

TIPS ON FEEDBACK

Tips for giving useful feedback

- Redefining feedback as either **useful or not useful**
- Give feedback **as soon as possible** after observing performance.
 - Wait only if doing so is necessary to gather necessary information. On the other hand, if the behavior you've observed was particularly upsetting, consider waiting until you've calmed down before providing feedback.
- **Is descriptive rather than evaluative** - Behaviors are described rather than rated. Good feedback provides an unbiased accounting of actual behavior based on observations.
- **Balanced**: Don't use feedback simply to underscore poor performance. Also provide feedback on work that is done well—you'll help the mentee learn from what he or she did right.
- **Focus feedback on behavior**, not character or personality.
 - Specific behaviors or skills are described rather than making generalizations about personality, temperament, etc.. Emphasizing behavior helps prevent the other person from feeling personally attacked.
 - Describe the other person's behavior and its impact on projects and/or coworkers. You'll help the person see why it's important to address problem behavior.
- **Avoid generalizations**. Instead of saying, "You did a great job during the meeting," offer feedback that is more specific, such as "The graphics in your presentation really communicated the message."
- Keep feedback **focused on factors that the mentee can control**. Feedback on factors that he or she cannot rework or improve is not constructive.
- Helpful feedback gives the mentee an indication of where they are in **reference to standards**, benchmarks and/or competency criteria.
- **Is best delivered in small doses** – A large amount of critical feedback given in one dose has been found to be overwhelming and counterproductive. Pick two or three key areas for improvement. If a troubling behavior or action was a one-time event, consider letting it go.
- **Be sincere**. Give feedback with the clear intent of helping the person improve.
- Give feedback **as often as necessary**.
- **Includes a Plan** – The plan for improvement should be negotiated with the mentee so that they take ownership of the identified challenges and the means for correcting them.

Tips for receiving feedback

- Ask your coach/mentor for specific information about how the coaching process is going. "What did I say that made you think I wasn't interested in your proposal?" or "How were my suggestions helpful to you?"
- Ask for clarification in ways that don't make your coach/mentor defensive. "Could you give me an example?"—*not* "What do you mean, I was unreceptive to your idea?"



- Help your coach/mentor avoid emotion-laden terms. "You said that I'm often inflexible. Give me an example of things I do that give you this sense."
- Don't be defensive. Offer justification or commentary on your actions only if asked. Tell your coach/mentor when you've gotten all the feedback you can process.
- Thank the person for his or her feedback, positive and negative. You'll build trust and model productive behavior.

Tips for eliciting responses from uncommunicative mentees

- Rehearse how you will respond if your mentee doesn't provide thoughtful replies to your questions during coaching discussions or sessions.
- Practice speaking slowly and taking long pauses. You'll give the other person time to formulate responses to your questions and ideas.
- Make it clear that you expect a reply—and are willing to wait for one.
- Ask open-ended questions—those requiring more than a "yes" or "no" response. They encourage more thoughtful replies than closed questions (requiring "yes" or "no") do.