Giving Feedback Can Be Tricky! You Can Do It With These Essential Tips

BY SAMANTHA PARKER

"To become more effective and fulfilled at work, people need a keen understanding of their impact on others and the extent to which they're achieving their goals in their working relationships. Direct feedback is the most efficient way for them to gather this information and learn from it." - Ed Batista

Giving feedback on someone's work is valuable, impactful, and essential to professional growth and development. However, it can also feel vulnerable, uncomfortable, and tricky. It requires emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and empathy since you have to manage how you deliver your feedback while also being sensitive to the feelings of others. Giving feedback is a great privilege because you are pushing someone to grow and improve.

As part of my job, I provide feedback to educational assessors on their written reports to teachers and coaches. I apply a critical eye to every aspect of their writing. I check to ensure that the writing is informative and clear and that the notes and scoring are accurate. I describe myself as a cheerleader and coach all in one.

When I initially began giving written feedback on my colleagues' work, I was motivated to help them improve, but I was also pretty nervous. I didn't take the prospect lightly because I understood the significance and delicacy of my role. Will they be annoyed by all the suggestions I am making? Will they be embarrassed by the mistakes I pointed out? Will they trust and accept my feedback? After all, I was new to the role, and most of my colleagues had been in the organization for longer than me. Looking back, I marvel at the level of trust, humility, and vulnerability in the process for them and me. It is a relationship that we have proudly built upon over time.

Early childhood program leaders' many essential roles include supervision and performance appraisals. You are responsible for providing ongoing feedback and support so your staff can regularly reflect on and improve their daily practices. This accountability system shows you are paying attention and committed to your staff's career growth and development.

Here are some essential tips to consider when giving feedback:

- Establish a respectful relationship to build trust and safety. You don't have to be best friends, but getting to know someone - listening to them, paying attention, and observing their needs - can go a long way in establishing a connection. The working relationship you develop is the foundation for the feedback that you provide.

- Be clear, specific, and consistent. Feedback should be easy to understand for any changes to occur. If you ask someone to revise something, tell them exactly what needs to be fixed and how they can do it. If you need to provide feedback at specific times, adhere to that timing regularly. If

someone is waiting for your daily feedback, and you give it to them the following work day, ensure it is provided at a similar time each time. Giving feedback consistently also makes people feel more comfortable receiving it. When people anticipate what to expect, they feel safer and better equipped to grow. They know they can rely on you and trust you.

- Attempt to individualize feedback, understanding that not everyone has the same communication style. Giving feedback is not always a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, some may want direct and concise feedback. However, others may want more details and context regarding what you ask them to do. If you are uncertain, don't be afraid to ask them what they prefer. Doing this will show that you are considering their needs, further reinforcing the trusting relationship necessary for growth. Getting to know someone and recognizing that everyone might have different needs for receiving feedback is essential.

- Always mix your feedback with positive reinforcement. It should be genuine and meaningful. Training your eyes to look for the good can help balance out a critical eye. In my experience, this is pretty easy to find.

- Maintain a record of an individual's progress and areas of improvement. By doing this, you are helping them see any growth patterns or opportunities in their work.

- Provide ongoing support and encouragement. Make yourself available. Your genuine investment in helping your colleagues grow will nurture that relationship and motivate them because they know you care about their work.

Providing feedback can be sensitive and tricky. It requires empathy and intentionality. However, if implemented thoughtfully, with these tips in mind, it can foster meaningful relationships, increase engagement, and significantly impact professional growth and development within your organization.

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