

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

What is feedback?

It is a way of learning more about ourselves and the effect our behaviour has on others. Learning to give helpful feedback is a skill that needs to be practiced in a safe environment so that both parties feel safe. Avoiding giving feedback is not helpful.

Helpful hints:

- > Note specific behaviours and the effects
- > Consider what could be done differently and/or what needs to change
- > Consider how this feedback can be presented so that it will be heard.

Giving feedback

- 1 Start with the positive: say what you liked, what went well, what was done particularly well and the effect that had on you
- 2 Be specific and speak for yourself. Feedback is authentic and helpful if you give specific examples e.g. "Lowering your voice as you asked that question seemed to put the client at ease" or "It sounded as if you were frustrated with Mr B when you asked him about the fence and he got more agitated after that point"
- 3 Focus on things that can be changed. Ask for specific changes or invite suggestions on changes and wait for an answer rather than provide advice e.g. "How might that response have been avoided?" or "What might have helped avoid that reaction?"
- 4 Offer alternatives tentatively, phrased as an open question if possible e.g. "Would it have helped if I had come in at that point?" or "What would have helped at that point?" and wait for the answer.

Receiving feedback

Feedback is intended to be helpful. If it is difficult to hear it may be because:

- > it is not skilfully delivered
- > it is not an accurate reflection of what happened
- > we hear it as criticism
- > we are resisting the need to change.

Receiving positive feedback

- 1 Listen carefully
- 2 If you are shocked, take time to absorb what is being said. You do not have to make an automatic response or return the compliment
- 3 If you are slightly shocked check your understanding of what you have just heard e.g. "can you repeat the point about..." or "can you show me what I was doing when I was listening to Mr B"
- 4 Respond to positive feedback e.g. "Thank you, I am pleased that you noticed that."

Receiving negative feedback

- 1 Listen carefully and if you are becoming at all anxious breathe a little more deeply to prevent any anxiety escalating
- 2 Check you have understood what is being said
- 3 Ask the speaker to repeat any phrases you find difficult to take in
- 4 Ask for specific examples or other examples of a particular behaviour.

Remember – this is someone else's observation of an event. It may be (partially) based on assumptions, incomplete information or projection (where one person projects what they think they understand how another person is feeling, what they are thinking, their motives etc.) it is someone else's perception and may not be true.

Responding to negative feedback

- 1 Avoid a defensive response – vehement denial (aggressive response) saying nothing, sulking, silently fuming (passive aggressive response) or (passively) assuming it must be true
- 2 If the observation is true – say so clearly, explain how you feel and ask what can be changed e.g. "You are right, that was a daft thing to do, I regret it now. How can I put things right?"
- 3 If the observation is partly true – agree with the part that is true and do not accept the rest. "You are right, mentioning his name was a mistake. I didn't hear Mr B say anything that suggested it made a difference."
- 4 If the observation is wholly inaccurate – say that you do not agree, add a positive truth and ask where this difference originated e.g. "I didn't see that. I was paying close attention to Mr B and didn't pick that up at all. How could that be?"

Consider how you have responded and if necessary revisit the feedback on another occasion. When you have had the opportunity to reflect on the whole exchange, you can reflect on your immediate and your considered response and reflect any change that is a result of learning by experience from the feedback received – increased awareness, new insights even further changes you have made or would like to make in light of feedback that has helped you improve your practice.

References:

At <http://www.bbctraining.com/onlineCourses.asp> there is a very useful interactive module on *Giving and Receiving Feedback*. Go to this address then click *Giving and Receiving Feedback* found under the title *Broadcast Management* to access the course. It only takes 15 minutes to complete.