

Principles of giving effective feedback

- Whether you are giving formal or informal feedback, there are a number of basic principles to keep in mind:
 - Give feedback only when asked to do so or when your offer is accepted
 - Give feedback as soon after the event as possible
 - Focus on the positive
 - Feedback needs to be given privately wherever possible, especially more negative feedback
 - Feedback needs to be part of the overall communication process and 'developmental dialogue'. Use skills such as rapport or mirroring, developing respect and trust with the learner
 - Stay in the 'here and now', don't bring up old concerns or previous mistakes, unless this is to highlight a pattern of behaviors
 - Focus on behaviors that can be changed, not personality traits
 - Talk about and describe specific behaviors, giving examples where possible and do not evaluate or assume motives
 - Use "I" and give your experience of the behavior ("When you said ... I thought that you were ...")
 - When giving negative feedback, suggest alternative behaviors
 - Feedback is for the recipient, not the giver – be sensitive to the impact of your message
 - Consider the content of the message, the process of giving feedback and the congruence between your verbal and non-verbal messages
 - Encourage reflection. This will involve posing open questions such as:
 - (a) Did it go as planned? If not, why not?
 - (b) If you do it again, what would you repeat next time? What would you do differently? Why?
 - (c) How did you feel during the session? How would you feel about doing it again?
 - (d) How do you think the patient felt? How did you reach that conclusion?
 - (e) What did you learn from this session?
 - Be clear about what you are giving feedback on and link this to the learner's overall professional development and/or intended program outcomes
 - Do not overload – identify two or three key messages to outline at the end.
- Emphasizing that responding to the senders' communication is vital and that feedback is fundamental to effective communication. Parsloe (1995) suggests that:

"Communication is a two-way process that leads to appropriate action ... in the context of developing competence; it is not an exaggeration to describe feedback as 'the fuel that drives improved performance'."