

Feedback

Guiding is communicating. Communication is successful if the recipient of the message understood as it was intended by the broadcaster. Because this process often goes wrong it is very important to have good communication skills as a mentor. Feedback is one of the key competences.

1. THEORY

I-messages are intended to clarify the intentions, thoughts, 'experiences, feelings, intentions and impressions of the sender and thus the chance to reduce misunderstandings in our communication.

An I-message can consist of the following elements:

By using I-messages you let the responsibility for the problem where it belongs, namely those who have a problem with certain behavior or a particular situation. You indicates that you have a problem, without blaming others for this problem. This way, you increase the chances that the other person listen to your message in stead of going directly into the defense. On an I-message can't follow a denial. The other can not get your feelings or your experience deny! The only thing that can happen is that the other person gives another I message.

There are different I messages and different ways of feedback. There is constructive feedback and positive feedback.

- Start with 'I'
- Indicate the behaviour you have difficulties with (examples, concrete facts,..)
- Identify your feelings
- Specify any explanation about your the feeling
- Define what you expect from the other / wishes or search for a solution together (searching for a solution together can work better)

TIPS:

- **Create an atmosphere of safety**
- **Describe observed behaviors:** Telling someone that they're "doing a good (or bad) job" doesn't really provide any information at all, and therefore it is a useless waste of time. You need to explain specifically what you like or want changed in a person's

behavior (and sometimes both). So state observations, not interpretations. Observations are what you see occur; interpretations are your analysis or opinion of what you see occur. Tell what you've noticed, not what you think of it, and report the behaviour you notice at a concrete level, instead of as a characterization of the behaviour. Observations have a far more factual and nonjudgmental aspect than do interpretations.

- **I-messages:** There are few things worse than saying, "People are telling me that you are..." The logical first response is to get defensive and ask, who has been saying these terrible things about me? It's a fair question. Without knowing who provided the information you don't have any context, and without context you can't tell your side of the story. Starting with I and things that you've observed make the message better.
- **Be specific and concrete:** People generally respond better to specific, positive direction. Avoid saying things like, "You need to be more talkative in meetings." It's too ambiguous and can be interpreted in a lot of personal ways. Say something specific and positive pointed at the task you want accomplished, such as, " I want to hear at least one opinion from you in every meeting we're in together going forward."
- **Only give feedback to change behavior**
- **Check whether the feedback is understood**
- **Make it regular:** feedback is a process that requires constant attention. When something needs to be said, say it. People then know where they stand all the time and there are few surprises. Also, problems don't get out of hand. This is not a once-a-year or a once-every-three-month event. While this may be the timing of formal feedback, informal, simple feedback should be given much more often than this – perhaps every week or even every day, depending on the situation. With frequent informal feedback like this, nothing said during formal feedback sessions should be unexpected, surprising or particularly difficult.
- **Respect the others dignity:** supportive feedback aims to encourage the desired behaviour in a manner which does not cause any unnecessary upset or hurt for the recipient of the feedback. When delivering feedback, you must ensure that your method of delivery respects their dignity. Critical factors include:
 - Time
 - Location
 - Privacy
 - Confidentiality
 - Availability of support

Supportive feedback should always be based on respect for your values and the values of the other person.

2. POSSIBLE WAYS (exercises) TO BRING THIS THEORY

It's important to do exercises on every subtopic of feedback. First of all you can give them a test about their feedback skills. Further on, they can discuss the do's and don't's about feedback. Based on this do's and don'ts, it's easier to make a checklist (by group or individual). The next step may be some exercises about the I-message and objectivity. And

the last part some roll playing, etc. Let them tell their own experiences.
It will make it easier to make the transfer between theorie and the mentorship.

1. exercise 1 (Appendix 1): positive feedback: giving compliments
2. exercise 2 (Appendix 2): Do something they don't like
3. exercise 3 (Appendix 3): Role playing

APPENDIX 1

Compliments

Let every person observe someone else during the training (give them a name before they enter,...). They may not know who's observing them. You can let them give compliments as last exercise of the training. These compliments have to be specific, they have to mean it, they have to express their feelings, etc. (According to the feedback rules).

APPENDIX 2

Do something they don't like

Everybody has to write down a little thing that they don't like (for example: people who come too close, people who shout, ...). Their neighbour has to do this specific behaviour and the person who don't like that behaviour has to give feedback according to the feedback rules.

APPENDIX 3

Roleplaying

Everyone has to write a case in which it was difficult to give feedback. Person A is the one who gives feedback. Person B is the student, person C is the observator.