

Courageous Conversations: How to Communicate Effectively



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The Fine Print

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Agenda

- Purpose of “Courageous Conversation”
- Criticism versus Constructive Feedback
- Overcoming Reluctance
- Common Reactions and Responses
- Receiving Feedback

Why do we need to have this discussion?

Provide feedback

- Help employees understand responsibilities and how to meet goals.

Positive impact on talent management and retention

Build future leaders (learn by experience)

Provide direction to employees

- Give employees advice on performance or skills development.

Encourage employees to take responsibility and ownership of their own development

Criticism, or Destructive Feedback (What you should not do)

Criticism is negative and can leave the recipient feeling demoralized and upset.

- Focuses on the recipient's personal traits and character rather than on specifics or facts.
- Can be perceived as a personal attack.
- Recipient may focus on his own feelings rather than the actual feedback.
- Undermines the receiver's confidence.

Constructive Feedback: Two Types

Reinforcing Feedback

Show of approval to encourage more of the same behavior.

Corrective Feedback

Shows how behavior should change in order to obtain the right result.

How to Use Constructive Feedback

Make your feedback specific to the behavior.

- Destructive: Christy, you have a bad attitude.
- Constructive: Christy, I am concerned about your punctuality. You have been 15 minutes late for the last three meetings. Can you help me understand why you've been late?

Focus on the performance issue manifested by the behavior.

- Destructive: Sam, why are you so shy?
- Constructive: Sam, we would appreciate you keeping the team informed about the status of the project. How about scheduling a weekly status meeting?

How to Use Constructive Feedback

Avoid judgments by describing rather than evaluating.

- Destructive: Steve, you are lazy about improving your skills and don't seem to care about your career here.
- Constructive: Steve, I gave you five opportunities to attend training programs this year and you haven't enrolled yet. What's getting in your way?

Consider your timing. Provide feedback either before the event in the form of advice, or immediately afterward as positive feedback.

- Destructive: Joe, because you've done such a poor job in the past, I need to preview the presentation before you deliver it.
- Constructive: Joe, let's review the content of your presentation together so you can do a good job in front of the team next week.

How to Use Constructive Feedback

Define the impact of the behavior

- Destructive: Amy, why can't you ever get things done on time?
- Constructive: Amy, when you don't submit your reports on time, I can't get complete my own report. This slows up decisions about resources needed for next month.

Check to be sure that clear communication has occurred.

- Destructive: Jim, do you know what you're doing?
- Constructive: Jim, are you clear on how to create the report from the data you received?

Overcoming Reluctance to Provide Feedback

Overcoming Reluctance: Mindset

Understand the desired outcome

- What do you hope to achieve?

Help the employee succeed

- Improved performance
- More opportunities

Overcoming Reluctance: Action Plan!

Prepare

- Be clear on your reason for the conversation: What do you hope to achieve?
- Plan ahead for possible outcomes: Plan/Practice.

Set Tone

- Note your desire for discussion to be helpful.
- Be confident. Don't apologize or shift blame.
- Consider employee's perspective.

Deliver Feedback

- Communicate clearly and honestly.
- Use "I" language instead of "You" language.

Close Session

- Express employee's value to the organization.
- Recap what you have agreed to do.

Common Reactions To Feedback

Common Reactions and How to Handle

Employee becomes overwhelmed by feedback

- Acknowledge his/her right to be emotional.
- Ask what caused the distress.
- Continue with discussion at a slower pace.
- Consider s/he may be using reaction to gain sympathy.

Feedback comes as a surprise

- Encourage employee to accept feedback as valuable information.
- Recognize that feedback should have been given in the past.

Employee doesn't think you are qualified to give feedback

- Remind employee that it is your responsibility to give feedback and that you are providing the feedback to help the employee be successful.

More Common Reactions and How to Handle

Employee becomes confrontational

- Acknowledge the situation.
- Remain calm and do not engage in an argument or power struggle.
- Advise employee that his/her behavior is unprofessional and unacceptable.
- If employee refuses to calm down, reschedule the meeting.
- Leave if necessary.

Employee refuses to accept feedback

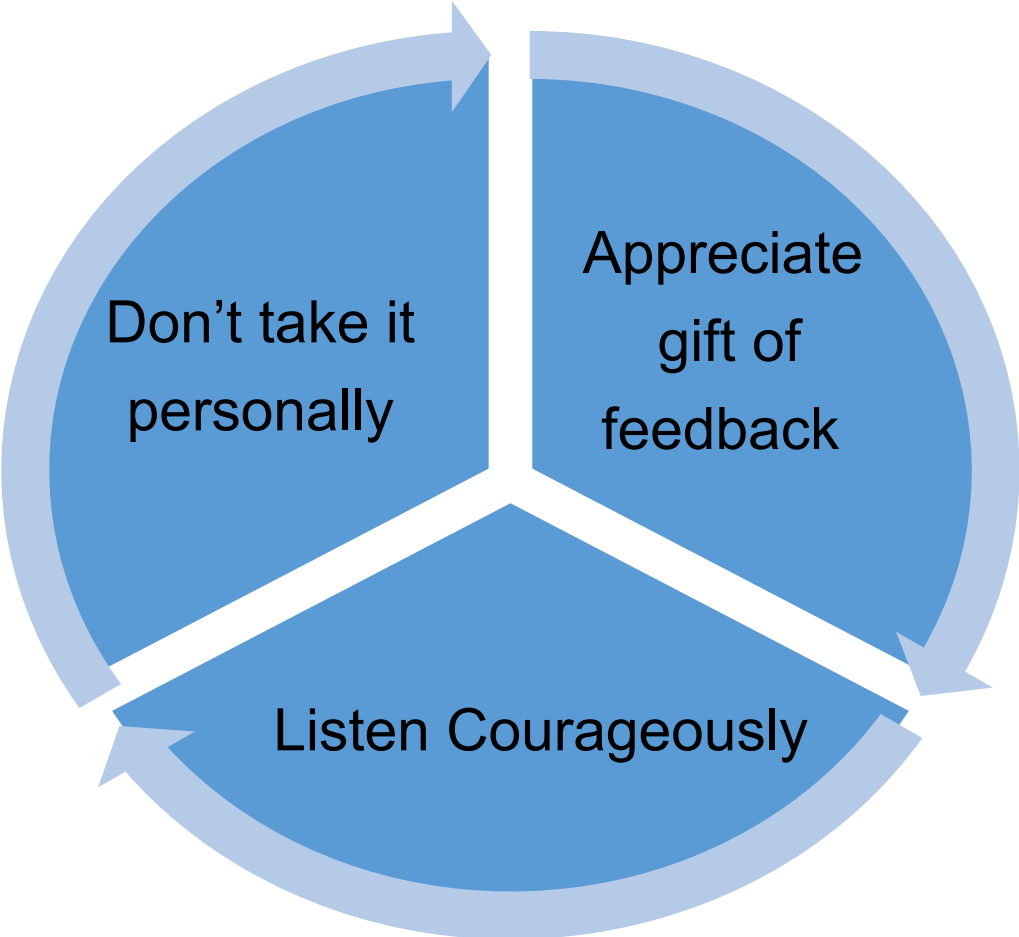
- Remind employee that this feedback is intended to give the employee the opportunity to be successful.
- Encourage employee to accept feedback as valuable information.

Closing the Discussion

- Briefly summarize the conversation- what the employee must do to be successful and how you have agreed to help.
- Express your commitment to the employee's success.
- Review the most important developmental need or issue.
- Thank the employee for being an active participant.

Receiving Feedback

Receiving Feedback



Summary

- Use constructive feedback.
- Prepare for the meeting:
What do you hope to achieve?
- Create an outline to stay on track.
- Identify possible reactions and your response.
- Mindset: Give the employee the opportunity for success.
- Summarize and reiterate your commitment.
- When receiving feedback, appreciate the “gift” of the advice.
- Communicate and listen courageously.



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