

## Content of Effective Feedback

We drew on the literature (Kilbourn, 1990; Gaipman & Anthony, 1993; Dolan & Schuler, 1995; Bernard & Goodyear, 1998; Weisinger, 2000) to single out **nine criteria** for formulating feedback.

**1. Confirm the student's strength.** Emphasize the student's successes. Avoid conjunctions such as *but* and *except* given their restrictive connotation. Such words spoil or cancel out the positive comment you've just made. Instead say . . . "*Now, I'd like . . .*"

**2. Identify the areas the student needs to improve – Be constructive.** Tactfully point out the areas that still need work. Keep your comments positive and confine them to the student's modifiable behaviours (e.g. too much gesticulating). If the student speaks with an accent that makes it somewhat difficult to understand her, suggest that she speak slowly or articulate more carefully since her accent cannot be changed. Base your feedback on facts.

**3. Identify the possible barriers to goal achievement.** What are the potential difficulties of the situation at hand? Examples: (a) Catheterizing an obese female patient: "*I know it's difficult to do when your patient is obese.*" (b) Caring for a different type of client: "*I realize you're not used to caring for this type of client.*"

**4. Encourage the student to try alternative behaviours and actions.** Explain that there are **other** (more efficient) ways of doing things. Then suggest a plan for acquiring:

- skills (another way of applying a technique),
- knowledge (key questions to ask a given category of clients),
- attitudes (student-patient interaction should be animated, yet professional).

**5. Provide motivation for change.** Point out the advantages of solving the problem. Explain why! Here are some examples of advantages to be gained:

- Knowledge: "*Ask the right questions in the interests of patient safety.*"
- Know-how: "*Use this technique to work faster.*"
- Attitudes: "*This approach will make the patients more receptive to you.*"

**6. Facilitate change.** Relate your comment to the solution. Suggest ways to go about changing. Use words of encouragement: "*Try this the next time!*" "*You'll see; it will be easier the next time.*" "*This comes with time.*"

**7. Demonstrate your commitment and interest.** Use words, questions and non-verbal language which prove your openness. Examples: "*What is your opinion?*" "*Next time, I'll be nearby if you need help.*" "*Come see me; we'll look for another solution. You've done well up to now.*"

**8. Clarify the student's perception of his/her performance.** Encourage the student to self-critique and to propose solutions, among other things. Ask questions to make certain the student has got the message: "*Understood?*" "*Okay?*" Have the student explain in his/her own words to check for understanding.

**9. Monitor the student's response to the feedback.** This follow-up confirms the student's use of the improvement plan, as well as her successes or modified behaviour. It helps the student put the suggested changes to work. Effective monitoring requires planning times for direct observation, coaching the student and delivering further feedback. Emphasize the student's successes. If there were problem areas, advise the student or confront him if the behaviour does not change.

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