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GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK\*

Feedback acts like a mirror. Feedback allows individuals to reflect back their observations of another person's behavior. Feedback, however, goes one step further than a mirror—the individuals giving the feedback can give their interpretation of or reaction to the observed behavior.

The following outline provides techniques, which should promote good feedback and good receiving.

GIVING:

1. Give specific and direct feedback: You will provide more effective feedback by reporting exact behaviors rather than general impressions. We have difficulty seeing when we use a steamed over mirror.
2. Share the effect: Let the person know the results of the behavior, e.g., the positive or negative effect on a patient of a specific intervention used by a student.
3. Give balanced feedback: Balance the negative with positive. Balanced feedback gives the person a truer picture of him/herself.
4. Give immediate feedback: Give feedback as soon after the event as possible. Waiting to give feedback until later clouds our recall and does not have as great an impact.
5. Be brief: You will have greater impact if you provide other individuals with short, simple and to the point observations of their behavior.
6. Speak to the behavior: Your feedback should report OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR not interpretations, judgments, hunches, projections and so forth.

RECEIVING:

Many things affect whether or not a person hears feedback. That person's openness or defensiveness, the day, the language used, the effectiveness of the feedback giver, general security, trust of the giver, ability to hear and attend, and so forth all can affect one's ability to hear feedback.

If the individual providing the feedback does so in the above manner and the receiver listens, then communication takes place. Communication of information is helpful to both the giver and receiver. Some of us block feedback, however, because we believe or fear that it will influence or change us. REMEMBER this important fact about getting feedback—YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO ANYTHING WITH THE FEEDBACK. You do not have to change if you hear it. You may wish to modify an approach or an intervention, but you do not really have to "change."

The following may help you HEAR more of and, therefore, use more effectively the feedback you receive.

1. Concentrate on listening: You do not need to respond. Listening, rather than thinking of a response, will allow you to hear completely the feedback offered.
2. If you want to respond, wait a few seconds to process what you heard—let what was said to you really sink in.
3. Repeat the gist of what you heard to yourself silently or out loud.
4. Ask for clarification if you think you need it.
5. Take notes and reflect on them later.

\*"Adapted from the "Physical Therapy Student Clinical Education Handbook", Master of Physical Therapy Program, Gannon University, Erie, PA (1998).