

Module: Feedback – tips and tools

Module in Communication Skills for Supervisors

In many everyday conversations we are asking questions to seek information that we need. These types of questions tend to be closed questions that will provide a factual or yes/ no response. Some closed questions are also used as ways to give advice.

Providing feedback is an essential part of supporting trainees to learn and improve. Many people are sensitive to feedback and see it as criticism so the way feedback is provided can make a huge difference to how it is received.

This tool outlines several coaching approaches to having a feedback conversation, which will be different to other models of feedback supervisors may be familiar with.

Reframing feedback

When you read or hear the word 'feedback' – what comes to mind?

For many it is about letting someone know what they need to do differently. It might be based on what others have said or it could be based on results or behaviours which need to change. This is often thought of as 'negative' feedback.

Of course, feedback can also be 'positive', letting someone know what they are doing well.

Ideally all feedback needs to be constructive.

Seeing feedback as data

Executive Coach, Myles Downey, suggests that one could think of feedback as data¹ – as being neutral, neither good nor bad. If we do this, it can support us to take the heat out of challenging feedback and engage the other person in a collaborative approach to making changes where required.

He suggests the following:

The data needs to be High-quality

Based on specific examples which ideally you have observed yourself and '*free from judgement and interpretation*'

Clarify intent (in delivering feedback)

Check your intent when preparing to give feedback. It needs to be based on raising awareness of the other person.

Emotional charge

Check any emotional charge associated with giving feedback. Are you feeling frustrated, angry, anxious, pleased? It can be useful to notice this in advance to check anything that might get communicated to the other person in an unhelpful way.

Three-step process to giving feedback

Having thought about those areas he suggests a three-step process to giving feedback:

1. **Contract** with the other person:
 - i. let them know you have some feedback you would like to offer,
 - ii. check how they prefer to receive feedback, (eg direct, offered constructively / positively, framed as a question / offered gently, offered in a private place). This can be done when first beginning work with a trainee as well as in the moment) and
 - iii. let them know your intent in providing it. (eg *I would like to offer this feedback to support you to build your confidence as you approach CCT.*)

2. **Data** - Provide the data in a factual, non-judgemental way.

(eg *'I notice that when a question was raised about X at last week's teaching session you did not raise your hand to respond. You have discussed this with me very clearly on a number of occasions, what held you back on that occasion?'*)

 - i. It can also be useful to encourage trainees to think of feedback as data, information which is designed to support them to learn and grow.

3. **Action** – explore actions that can be taken.

Seeing feedback in this way can help to build the relationship as well as supporting a trainee to make changes. It can also engage trainees in recognising the benefits of receiving feedback.

Doing well / Stop / Start / Continue

Stop / Start / Continue is a simple framework to use when supporting someone to make changes. It can be used as a framework for a one to one conversation with a trainee based on the trainer's observations, and can form the basis of a very simple 360 questionnaire. Starting with what they are doing well can reassure the trainee that certain things are going well, even if others need to change.

Example: When thinking about Dr A:

- *What are they doing well?*
- *What could they stop doing?*
- *What could they start doing?*
- *What could they continue doing?*

The Feedback Sandwich

The feedback sandwich is a very simple model which involves surrounding challenging feedback with someone considered more positive.

It involves –

1. Offering some constructive acknowledgement of what is going well
2. Then offering some feedback which might be considered challenging
3. Offering more feedback about what the trainee is doing well.

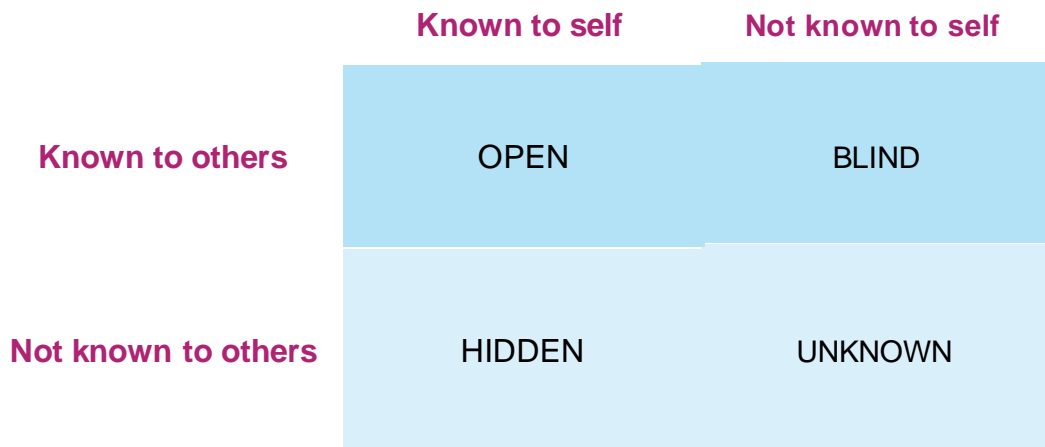
The idea is that once someone is reassured that certain things are going well, they may be more able to hear something which might feel less comfortable.

It can be a way to soften something challenging.

The Johari Window

The Johari Window is a model developed by psychologists Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham to help people to increase self-awareness and interprofessional relationships². It can be a useful tool to use when providing feedback, particularly if someone is struggling with relationships or when someone does not see the value of feedback. It is also useful to use in teams.

The model is based on four quadrants or windows (see the diagram below) based on what is known or not known by self and others.



What is known or not known could include skills, experiences, motivations, feelings, challenges or other traits or attributes considered important.

A trainee could be invited to share how they see each quadrant. The size of each ‘window’ can be increased or decreased to represent which areas a trainee considers to be most full.

For example, a trainee who lacks confidence or is finding it hard to build relationships with fellow trainees could be encouraged to explore how they might expand the Open area by perhaps speaking out or volunteering to run a training session or similar so that others could see more of their skills and abilities.

Self-awareness increases as the Open area expands and this can be useful to explain to a trainee who struggles with the idea of feedback.

Trainer exercise

How might you go about offering feedback to the trainees outlined below?

Scenario 1	A trainee is getting on well with their team, but they seem to lack confidence when working with a particular consultant and you want to support them to speak out.
Scenario 2	You are concerned that a trainee is behind with their e-portfolio. You know they are under pressure at the moment but if they don't start to complete it, they risk losing their next placement.
Scenario 3	You feel a trainee is not telling you the whole story about an incident which others shared with you recently.
Scenario 4	A trainee is repeatedly late for clinic, and this is having an impact on the rest of the team. Other than this, things are going well.
Scenario 5	You have noticed some communication issues with a trainee. They don't seem to listen to instructions, and you noticed that they missed an important clinical cue recently

Top tip and bonus exercise

Acknowledge trainees for what is going well

When things are busy it can be a challenge to remember to acknowledge what is going well. However, even acknowledging small things can make a big difference to someone's confidence and motivation.

See if you can find at least one thing to acknowledge your trainees for this week – either individually or collectively.

Other worksheets & podcasts to look at in the module

- Podcast on Providing Feedback for Supervisors
- Growth Mindset: The Basics for tips on how to acknowledge effort, engagement and persistence rather than fixed traits
- Start with what's working – Appreciative Inquiry

Further reading

1. For further information and background about the Johari Window visit: <https://www.businessballs.com/self-awareness/johari-window-model-and-free-diagrams/>
2. Myles Downey, *Effective Coaching*, TEXERE, (2003)