

Effective Feedback

Center for Student Involvement Resources

One of a leader's responsibilities is to create and utilize a forum for open, constructive communication in which feedback is one important aspect. Feedback is communicating to a member or groups how their behavior has affected us or other people.

Effective Feedback

1. Can be heard by the receiver
2. Keeps the relationship intact, open and healthy
3. Validates the feedback process in future interactions.

Effective feedback, both positive and negative, is helpful to others. When you give feedback you are offering valuable information that will be useful to another person making decisions about how to behave. Feedback is not criticism. Criticism is evaluative; feedback is descriptive.

Characteristics of Effective Feedback

1. It is specific rather than general. To be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as to be told that "You were not listening to what the others said, but I felt I had to agree with your arguments or face attack from you."
2. It is focused on behavior rather than on the person. It is important that we refer to what a person does rather than to what we think or imagine he/she is.
3. It takes into account the needs of the receiver. It should be given to help, not to hurt. It is directed toward behavior that the receiver can do something about.
4. It is solicited, rather than imposed. Feedback is most useful when the receiver has formulated the kind of question that those observing can respond to.
5. It involves sharing of information rather than giving advice. By sharing information, we leave a person free to decide in accordance with goals, needs, etc.
6. It is well timed. In general, immediate feedback is most useful (depending on the person's readiness to hear it). Excellent feedback presented at an inappropriate time may do more harm than good.
7. It concerns what is said or done, or how it is said or done, not why. The "why" takes us from the observable to the inferred and involves assumptions regarding motive or intent.
8. It is checked to insure clear communication. One way of doing this is to have the receiver try to rephrase the feedback received to see if it corresponds to what the sender has in mind. No matter what the intent, feedback is often threatening and thus subject to considerable distortion or misinterpretation.

Adapted from the NJIT Lisa A. Pierce Center for Student Leadership

For more information, stop by the Center for Student Involvement, SC Annex Commuter Lounge, call 973-655-7818, email csi@mail.montclair.edu, or visit www.montclair.edu/csi