



BUILDING TRUST

GIVING & RECEIVING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Despite people's best intentions, certain behaviors can undermine trust and the effectiveness of collaboration. Here is a non-judgemental way to give difficult feedback so that it's easier to hear and accept, which increases the likelihood of empathy and behavior change. Unsolicited and unwelcome feedback might do more harm than good so be sure to ask the person if he or she is okay with you sharing your feedback BEFORE doing so.

It's important to follow the flow below. It may feel awkward at first but as you experience the benefits of using it and get familiar with the language, it will be natural and worthwhile over time.

“When you _____, (behavior) the impact on me is _____, (impact) so I think _____ (interpretation) and I feel _____ (feelings).”

The Behavior is a specific thing the person said or did (or says or does). Just describe the behavior very factually.

“I was talking and you started talking before I finished...”

The Impact is how the behavior affects you.

...it made me lose my train of thought and I didn't get to say what I wanted to say.

The Interpretation is what you think the behavior means.

That makes me think that you don't respect my opinion...

The Feeling is the specific emotional you experience as a result of the impact.

...and I feel insulted.”

We know that it can be challenging for people in work situations to share their personal feelings, even in such a formal way (although we do it whether we intend to or not). While you can leave out the last step in the feedback template below, it will significantly reduce the effectiveness your feedback.

Note that what is *not* included here is any statement about the other person's intent. Assigning malicious intent to others is often what deepens anger and unproductive conflict. After all, what's often driving the other person's unhelpful behavior are feelings of fear, anger, or resentment, so accusing that person of malicious intent only hurts more (not to mention that we're often completely wrong about the other person's intent).

This is only a general model. Find language that feels comfortable to you, but try to follow the flow and include the four elements above. Some versions of this model leave out the Interpretation but we consider it important since it gives the other person the opportunity to understand and maybe challenge your interpretation.

Increasing the Effectiveness of Your Feedback

- Try to give feedback about a behavior as soon after it happens as possible...but not while you're too angry. Giving feedback sooner helps the other person identify the behavior you're talking about (after all, it's hard to remember a specific situation that happened two months ago). But if you give feedback while you're angry, the high emotional content will overwhelm what you're saying and the other person will likely feel attacked.
- You can help others provide you with better feedback with a relatively simple question: “What did you see or hear that caused you to make that conclusion?” That helps the person focus on your behaviors rather than assigning intentions or motivations to you.