



Information Sheet: Giving and Receiving Feedback

What do we mean by feedback?

Receiving feedback from others is one way in which we learn about ourselves, our abilities, skills and qualities. Without feedback, we cannot grow and develop. Constructive feedback promotes self-awareness and increases options. It includes critical as well as positive comments - given with skill and sensitivity. It may not always be comfortable but if we are told the reasons for the other person's opinion we are free to disagree.

Given in an insensitive and unskilled manner, feedback becomes destructive; leaving the recipient feeling deflated with nothing to build on. All feedback says as much about the giver as the receiver. People usually mean to be constructive when they give feedback. However, lack of skill can make evaluations destructive and much of the value may then be lost. Giving both positive and critical feedback is a simple skill which is easy to learn and improves with practice.

Giving constructive feedback:

- **Own the feedback:** The feedback I give you is based on my perceptions, my evaluation, and my opinion. I must take responsibility for it. I may be wrong.
- **Be positive first:** Recognition of our positive abilities makes it easier to accept our shortcomings.
- **Be specific:** The more detailed information I have about my performance, the easier it is to make any necessary alterations.
- **Focus on behaviour not being:** Tell me about those things that I can change (what I do), not the ones I cannot (who I am).
- **Offer alternatives:** I need to know the things I have not got right yet. Practical

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suggestions for their improvement will facilitate my learning.

- **Choice of change:** I am free to accept or reject your evaluation.

Receiving feedback:

- **Listen:** No matter how uncomfortable it is, hear me out. If you reject or defend against it you may miss some important learning.
- **Clarify:** Be sure you understand what is being said. Check, reflect, paraphrase or ask.
- **Check it out:** Find out if others share the same view as the person giving the feedback.
- **Ask:** Feedback is critical to learning. Don't be afraid to ask what you need to know.
- **Choose:** You have the right to accept or reject any or all of the feedback.

And don't forgetSay thank you! It might have been difficult for the person to give you that feedback. Tell them it was helpful and let them know you appreciate the time and effort they have taken.

How CCL can help:

We offer counselling to people, aged 16 and over, living in Ryedale and, where appropriate, in Scarborough. We work with a wide range of presenting issues, including difficulties in personal and work relationships. You can be referred to our free service by your doctor or any other NHS worker or you can self-refer to our co-payment counselling scheme.

Other sources of information:

Access our information sheet 'Listening Skills for Conflict Situations' from our website. Many web-based resources concentrate on feedback in the work situation: try the Giving and Receiving feedback section of the <http://learntech.uwe.ac.uk/CommunicationSkills/> website.