



Giving Feedback

STEPS

1. Focus feedback on behavior rather than the personality
We should focus on what a person does. It is required that we should use words describing behavior rather than person. For example we might say a person who is interviewing very fast with a patient "talked very fast in this encounter," rather than that he/she "is a person who talks incoherent". When we talk in terms of "personality traits" it implies inherited, constant qualities difficult, if not impossible, to change. Focusing on behavior implies that it is something related to a specific situation that might be changed. It is less threatening to a person to hear comments about his behavior than his "traits".
2. Focus feedback on observation rather than inferences
Observations refer to what we can see or hear in the behavior of another person, while inferences refer to interpretations and conclusions which we make from what we see or hear. In a sense, inferences or conclusions about a person contaminate our observations. When inferences or conclusions are shared and it may be valuable to have this data, it is important that they be so identified.
3. Focus feedback on description rather than judgment
The effort to describe represents a process for reporting what occurred, while judgment refers to an evaluation in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, nice or not nice. The judgments' arise out of a personal frame of reference or values, whereas description represents neutral reporting.
4. Focus feedback on descriptions of behavior in terms of "more or less" rather than in terms of "good or bad"
The "more or less" terminology implies a continuum on which any behavior may fall, stressing quantity, which is objective and meaningful rather than quality, which is subjective and judgmental. Thus, eye contact of a person may fall on a continuum from less to more, rather than "good" or "bad".
5. Focus feedback on behavior related to a specific situation
Feedback should refer to behavior placing in the "here and now" rather than to behavior in the past. What you and I do is always tied in some way to time and place. Feedback is generally more meaningful if given as soon as appropriate after the observation or reactions occur, thus keeping it concrete and relatively free of distortions that come with the lapse of time.