

Tips on How to Give and Receive Feedback

Being able to give and to receive feedback is important when working with others, when building relationships based on trust and honesty, and for being able to make progress – without feedback, people may be held back from reaching their full potential. Feedback, however, is not an easy thing to give and the awareness we could be upsetting someone often holds us back from sharing our ideas or feelings; it is also not an easy thing to receive – it can be hard not to take something someone has stated about you or your work personally. It is, therefore, important to focus on how we can give feedback in a constructive and compassionate way and how we can receive feedback without becoming offended. One way to start is by viewing feedback as a means of developing, of building resilience and of connecting with others.

Imagine that feedback is like having something stuck between your teeth. If no one tells you it's there, you might spend the day wandering around and interacting with people with a piece of spinach announcing itself each time you speak. Many people may have seen it, but everyone has felt awkward enough not to say anything. Most people would rather somebody told them about the spinach. Feedback is like that. It can be difficult to say, but when shared with the right intention and the desire to help, it can be incredibly useful.

The following suggestions are designed to help facilitate the development of honest and open conversation, and the establishment of short feedback loops.

Giving Feedback

Here are some tips on how to give feedback:

- Take responsibility for what you are sharing. Make “I” statements – starting statements with “you” can sound accusatory and make people feel defensive.
- Think about your intention – why are you sharing the feedback? Is it to help someone else progress? Is it to share how you have been affected by something? Whatever your intention, want the best for the other person and for your relationship with them. Feedback is not about undermining someone or scoring a point, it is about strengthening bonds and helping people reach their highest potential self.
- Show appreciation for others if you are giving them feedback that could be received as negative – praise something that they do well. It is much easier to hear feedback if you know that you are valued.

- Give feedback in a one-on-one situation. Bringing something up in front of others can make someone feel exposed or vulnerable.
- Take it slow – if there are several things you want to mention, it is probably not worth bringing them up all at once.
- Think carefully about what you want to say – it could help you to write out your feedback before you give it and read to see how it sounds.
- Be sensitive to the fact that you are talking to someone who is as complex as you and who might have events going on in their life that you may know nothing about.
- Open the floor – see if they have feedback to offer you and ask if you could do anything differently.

Receiving Feedback

Here are some tips on how to receive feedback:

- Take responsibility for your feelings and your response. You can decide how you react in each situation.
 - Try not to take the feedback personally. Assume the best of the other person – they are sharing information so that you can improve at something or so that your relationship with them can improve.
 - Be aware that it is difficult to give feedback – the fact that someone is taking time to give you feedback shows that they value you and that they feel comfortable enough in your presence to do so.
 - Make an effort to understand how something can be done differently – ask for support if you feel that you need it.
 - Be honest – if you feel like you have been misinterpreted then say so, but do so sensitively and compassionately.
 - Openly ask for feedback from others – getting into the habit of receiving feedback can be incredibly helpful for your growth and it can make receiving feedback less of a big thing.
 - If some feedback has upset you, take time to process that feedback independently and think about why it has upset you. Is it related to any previous experiences? Sit with those feelings and give yourself time to work through them.
 - View feedback with a growth mindset. Without feedback you might never learn things about yourself, you might not develop as much as you could. Feedback is a tool that can help you reach your potential and that can improve your relationships with others.
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