

Tips for Giving and Receiving Feedback¹⁰

“An artful critique focuses on what a person has done and can do, rather than reading a mark of character into [what has been] done. Instead of creating helplessness, anger and rebellion, [an artful critique] holds out the hope of doing better and suggests the beginning of a plan for doing so.”
—Daniel Goleman, “Emotional Intelligence”

Constructive Performance Feedback results in the personal growth of a young person and is information-specific, issue-focused, and based on observations. It comes in two varieties:

- **Positive Feedback** communicates an effort well done.
- **Negative Feedback** communicates the need for improvement. Negative feedback doesn't mean a terrible performance, but rather a performance in which the outcomes delivered should be better. So negative is not a negative word in this case.

Praise and criticism are both personal judgments about performance, with praise being a favorable judgment and criticism, an unfavorable judgment, and are not forms of constructive feedback.

When giving constructive feedback, it is important to:

- ✓ **Be Specific.** Say what the person did well and what can be improved in specific terms.
- ✓ **Offer a Solution or Plan.** Recommend specific steps the person can take to do better next time.
- ✓ **Be Present.** Provide feedback face-to-face, whenever possible.
- ✓ **Be Sensitive.** Be attuned to the impact of what you say and how you say it to the person at the receiving end.
- ✓ **Describe, in a Non-judgmental Way, What Needs to Change.** For example, “in the office, keeping our voices lower help our colleagues nearby stay focused on their work.”

To gain the most from constructive feedback, individuals must be open to receiving feedback, namely:

- ✓ Seeing feedback as valuable information about how to do better, not as a personal attack.
- ✓ Refraining from being defensive; if feedback is upsetting, ask to resume the meeting later.
- ✓ Taking time to absorb what you've heard.
- ✓ Using feedback sessions as an opportunity for growth.

¹⁰ Adapted from the “Managing with Heart” chapter of Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman. Mr. Goleman in turn adapted these ideas from psychoanalyst Harry Levinson.