

Delivering Constructive Performance Feedback

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will provide tips on how to deliver constructive performance feedback. Specifically, it will cover:

1. Constructive Feedback
2. Guidelines for Giving Constructive Feedback
3. Improving the Quality of Constructive Feedback
4. Reflect

1. Constructive Feedback

Performance feedback can be given two ways:

- Constructive feedback: Information-specific, issue-focused, and based on observations. It comes in two varieties.
- Praise and criticism: Both are personal judgments about a performance effort or outcome, with praise being a favorable judgment and criticism being an unfavorable judgment. Information given is general and vague, focused on the person, and based on opinions or feelings.

Do not fall into the trap of giving praise and criticism on employee performance. Instead, follow these tips to give constructive feedback.

Constructive Feedback Tips	Description
Be direct when delivering your message.	Get to the point and avoid beating around the bush. Both negative and positive feedback should be given in a straightforward manner.
Avoid "need to" phrases, which send implied	For example, "Jane, you need to get your reports turned in on time, and you need to spell check them." This message is not really performance feedback. It implies that Jane did not do something well with her reports, but it doesn't report exactly what happened. Providing clarity on what occurred is the aim of feedback.

messages that something that didn't go well.	
Be sincere and avoid giving mixed messages.	Sincerity says that you mean what you say with care and respect. Mixed messages are referred to as "yes, but" messages. For example, "John, you have worked hard on this project, but. . . ." What follows is something the person is not doing well and is the real point of the message. The word "but," along with its cousins "however" and "although," when said in the middle of a thought, create contradictions or mixed messages. Putting "but" in the middle tells the other person, "Don't believe a thing I said before."
In positive feedback situations, express appreciation.	Appreciation alone is praise. Yet when you add it to the specifics of constructive feedback, your message carries an extra oomph of sincerity. For example: "Sue, your handling of all the processing work while John did the callbacks made for an efficient effort and showed good teamwork. Everything you did was accurate. Thanks so much for helping. Such initiative is a real value to the team."
In negative feedback situations, express concern.	A tone of concern communicates a sense of importance and care and provides the appropriate level of sincerity to the message. Tones such as anger, frustration, disappointment and sarcasm tend to color the language of the message and turn attempts at negative feedback into criticism. The content of the message gets lost in the noise and harshness. The purpose of negative feedback is to create awareness that can lead to correction or improvement in performance. If you cannot give negative feedback in a helpful manner, in the language and tone of concern, you defeat its purpose.
Give the feedback person-to-person, not through messengers of technology.	The nature of constructive feedback is verbal and informal. That can be done only by talking live to the employee, either face-to-face or by phone when you physically cannot be together.
State observations, not interpretations.	Observations are what you see occur; interpretations are your analysis or opinion of what you see occur. Tell what you've noticed, not what you think of it, and report the behavior you notice at a concrete level, instead of as a characterization of the behavior. Observations have a far more factual and nonjudgmental aspect than interpretations.

Negative feedback is news to an employee about an effort that needs improvement. Negative feedback does not mean a terrible performance, but rather a performance in which the outcomes delivered should be better. So negative is not a negative word in this case.



Without the specifics, you only have praise or criticism. Start each key point with an "I" message, such as, "I have noticed," "I have observed," "I have seen," or when the need exists to pass on feedback from others, "I have had reported to me." "I" messages help you be issue-focused and get into the specifics.

2. Guidelines for Giving Constructive Feedback

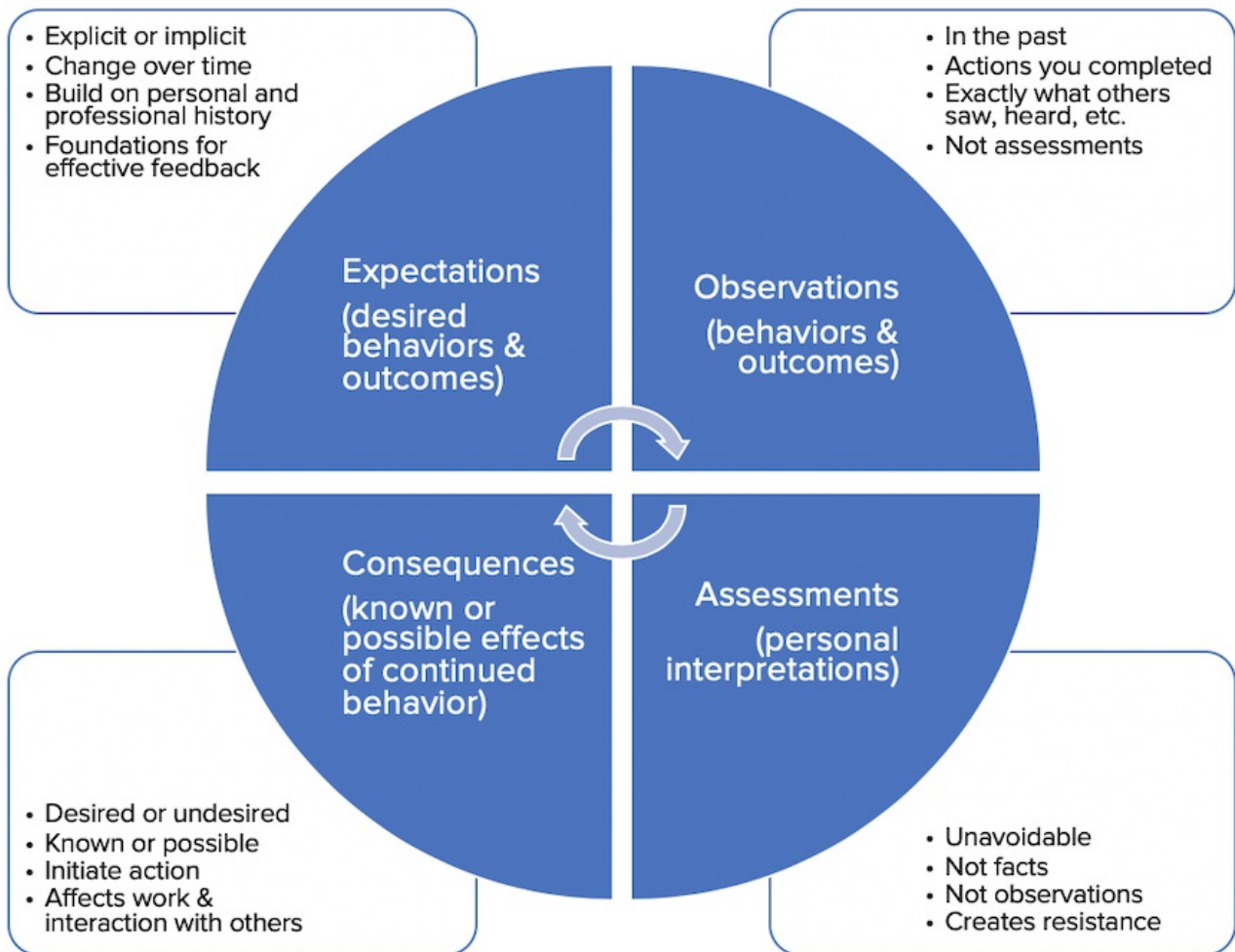
The guidelines for giving constructive feedback fall into four categories:

- **Content:** What you say in the constructive feedback.
- **Manner:** How you say the constructive feedback. As you may know, how you say something often carries more weight than what you have to say. Manner is an important element when giving feedback.
- **Timing:** Answers this question: When do you give an employee feedback for a performance effort worth acknowledging? The answer is as soon as possible. Feedback is meant to be given in real-time, as close as possible to when the performance incident occurs so that the events are fresh in everyone's minds. When feedback is given well after the fact, the value of the constructive feedback is lessened.
- **Frequency:** Answers the question, "How often should your employees receive constructive feedback on their performance?" This last guideline is the most important because it makes all the other guidelines work. Use constructive feedback regularly to acknowledge real performance. Try to catch and respond to employees doing the job right just as much as you catch and respond to them doing something not quite right and do not acknowledge how they are performing only once or twice a year.

3. Improving the Quality of Constructive Feedback

To improve the quality of feedback conversations, feedback is:

- Most beneficial if on-going (which ensures no surprises)
- Intended to support employee performance and development
- Helpful and applies to both positive and constructive situations



Video Transcription

Sylvia is an entry-level RN with only a few months of working experience in a hospital. She lacks patience when dealing with difficult patients. And recently, she was involved in a heated argument. Amanda, who is the nursing unit manager, is uncertain of how she should approach her.

Delivering difficult news or negative feedback to an employee can be challenging. Managers often feel awkward and tend to avoid it. Other times, they share feedback in an inappropriate way, offending the employee. However, delivering negative feedback when doing it properly is essential for the employee since you're giving them the opportunity to improve their performance.

OK, so let's discuss some tips on how to give negative feedback effectively. First of all, consider the timing. Feedback should be given regularly and as soon as possible, ideally right after the event in question. Second, it's important to find a private place and talk to the employee person to person because no one wants to receive negative feedback in front of others.

Also, a super important element is manner, which is how you say something. The manager has to get their emotions under control and approach the employee in a genuine and supportive way. Anger, frustration, disappointment, or even worse, sarcasm, can turn negative feedback into criticism or judgment.

Now let's look at the content. A helpful framework includes four steps. First, state the expectations. In the case with Sylvia, Amanda should clearly state her standards and how she expects her nurses to interact

with patients. Second, Amanda should describe the observation she's made about the way Sylvia interacts with patients. Ideally, she should use the most recent problematic event she observed and describe the behavior objectively without judgment.

Third, Amanda should share her assessment where she explains how this behavior can negatively impact the unit. She should be concrete and objective. For example, she could talk about one specific interaction where Sylvia caused a patient's family to leave dissatisfied and how they will be less likely to come back and more likely to file for a lawsuit.

Finally, Amanda should explain the consequences. This is where she offers actionable suggestions on what to do differently and how to improve. For Sylvia, this includes breaking the ice with patients, using active listening skills, being more courteous, and giving them her undivided attention, as well as remembering to pay attention to the patient's family.

After that, Amanda should explain what will happen if the behavior doesn't improve. When Amanda gives feedback, it's important to remember that Sylvia is also encouraged to give her side of the story. Finally, when both parties have spoken and listened to each other, Amanda should summarize the conversation and commit to a follow-up on the feedback she gave.

4. Reflect

Kate is an entry-level RN with almost a year of experience on a medical-surgical unit. Documenting in an Electronic Health Record (EHR) is an important part of her job. Kate's documentation lacks structure and is not appropriately done. Experienced RNs on the unit have tried to help her but to no avail.



REFLECT

It is your turn to deliver constructive feedback. Download the worksheet and deliver constructive feedback to Kate. Share with your colleagues or supervisor.



[Delivering Feedback Worksheet](#)

Authored by Kerrie Roberson, DHA, MBA, MSN, BSN, RN-BC, CMSRN, WAAD

Support

If you are struggling with a concept or terminology in the course, you may contact **NurseLeaderSupport@capella.edu** for assistance.

If you are having technical issues, please contact **learningcoach@sophia.org**.