

Feedback

“Can I give you some feedback?” This is the rhetorical question that no one wants to hear. But giving and getting feedback is vital everyone’s personal and career success. Most people don’t like giving feedback. Who wants to make someone feel bad? And people really don’t like getting feedback. Any type of negative judgment is a hit to our self-esteem. But everyone has room to grow and improvements to make. So, we need to learn how to give and receive feedback! Here are some tips to do so effectively:

How to **give** feedback:

- **Do it:** The first step is to provide the feedback! By *not* verbally communicating feedback to someone, you are actually giving feedback – you’re communicating that their behavior does not need to change. If no one tells you otherwise, you assume that everything is going well. If that’s not true, the first step is to have the conversation.
- **Identify your motivation.** Feedback should be given with an attitude of care and support. If you’re motivation is punitive or retaliatory, do not proceed. Wait until your anger or resentment has abated, or talk with HR or another supervisor about how else to relay the information.
- **Practice.** Sit down with someone else (an appropriate person who is not a colleague or direct report to the person receiving feedback) and practice what you want to say. Ask how it sounds. Make sure you’re getting your point across in a way the receiver can really hear it.
- **Provide specific examples and link them to impact.** It’s important to give people specific examples of the behavior you’d like to address. Talking in generalities can be hard to understand. Also, discuss what the impact of that behavior has been. For example: “Last month, when you submitted the report late, it prevented the accounting department from paying our bills on time.”
- **Compliment too.** Don’t limit feedback to just the negative! Feedback should include lots of positive reinforcement. For example, “The way you handled that unhappy customer showed a lot of professionalism.” Or “you’ve shown so much improvement in submitting reports on time.” If you’re consistently providing positive feedback, trust will be built and when it’s time for difficult feedback, it will be easier for everyone.



How to **receive** feedback.

- **Drop the defense.** It can be extremely hard not become defensive when receiving feedback. Most people will automatically argue that what’s being said is not true. Defensiveness is your mind’s way of keeping you comfortable. It blocks the bad feelings that come with admitting a fault or a failing. That strategy may feel better in the short run, but it’s not going to lead you to being a better version of yourself. Instead, you can acknowledge that what’s being said is hard to hear, that you feel embarrassed or inadequate – then sit with that emotion. You may find it soon turns to motivation to improve.
- **Listen.** As mentioned above, your instinct when hearing feedback is probably to get defensive. So, rather than listening to what’s being said, your mind may start preparing your rebuttal. But, since you’ve committed to not being defensive, try to return your focus to what’s being said. Then ask clarifying questions to make sure you’ve really heard the feedback.
- **Make a plan.** Getting feedback is step one in a process of improvement. After you’ve heard the feedback, be sure to clarify what the expectations of you are going forward. For example: “Okay, I hear you saying that I can be short-tempered with customers. In the future, when I’m feeling frustrated, what do you suggest I do differently?” Then follow up with next steps: “I’d like to get together again in a week to talk about how it’s going.”

If you are struggling to give or get feedback, or any other difficult circumstance, call Family Services EAP today at 978-327-6666, email info@FamilyServicesEAP.org, or submit an inquiry online at FamilyServicesEAP.org. EAP services are **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL**.