

Tips for Receiving Feedback

(adapted from an article by Susan M. Heathfield)

Purpose: This tool is intended to assist employees with developing an open and non-defensive posture to coaching and feedback. This tool should help employees receive and respond to feedback in an appropriate and professional manner.

10 Steps on how to Receive Feedback

1. Try to control your defensiveness. Fear of hurting you or having to deal with defensive or justifying behavior make people hesitant to give feedback to another person.
2. Listen to understand. Practice all the skills of an effective listener including using body language and facial expressions that encourage the other person to talk.
3. Try to suspend judgment. After all, in learning the views of the feedback provider, you learn about yourself and how your actions are interpreted in the world.
4. Summarize and reflect what you hear. Your feedback provider will appreciate that you are really hearing what they are saying. You are ascertaining that you 'are' really hearing.
5. Ask questions to clarify. Focus on questions to make sure you understand the feedback.
6. Ask for examples and stories that illustrate the feedback, so you know you share meaning with the person providing feedback.
7. Just because a person gives you feedback, doesn't mean their feedback is right. They see your actions but interpret them through their own perceptual screen and life experiences.
8. Be approachable. People avoid giving feedback to people who are not approachable. Your openness to feedback is obvious through your body language, facial expressions, and welcoming manner.
9. Check with others to determine the reliability of the feedback. If only one person believes it about you, it may be just him or her, not you.
10. Remember, only you have the right and the ability to decide what to do with the feedback.

5 Additional Tips:

1. Try to show your appreciation to the person providing the feedback. They'll feel encouraged and believe it or not, you do want to encourage feedback.
2. Even your manager or supervisor finds providing feedback scary. They never know how the person receiving feedback is going to react.
3. If you find yourself becoming defensive or hostile, practice stress management techniques such as taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly.
4. Focusing on understanding the feedback by questioning and restating usually defuses any feelings you have of hostility or anger.
5. If you really disagree, are angry or upset, and want to dissuade the other person of their opinion, wait until your emotions are under control to reopen the discussion.