

Rules for Giving Effective Feedback

The following rules for giving effective feedback were taken from Allen E. Ivey's book titled Intentional Interviewing and Counseling (1983).

1. The person receiving the feedback should be in charge. Feedback is likely to be most successful if the person solicits it. Only give as much feedback as the person can use now. A couple of ways to do this is to let the person identify what areas she would like feedback in. Or let the person control when the feedback session can end.
2. Feedback should focus on strengths and/or something the person can do something about. It does little good to tell a person to change many things that are wrong. It is more effective to give feedback on positive dimensions and build on strength. When you talk about negatives, they should be areas the person can do something to change or adapt to.
3. Feedback should be concrete and specific. It does little good to offer vague feedback. For example, "You aren't able to get along with the group" is not as helpful as "You had two arguments with Ginny that upset both of you, and now you are disagreeing strongly with Lois. What does this mean to you?"
4. Feedback should be relatively nonjudgmental. Critical to being nonjudgmental is accepting vocal tone and body language. Too often feedback turns into evaluation – "You did that exercise very well," compared to "I saw you relax and heard your joy as you went through that exercise." Stick to the facts and specifics. Facts are friendly judgments; may or may not be.
5. Feedback should be lean and precise. Most people have many areas that could profit from change. However, most of us can change only one thing at a time and can hear only so much. Don't overwhelm the person. Select one or two things for providing feedback and save the rest for later.
6. Check-out to see how your feedback was received. Check to see how the other person reacts to feedback. "How do you react to that?" "Does that sound close" "What does that mean to you?" are three examples that involve the person in feedback and will indicate whether or not you were heard and how useful your feedback was.