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5 Tips For Giving Helpful Feedback

It's not human nature to welcome negative feedback. At best, people accept the comments, make changes for the better, but feel disappointed that they didn't perform better the first time around. At worst, they disregard the feedback, become disengaged, and dislike the person who took the time to comment.

So it's no wonder that leaders and coworkers hesitate (https://www.eremedia.com/tlnt/why-were-so-afraid-of-feedback/) to offer feedback on less than critical matters — especially when they think such feedback might jeopardize their relationship with the other person.

So should you or should you not speak up? When you find yourself in that quandary, consider these five techniques to make feedback more palatable as well as helpful:

1.Tie feedback to their goals (https://www.eremedia.com/tlnt/7-tips-for-giving-feedback-and-making-it-a-lot-less-difficult-too/)

Your opening statement or question should remind them of their goal: "Jenni, are you still planning to finish this project by November 15?" She says yes. Then you respond, "Okay. I just wanted to verify that was still your goal. I'm concerned about finishing by then with the most recent supplier delays. Here's what I see happening…."

You don't always have to start the discussion with a restatement of or question about their goals. But certainly you don't want to take the circuitous route in relating your feedback to their goal. Make it very clear how your input can help them accomplish their goal either faster, easier, cheaper, or better.

2. Make the feedback immediate

Memories fade fast. That's especially true if things "turned out all right" in the end. Your feedback discussion will be more specific and accurate when it takes place immediately after a situation occurs — not two weeks or two months later.

3. Give help and resources

Your feedback will be more welcome if the other person considers you a coach, not a critic (https://www.eremedia.com/tlnt/what-the-voice-teaches-us-about-feedback-and-coaching-done-right/). So offer help in the form of helpful tips, mentoring, leads to other experts, online publications, better equipment or software. Remember that tone of voice and phrasing when offering help matters a great deal. Try this phrasing: "I used to do/think…. until I discovered/learned that ….. So I thought this might help you as well."

4. Make the conversation a dialogue, not a monologue

Guide the feedback discussion with reflective questions: "How do you think the X project turned out?" "Did X work out the way you intended?" "Are you pleased with how X is going?" "What would you do differently next time?" "What kind of help do you think you need?" "How can I or someone else help you to turn this around?"

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5. Focus on the future, not the past

Although we can all learn from the past, rarely do we get redo opportunities. So make sure the other person hears positive comments about how the learning applies to the future.

Otherwise, what's the point of your feedback?

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