
Receiving Feedback Effectively

Resources for Interns and Supervisors/Mentors

While it is easy to take feedback personally as an assault on your character, try to perceive it as a **learning opportunity**. Feedback can help you identify and reinforce strengths, keep you focused on your learning goals, clarify the effects of your behavior, and increase your ability to detect and remedy errors on your own. Learn to use feedback to your best advantage.

- **Listen to the feedback given.** This means not interrupting. Hear the person out, and listen to what they are really saying, not what you assume they will say. You can absorb more information if you are concentrating on listening and understanding rather than being defensive and focusing on your response (or rationalizing the invalidity of positive feedback because of low self-esteem). If possible, take notes.
- **Be aware of your responses.** Your body language and tone of voice often speak louder than words. Try to avoid putting up barriers. If you look distracted and bored, that sends a negative message as well. Attentiveness, on the other hand, indicates that you value what someone has to say and puts both of you at ease.
- **Be open.** This means being receptive to new ideas and different opinions. Often, there is more than one way of doing something and others may have a completely different viewpoint on a given topic. You may learn something worthwhile.
- **Understand the message.** Make sure you understand what is being said to you, especially before responding to the feedback. Ask for clarification, or for specific examples, if necessary. Listen actively by repeating key points so that you know you have interpreted the feedback correctly. In a group environment, ask for others' feedback before responding. As well, when possible, be explicit as to what kind of feedback you are seeking beforehand so you are not taken by surprise.
- **Reflect and decide what to do.** Assess the value of the feedback (based on its source and relevance), the consequences of using it or ignoring it, and then decide what to do because of it. Your response is your choice. If you disagree with the feedback, consider asking for a second opinion from someone else.
- **Follow up.** There are many ways to follow up on feedback. Sometimes, your follow-up will simply involve implementing the suggestions given to you. In other situations, you might want to set up another meeting to discuss the feedback or to re-submit the revised work.

Adapted from:
The Centre for Teaching Excellence
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_resources/tips/receiving_and_giving_effective_feedback.html