

## A Checklist on Feedback and Conflict Management



**Feedback - a sensitive subject at both ends. A difficult thing to do but among the most efficient in developing a culture of respect and trust.**

We all know how important feedback is yet very few of us are actually providing it/asking for it properly and regularly.

In this article I will share some tips on how feedback can be applied in one to one discussions or mediating between members of your team that are in conflict.

### **Some ground rules:**

- Firstly, communicate your intention to have a **feedback** session which goes both ways as the premise for a successful collaboration & respect.
- **The purpose of such meetings should be** honest, respectful feedback and feedforward that could eliminate/reduce tensions, contribute to better relationships and lead to stronger and more efficient team work as well as to better results.

#### *1. Before the meeting you should:*

- a. **Prepare well by - thinking or writing down**
- b. What is it you like/admire about the other person? Behaviors/strengths that the person should **continue doing**. Examples of positive impact on others.

#### *2. Stop doing:*

- a. Behaviors and aspects the person should **stop doing**. Examples of impact on others.
- b. What are the values you do not feel the other person is actually living? (i.e responsibility, accountability, etc)
- c. What behaviors of that person make you feel uncomfortable? Aspects that if changed, could create an important shift in that relationship.

### 3. *New behaviors the other person should start doing. Ask yourself:*

- a. What is the outcome I want? Visualize it and prepare actions post that outcome.
- b. What do I want the other person **to actually do** after we finish the session?
- c. What do I want the other person **to feel** about me and the discussion we had, after we finish the session?
  - The feedback is the past and thus the person cannot do too much about it
  - The suggestions/feedforward are the future therefore the person could actually act and change
  - The discussion should focus much more on suggestions/the future rather than on the feedback/past.
  - Ask probing open ended questions to clarify if needed.
  - Always praise authentically, never falsely. Even if your praises are genuine, you need to learn to praise skillfully as it can backfire even with the best of intentions (study fixed and growth mindset related aspects for details)
  - Treat the other as adult, with kindness and compassion
  - Practice radical, feedback: important aspects that are not said, for whatever reasons, will backfire in time

**Suggested Timing:** up to 1h usually (for mediation or a self-driven process and not for regular feedback where timing should be max 10-15 mins) or max 1,5h if there has been a long time since no such exercise has happened.

#### **Process:**

1. Kindly ask the person for a complete feedback about you and feedforward keeping in mind the above
2. Make sure you **listen** irrespective of whether you agree or not with what you hear. Your job is to give full attention to the speaker as a gift.

Acknowledge but do not over acknowledge. Try not to speak except to acknowledge. If your body language shows biased listening, disapproval, etc. the other will be discouraged to provide an honest feedback. Thus pay attention to/train on/rehears on how your expressions/micro expressions and body language speaks about how well you listen!

3. You should be able to point out each of the aspects the other person tells you after he/she finishes talking:

**“what I heard you say was.....”** or

**“what you say sounds important. To make sure I understand you correctly, I would like to repeat what I think I heard”. Let me know if my understanding is correct, ok?”** or, if the other person is not doing it, you may take the lead and say

**“I want to make sure I do not miscommunicate anything so if it is ok with you, after I speak, I’d like to invite you to let me know what you heard. Is that ok?”**

Empathic listening: **“I am going to tell you what I heard you feel and you let me know how well I am doing, ok?”**

4. Immediately after, the other gives feedback by telling you what he/she feels you got right (for example, what you missed, what you misinterpreted, etc.)
5. Go back until the other is satisfied that he/she is completely understood by you. Do this for as long as it

takes but try be efficient with the time!

6. Then switch places doing the same exercise the other way around

7. After the discussion is over, don't comment anything else. Just **thank each other** genuinely and mention that you will meet again in few days after each has reflected on the feedback and feedforward.

Eventually (only if it is the context) spend a few minutes (5 min suggested) discussing the experience and how it helped clarify and strengthen the relationship.

8. After the session, plan another 5 minutes meeting in 2-3 days time to tell each other:

**“I have thought a lot about what you said and this is what I intend to do/change. Let's meet again in a month and provide each other feedback and feedforward on that. “**

In the following month, try change behaviors discussed and follow up on that keeping the tempo and the rules.

Repeat the exercise regularly/when needed.

#### **Suggested readings:**

<https://hbr.org/2014/01/how-netflix-reinvented-hr>

What Got You Here Won't Get You There, Marshall Goldsmith

Search Inside Yourself, Chade Meng Tan

Powerful: Building a Culture of Freedom and Responsibility, Patty McCord

Principles: Life and Work, Ray Dalio, etc.