

Exploring Leadership

COMMUNICATION: CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Giving and receiving constructive feedback is essential to individual and group development. The University of Tasmania said “[It] provides encouragement, support, corrective measures and direction to the person receiving it.” Constructive feedback is meant to be uplifting and provide useful comments/suggestions that will lead to a positive improvement of behavior and results.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- When was the last time you received feedback?
- Was it helpful? Was it a positive or negative experience?
- How could your experience have been different?

This workshop focuses on constructive feedback on a one-on-one basis, the most well-known type of feedback. Usually this occurs between a worker and their boss, a teacher and their student, or a leader and their youth participants. Although one-on-one feedback is the most common way, it is important to remember the true meaning behind these meetings: to improve the work behaviors, successes, and relationships.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

The goal of this activity is for youth to complete a drawing only using verbal communication. This is done in pairs. Depending on how complex you want to make it, and the age/abilities of your group, you may want to select previously drawn images or have team members draw something themselves.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

- Team members may switch roles so that they each get a turn drawing and describing. This lets them gain a deeper understanding as to what feedback might be helpful in this situation and understand the importance of perspective.
- Remind youth that constructive feedback is based on action/behavior not the person.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- How to give and receive constructive feedback.
- How to receive and interpret constructive feedback in a beneficial way.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Paper/whiteboards
- Writing utensils
- Pre-done drawing (not required)

- Youth sit back-to-back. One person verbally describes a shape or picture to their partner who tries to draw the image as similar to the description as they can.
- Partners must stay back-to-back for the duration of the activity- no peeking! Additional rules can be added as needed such as: the describer can not repeat themselves, the entire image must be described before you start drawing, the artist may not erase anything, etc.
- Once the pairs have completed their drawings, they can look to see how accurate the result was and discuss how the activity went.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Ask the below open ended questions to your group to engage in a discussion about what happened during the activity.

- How did you feel during this activity? (both perspectives, the artist and the describer, this discussion will vary if the pair only did one role or each did both)
- How did you use feedback to improve your performance?
- How did the way someone gave feedback affect the way you received it?
- How does thinking about someone else's perspective affect the way you might give and receive feedback?
- What's the difference between negative and constructive feedback?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

After discussing how the activity went, talk about what strategies are necessary for giving constructive feedback:

- Check your motives (why are you doing it)
- Be timely (as soon as possible, but not when emotions are high)
- Make it regular
- Prepare comments ahead of time
- Be specific
- Criticize in private (safe place)
- Use "I" statements (ex: I felt When you... NOT you were ...)
- Limit your focus (main issues, don't nit-pick)
- Talk about the positives
- Give specific suggestions
- Follow up (let them know you see their efforts and compliment improvement/remind them to keep working at it if needed- nicely)



CONCLUSION:

Constructive feedback in a one-on-one setting can be difficult as it can easily get personal and discouraging. At the same time, we use this form of feedback all the time so it's essential that we develop the skills necessary to give and receive good, constructive, feedback in this specific setting. By using specific strategies, one-on-one feedback meetings can be both helpful and successful.

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REFERENCES

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