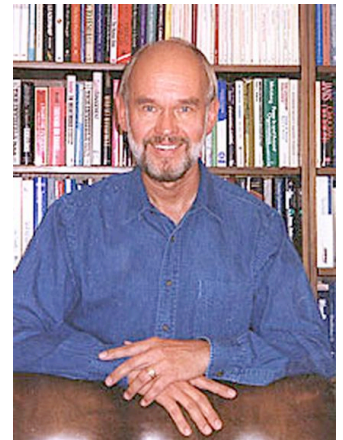


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Personal feedback can help us grow

Feedback can provide learning opportunities for each of us, if we can use the observations and reactions of others to become more aware of the consequences of our behavior. Personal feedback can help us become more aware of what we do, how we do it, and how it affects others. This can help us modify behaviors and become more effective in our relationships and interactions with others. Giving and receiving feedback requires courage, skill, understanding, and respect for self and others.

Here are some ways to make feedback more effective. Be specific, rather than general. Deal with descriptions of observed behavior of the receiver, rather than inferences, attributions, or evaluations (and focus the descriptions in terms of "more or less" rather than "either-or"). "Own" the feedback by reporting your reactions and the impact on you, rather than labeling the characteristic or attributing intentions of the receiver. Provide feedback that is verifiable (i.e., include specific examples) to allow the receiver to verify whether the feedback data accurately represent events and behaviors. Acknowledge the receiver's freedom of choice about making changes, rather than pressure her or him to accept the feedback and change. Check to make sure the receiver understands your message in the way you intend it; use an effective communication process that checks for understanding by the receiver. Sincerely intend to be helpful, rather than to correct, belittle, or punish.

A useful form for giving feedback is: "When you said (or did) X, I felt Y, because Z." One effective opener for giving feedback is: "Something is bothering me; may I share it with you?" Another is: "I would like to talk with you about something important in our relationship; is it OK to talk now or can we set a time to talk?"

When receiving feedback it is important to try to hear, inquire, and understand the feedback we receive, and resist the natural tendency to explain or rationalize the behavior at issue. None of us like to be reminded that we are less than wonderful in some way. However, receiving and using good feedback provides a primary opportunity to become more wonderful.