around."*<sup>1</sup>

*"You want to be better at your job all the time."*<sup>1</sup>

- 6 Engage trainee in reflection/analysis**  
HINT: Have the trainee consider their own performance. Sample wording: Which suggestion(s) do you think might be a helpful place for you to start? When or how are you going to move forward on this?
- 7 Use clear, plain language**  
HINT: Avoid jargon, abbreviations or metaphors.
- 8 Factually describe performance**  
HINT: Describe what you saw and heard. Identify processes, outcomes and impact.
- 9 Focus your message**  
HINT: Specify what are steps, sequence, priorities or options they should follow. Limit your messages to 3 or fewer areas to discuss.
- 10 Coach for improvement**  
HINT: Ensure the learner has clarity on what to work on 'next'. Ask if they understand. Wait for Qs or ask them to repeat back the improvement plan to confirm shared understanding. Follow up to support action plan.



DELIVERY



## Key resources

Stone, D. and S. Heen (2014). Thanks for the Feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well. NY, NY, Penguin Group.

Sargeant, J., J. Lockyer, K. Mann, E. Holmboe, I. Silver, H. Armson, E. Driessen, T. MacLeod, Y. W. Ross and M. Power (2015). "Facilitated reflective performance feedback: Developing an evidence and theory-based model that builds relationship, explores reactions and content, and coaches for performance change (R2C2)." Academic Medicine 90(12): 1698-1706.

van de Ridder JMM, McGaghie WC, Stokking KM, & ten Cate, OTJ. Variables that affect the process and outcome of feedback, relevant for medical training: a meta-review. Med Educ 2015;49:658-673

<sup>1</sup> Watling C, Driessen E, van der Vleuten CPM, et al. Learning from clinical work: the role of learning cues and credibility judgements. Med Educ 2012;46:192-200

Watling C, Driessen E, van der Vleuten CPM, et al. Learning culture and feedback: An international study of medical athletes and musicians. Med Educ 2014;48:713-723.