



GUIDELINES FOR OFFERING FEEDBACK & FINDING POSITIVE WAYS TO MOVE FORWARD



A *Tools for Change* handout

Before getting together, take time to reflect on the relationship you have with the person:

1. What is your intention in the relationship?
2. What is your truth in the conflict?
3. What is at stake in the conflict and what is the best outcome for your conversation?

DISSATISFACTIONS When something is taking or has taken place that you find problematic, include all the following pieces of information. Remember that there are multiple perspectives, while you are raising your dissatisfaction, investigate what experience the other has. Strive to understand and be empathetic. The framework below will help reveal what is needed to move forward. These steps may be used in any order that is helpful to you.

1. State the common mission and values that are affected by the current circumstances (what is at stake).
2. **When** (observable event / behavior(s) only) **happened,**
3. **I felt** ... (emotion only e.g. sad, angry)
4. **Because I think** ... (event/behavior) **this will result in/has resulted in...** (consequence, i.e. the impact on your shared mission, goals and/or values.) *It is good to describe what in your experience caused you to conclude this.*
5. I know that I also contributed to the **situation by** ... (Acknowledge how you personally contributed to the situation by what you did or neglected to do.)
6. **I value you because...** (how the person makes a positive contribution.)
7. **I will** ... (what you are willing to do to contribute to solving the problem) **so that** (anticipated improvement will occur.)
8. **I would like you to** ... (what action you would like from the other.)

ANXIETIES & WORRIES What you are afraid the other(s) might think, feel and/or do that will cause problems. It is important that anxieties are given voice. It is good to express what in your own past experience has led you to conclude that the current situation is likely to lead to difficulties. Be explicit about the potential effects on your common mission and or values. Express your own needs.

I am worried that (what you are afraid the other might think feel, or do) **if this is true it makes me feel** (emotion) **because** (consequence) **I would like** (what you need to feel relaxed and trusting.)

AFTER RECEIVING FEEDBACK It is vital that all concerns get validated and not discounted. Telling someone, "There is no need to be worried." increases tension because the person rightly feels discounted. Validation occurs when the person who has received feedback expresses what is true about s/he has just heard.

That truth may be small or large, but it's important for you to acknowledge that something has happened to provoke the feeling. When that is named, things tend to fall into perspective and a more trusting atmosphere emerges. Strive for empathy and endeavor to express specifically what ways you understand the views that other person holds. Express both how you care about the other and the situation. And say what you are willing to do.

Do not justify, explain, argue, avoid discomfort, ask leading questions, affix blame, be sarcastic, dismiss, discount or define anyone else's experience. Let go of manipulative and argumentative stances.

Do have compassion and generosity toward yourself and everyone involved. Be curious and listen openly, remember that people have good reasons for what they do, make assumptions explicit, acknowledge mistakes, empathize, remember that multiple views can be "right" and focus on consequences not personalities. Take responsibility and ask for what you want.

Always make room for different perspectives. Look for solutions which are inclusive and grounded in a shared commitment to doing what is best for the organization/group/community. These solutions should also support each other in overcoming individual limitations. Make agreements and write them down.

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