

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR GIVING AND RECEIVING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK: FORM B

Giving information or feedback can be used as a way of giving help. It can be a learning mechanism for people who want insights into how well their behavior matches their intentions as perceived by the participants or audience. Feedback can be a means of establishing one's identity for answering, *Who am I?* The famous sociologist Charles Cooley said that we come to know who we are by the reflection others give us of ourselves. The following are five principles of giving and receiving effective information (feedback).

PRINCIPLE 1

Giving Feedback

Feedback describes behavior rather than evaluates behavior.

Describing one's own reactions to another's behavior leaves the other free to use the feedback or not use it, as he or she sees fit. Avoiding evaluative language reduces the need for the individual to react defensively (learning is difficult when one is defensive).

Here is an example:

Your head nodded a lot and I noticed you yawning six or seven times during the discussion (behavior); not, You looked bored and disinterested (motive).

Receiving Feedback

Encourage feedback by asking questions that indicate you want feedback.

Obtaining information about yourself from others can help you know yourself better and enable you to interact more effectively in groups. Your reactions to feedback should encourage others to provide it freely. Ask:

- ✓ *Are there other benefits people think may result from this communication exchange?*
- ✓ *What did you notice about my performance/behavior?*
- ✓ *How did I come across just then?*

PRINCIPLE 2

Giving Feedback

Feedback describes specific behaviors.

In giving feedback, try to avoid making general and categorical statements about behavior. Telling people they were "domineering" gives a categorical interpretation of their behavior and may not be very useful to them. A more useful statement would be:

Just now when we were deciding the issue, I felt that you did not listen to what others said and that you were expecting me to either accept your point of view or face attack from you.

Receiving Feedback

Ask about the specifics of your own words and behavior.

If people say you were “okay” or “good” or use other evaluative terms such as “awful” or “enjoyable,” you will need to ask them about specific behaviors or words you used to give them that reaction. Ask:

What sort of things did I do and say that made you feel it was okay?

PRINCIPLE 3

Giving Feedback

Effective feedback expresses consideration toward the receiver.

Feedback can be destructive when it serves only your own needs as giver and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end. During the social interaction endeavor to notice the purposes and motivations of the speakers. Instead of assuming what they were endeavoring to achieve, ask them to express what their needs and motivation were during the interaction. Then you can more accurately frame your feedback with their orientations and perspectives in mind.

Receiving Feedback

Ask probing and clarifying questions.

Make sure you understand comments others make about your behavior. You can do this by asking them probing questions such as questions of clarification and qualification. Ask:

Can you give me an example of that?

What assumptions did you identify in what I said?

Were there times I did not engage in that behavior?

PRINCIPLE 4

Giving Feedback

Feedback should be tentative and focus on behavior that the receiver can modify.

Try to develop a sense of what is within the power of people to change within themselves. For example, personality characteristics are not points of focus that people generally would want to address or change about themselves. Frustration is only increased when people are reminded of some shortcoming over which they have no control.

Receiving Feedback

Avoid reacting and becoming defensive to feedback you receive.

You should withhold your own judgments, reasons, or explanations when feedback is provided by accepting others’ responses to you without justifying your actions or words. If you try to justify your actions, others may think that you are defensive and they may then be reluctant to give you further feedback or to clarify points they made.

PRINCIPLE 5

Giving Feedback

Once expressed, ownership of the speaker’s utterances may be assumed by the listener as well.

The speaker should express thoughts and feelings about the other person’s behavior. Everyone needs to assume responsibility for telling each other the impact of behaviors on them. Frame

your feedback in terms of your own feelings and thoughts rather than the other person's assumed feelings. Example:

I felt frustrated when I heard the conversation return to the same issue three times.

Receiving Feedback

Use this sequence of action after you receive feedback:

- a. Take ownership of the feedback and reflect on it.
- b. Decide if and how you can grow from the feedback.
- c. Say "Thank You" to the person giving the feedback.