

## 5) Feedback

Feedback lets us know what we are doing well and how we can improve. We've been receiving feedback since we were children, it's how we learnt to behave.

We give and receive feedback all of the time, we might complain after waiting too long in a shop, might comment on how untidy your friend leaves the kitchen after using it or we might tell one of our team members that they aren't completing all of their tasks on time.

Feedback is important as it helps us develop and improve our skills, it can be positive (good) or negative (bad). It's important that we give and ask for both kinds of feedback, only knowing what we are good at doesn't help us develop our strengths and only being told we are bad at things isn't helpful either.

Feedback is an essential part of education and training programmes. It helps learners to maximise their potential at different stages of training, raise their awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, and identify actions to be taken to improve performance.

Feedback can be part of interpersonal and group evaluation. In some of the methods outlined previously the evaluation process implies giving feedback to somebody.

Feedback is "the transmission of evaluative or corrective information to the original source about an action, event, or process."

One very important element should be emphasised:

**FEEDBACK SHOULD BE HELPFUL TO THE PERSON RECEIVING IT**

To be helpful, feedback to somebody must be such that the person:

- understands the information
- is able to accept the information
- is able to do something with the information.

Feedback can be used in one to one situations as well in small groups/teams.

When using feedback in a group it is helpful to begin by reminding the group briefly of the meaning of feedback and to set a time frame so that everybody has the chance to both give and receive feedback.

Some things that we consider to be feedback serve only the needs of the person giving it and not the needs of the person receiving it. In other words, if you are fed up with somebody and finally come to the point telling them, you might be relieved in doing so, but this does not constitute giving feedback. This serves only your need to tell them how you feel. It does not necessarily provide them with constructive information that they can act on for improved relations.

Feedback is somewhat more complicated than one might imagine. To avoid misunderstandings and problems in the group, it is important to be sensitive about the group dynamic when using feedback. When working in the context of human relations, feedback should be guided by the principle of mutual respect for each other as learning subjects.

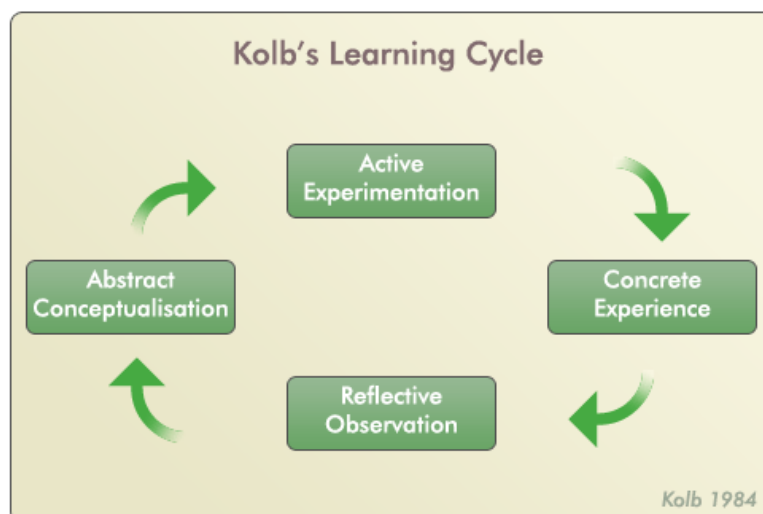
Take your time. Make sure you have enough space (in terms of the working room and time frame). Think about an adequate environment in which to do feedback. Think about

the atmosphere in the group and the implications of undertaking feedback at any given moment. These simple things can provide participants with the security they need in order to undertake honest feedback and serious evaluation.

It is very important to ensure that the feedback given to the learner is aligned with the overall learning outcomes of the program and the projects in which the learner is engaged. Giving feedback can be seen as part of experiential learning. Kolb (1984) proposed that learning happens in a circular fashion, that learning is experiential (learning by doing), and that ideas are formed and modified through experiences.

The learning cycle requires four kinds of abilities or learning contexts:

- concrete experience – learners are enabled and encouraged to become involved in new experiences
- reflective observation – gives learners time to reflect on their learning
- abstract conceptualisation – learners must be able to form and process ideas and integrate them into logical theories
- active experimentation – learners need to be able to use theories to solve problems and test theories in new situations.



This cycle is similar to the 'plan – do – reflect – act' cycle which is often used in appraisals. Feedback plays an important role in helping learners move round the cycle. For example, feedback supports the process of reflection and the consideration of new or more in-depth experience. Through a process of negotiation, feedback can also help the learner plan productively for the next learning experience.

If we consider that one of the tasks of those giving feedback is to help the learner achieve their learning goals, it is suggested that we need to start with an understanding of:

(a) where the learner is in terms of their learning, the level they have reached, past experience, and understanding of learning needs and goals

(b) the learning goals in terms of knowledge, technical skills and attitudes. You may be observing more than one of these learning domains at the same time.

During the observation, our task is to identify where and how far the learner has travelled towards the learning goals, where they may have gone off track and what further learning or practice may be required.

There are a number of barriers to giving effective feedback in the context of medical education:

- a fear of upsetting a person or damaging interpersonal relationship
- a fear of doing more harm than good
- person being resistant or defensive when receiving criticism. Poor handling of a reaction to negative feedback can result in feedback being disregarded thereafter
- feedback being too generalised and not related to specific facts or observations
- feedback not giving guidance on how to rectify behaviour
- inconsistent feedback from multiple sources
- a lack of respect for the source of feedback.

Below you will find some suggestions for how to give and receive feedback.

WHAT FEEDBACK SHOULD BE	WHAT NOT TO SAY Why?	WHAT TO SAY Why?
<b>Descriptive</b>	<p>“This is bad!” or “This is good!”</p> <p><i>Because criteria for this judgement are subjective and other people can interpret them differently</i></p>	<p>“Your loud talking during the role-play made me feel stressed.”</p> <p><i>Because it is up to the other person to decide what to do with the feedback; keep your observation to a description of what happened and what you felt at that moment</i></p>
<b>Specific</b>	<p>“You are dominant!”</p> <p><i>Because the way of saying it is both unhelpful and confrontational, and doesn't tell the other person anything specific about how you experienced the situation</i></p>	<p>“While making that decision, I had the impression that you dominated the space for discussion and that I did not have space to contribute ...”</p> <p><i>Because this indicates what you experienced, and how you experienced the situation</i></p>
<b>Appropriate</b>	<p>“What you need to do ...”</p> <p><i>Because this presents your suggestion as a fact rather than as an opinion</i></p> <p><i>Because this indicates a projection of your needs onto the other person</i></p>	<p>“What I see as your needs ...”</p> <p><i>Because you are speaking on your own behalf which helps prevent any reactions or opinions being presented as facts</i></p> <p><i>Because this indicates that you are thinking about the needs of the other and what they might be able to do</i></p>

WHAT FEEDBACK SHOULD BE	WHAT NOT TO SAY Why?	WHAT TO SAY Why?
		<i>about the feedback</i>
<b>Useful</b>	<p>If a person is unable to change something, there is no point in mentioning it. <i>Because it just makes the other person feel powerless if they cannot change the thing you point out, and pointing it out is not constructive</i></p>	
<b>Wanted</b>	<p>Feedback is most effective when wanted by the receiver. <i>Because if it is not wanted, it won't be accepted as constructive and worked with</i></p>	
<b>At the right time</b>	<p>If at all possible, feedback should be given as soon as the impression was made. <i>Because if it is given much later the other person will not remember the situation as well, and will not be able to consider the feedback constructively</i></p>	
<b>Clear</b>	<p>Ask the receiver of feedback whether they need any clarification of your point. <i>Because you may not have made yourself clear and they may not understand it completely</i></p>	

[Feedback https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/feedback](https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/feedback)

#### Tips for giving and receiving feedback

GIVING	RECEIVING
<p>Think about the needs of the person receiving the feedback. Is what you have to say really relevant? Does it speak to something they can work on or change? Does it really respond to</p>	<p>Listen actively and carefully. Hear the feedback through to the end and consider what it is trying to tell you.</p>

GIVING	RECEIVING
their needs or is it a projection of your own?	
Avoid being judgemental as far as possible (avoid the use of “you”). Use “I” statements and avoid speaking on behalf of others (“we”).	Try to remain open to what is being said to you. If you notice that you are becoming defensive, make a mental note of any questions or disagreements and check them out later.
If you encounter defensiveness or an emotional reaction to your feedback, deal with those reactions first rather than trying to convince, reason, or supply additional information.	If you are unsure about what the person giving feedback is trying to get at, try to rephrase what you have just heard and check with them that you have understood what was said correctly.
	Think carefully about the feedback you have received. Don’t react immediately to what you have heard.
	Go back to your self-assessment and check whether you want to change or add anything.

There are different techniques for giving feedback.

One technique is the ‘Feedback Sandwich’, where you make positive statements, discuss areas for improvement, and then finish with more positive statements.

The benefits of this technique are:

- (1) it softens the impact of the criticism or corrective feedback,
- (2) it is easier to discuss problems if this discussion begins and ends with praising.

Sandwich feedback is perhaps best used to help newcomers to develop feedback skills.

But once a person, giving a feedback, uses the sandwich feedback technique a few times, participants recognize the praise-criticism-praise pattern. They realize that the person giving a feedback offer criticism after initiating their conversations with praise. Subsequently they learn to discount this praise since such praise is just a lead-in to the criticism.

Another technique is ‘Stop, Start, Continue’. This is where you discuss with your mentee:

- what they feel they should stop doing

- what they feel they should start doing
- what they wish to continue doing

#### E(vidence), E(ffect) and C(hange) or EEC

In this model, improvement is the focus of the feedback. The EEC method can be used to give both positive as well as negative feedback to employees according to their performance.

**E - Evidence:** Begin with an example about the person's behavior and/or actions that took place during a certain period. These could be positive or negative depending upon what needs to be addressed. Do not in any way talk about their personality.

**E - Effect:** Detail out in a complete non-subjective manner what has been the effect of their behavior or action on you, their team mates or any instance in the organization.

**C - Change:** If the purpose of feedback is to rectify behavior, then provide suggestions on how they can change this behavior. Keep in mind you should not impose your ideas that you believe can help them out in such situations. Offer them guidance but help them come up with their own ideas on how they can best tackle these problems.

#### Ask-Tell-Ask

- Ask the learner for their perceptions about strengths and challenges
- Tell them your impressions backed by observations, and specific examples
- Ask them what can be improved and how— assist you in developing a learning plan

The Ask-Tell-Ask Feedback method fosters participants' abilities to identify their own strengths and areas for improvement as well as provides preceptors with the opportunity to share positive and constructive feedback. The strengths of this model include that it is learner-centered, fosters self-assessment skills, increases accountability for learning, gives the preceptors insight into participants' perceptions of performance, encourages preceptors to provide specific feedback, and can be used across a variety of settings.

#### Four steps feedback technique.

1. **Ask** an participants whether they are open to some feedback.
2. **Describe specific behavior** you saw, heard, or read about.
3. **Describe the impact of the behavior.** Once you have described what you observed, tell them what you felt or what impact it had on the organization, project, or team.
4. **Discuss next steps.** Even with affirmative (positive) feedback, state. For corrective (negative) feedback, ask open-ended or leading questions to encourage the participant to suggest change.

#### Group Feedback

While the other methods of communication assume a one-on-one setting, group feedback affects the entire team. It is a dangerous method to use and inevitably leads to misunderstandings and frustration, simply because the delivery of the message cannot be tailored to individual recipients. In this setting, the team — as a whole — is the recipient of the communication given by the project manager. It is time-saving but frequently unproductive.