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15.277 Special Seminar in Communications: Leadership and Personal Effectiveness Coaching
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Giving and receiving feedback activity

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Giving Feedback is basic to every relationship--being in a team, being an employee, a manager, a friend, a parent and a spouse. We have had and will have more opportunities to give comments and feedback within the team. But helping the other person hear and receive feedback is not easy. This is an opportunity to build skills in sharing with another person how we perceive their capabilities. The skills we focus on today are the fundamentals of effective feedback:

- Owning our feedback
- Speaking descriptively and non judgmentally
- Asking clarifying questions
- Accepting feedback

Typical Activity Outcomes	Potential “Leadership Connections”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants develop more acute sense of language • Appreciate the difficulty of giving feedback • Practice how to phrase feedback to be heard • Improve in ability to ask clarifying questions • Improve ability to listen • Practice accepting the gift of feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearse the “relating” dimensions of DLM • Appreciate better the significance of inquiry, “listening” • Prepare all team members to play a leadership and coaching role by developing ability to give each other feedback

Activity Materials

- Facilitator Guide
- Participant handout “Language of Effective Feedback”
- Participant handout: Outline of DLM with Relating dimensions highlighted
- paper and pen

Activity Time Frame

Total Time: 55 minutes; Activity Schedule:

- 3 min: Activity Introduction
- 5 min: Review DLM - Relating
- 10 min: Discuss Feedback
- 10 min: Practice language – everyone
- 21 mins: Feedback pair-by-pair (3 mins each person)
- 3 min: Summary & Next week’s assignment

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Setting Up The Activity

Be sure that the group is sitting in the circle. Each person will have a partner in this activity. You may want to note where members are sitting so that in future sessions you may encourage them to change partners (or ask them to choose different partners in future).

Safety Considerations

There are no physical safety concerns for this activity.

Facilitation Instructions

Step 1: Introducing the Activity

Striking the right note in setting up the exercise, working on discovery and learning will help students receive this event.

Encourage them in seeing that this is a simple, but elegant framework for giving and receiving effective feedback without creating defensiveness. Feedback is the crucial skill in leadership and management communication and negotiation.

Say the following (in your own words): *Last session your team developed goals built on the observations of strengths you and your team observed at the Warren Center. Today we want to practice giving relevant comments to a person about something we have observed or been told that might be instrumental in improving their performance.*

We are, in effect, rehearsing the basic skills of Relating from the DLM.

Step 2: Overview the Activity Schedule

Overview the schedule:

1. We'll begin by reviewing the Distributed Leadership Model
2. Practicing norm-setting language for feedback
3. Do a simple exercise
4. Give feedback on the exercise
5. Debrief

Step 3: Lead the Discussion of Contextual material

DLM

Ask the team to recall the Distributed Leadership Model and ask if anyone can recall the 4 main dimensions (or any of the 6 dimensions)

Remind them of the four dimensions: Sensemaking, Relating, Visioning, Inventing. Tell them today you will focus on feedback as a piece that pertains to "relating". Show them the four sub-dimensions of relating: Inquiry, Advocacy, Persuading, External Boundary Spanning. Focus them on the critical skills of Inquiry and advocacy reminding them of the simply key to relating and advocacy: if people think you don't listen to them, they won't listen to you.

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LANGUAGE OF FEEDBACK

Ask why it's difficult to get good feedback. Ask what makes good feedback. What generally makes it hard to get feedback is that people don't know how to do it. They are afraid it will make you defensive. Here is a way of practicing feedback to avoid defensiveness, increase effectiveness (people know what to do) and to increase trust within the team.

Review the language handout with them. Do not rush—it takes time. Help them make distinctions between observation and evaluation and stating feelings.

Step 4: The exercise

Explain the structure of the activity:

1. Preparation – think of a person who did something that made you react strongly.
2. Let's select the first pair. (Each will take turns giving feedback to the other.)
3. Practice Feedback pair-by-pair: Out loud in front of the group
4. Debrief Feedback

Facilitation Notes

Step 1. Prepare

First, you can make notes on a time when something someone did made you react with a strong emotion, e.g., frustration, anger, impatience. Make notes on what occurred that sparked a response. Describe it on paper in detail.

Step 2. Select the first pair

Select a pair, have them choose an A and a B

Tell “A” to imagine that B is person who did what you strongly reacted to.

Tell “B” to listen to the feedback and note whether they understood what they had done, the evidence for it, the impact of it and the request.

B may ask clarifying questions, but not comment otherwise until the end.

(7 –person team: Have a “B” go twice.)

Step 3. Begin Feedback

First, A to gives feedback to B on what they observed and experienced in their interaction.

Note to facilitator:

Each person giving feedback will be using these precise language norms:

Giving Feedback

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a) Solicit agreement: “I would like to share with you my experience of what just occurred.”

b) (Providing evidence) Describe what you observed: “When you did this _____ (describe what the person said or did).

[Coaching note: Listen carefully for precision. When you hear evaluation, ask for description after indicating where the evaluation comes in. For example, “you were very polite” is evaluation, versus “you said, ‘please’” which is description]

c) (Providing impact) Tell how it made you feel: “When you did that it made me feel_____.”

[Coaching note: Listen carefully for blame. “you made me feel good” is blaming the other for your feelings, versus “I felt good” which is merely owning feelings. “You tried to trick me” versus “I felt skeptical”.]

Pause to let B respond.

[Coaching note: Have B stick to clarifying questions only. If the person wants to talk about what happened from their perspective, or explain, or defend, ask them to hold that for later. Tell them now just to make certain they understand A’s responses first.)

Receiving Feedback

d) When the feedback is understood, the person receiving feedback should simply rephrase it to acknowledge it and thank the other for it: “I have heard what you said (rephrase what was said) and understand it and know that you feel “_____” about it. You might add, if you have to explain or clarify what happened in your mind, “I am prepared to have a further conversation about it; prepared to open up more conversation with the other. Thank you for that feedback.”

Switch roles, ask B to become giver of feedback to “A”. Follow above protocol.

Coaching Comments:

Step 4. Debrief on giving feedback.

Questions:

What happened when you gave feedback?

How did you feel about receiving it?

Why set up language norms?

What are advantages of language norms?

How will this language be useful?

What can you do to practice it?

What, if any, are the implications for managers in another culture?

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Coaching Comments: They may feel it is awkward to use the “norms”. They may feel stilted, contrived. Point out that that will be true until they can practice using the norms in their own language and with sincerity. And that the important thing is to practice being specific and descriptive, while avoiding generalizations or judgments. Much of this learning is listening to our experience and to the language. If we are attuned to our feelings, we will know when we are avoiding, or smoothing over, or are reacting to another’s ambiguity or distrust or defensiveness.

Step 5: What did they learn?

Finally, ask what can be learned from the exercise.

I trust that most will say they learned how important being sensitive to language is in leading and managing our relationships.

Meanings to elicit:

1. Feelings, once emerged, become a fact. Once a feeling is manifest into a fact, it needs to be acknowledged. It is the elephant in the room. Until it is acknowledged, ego can get in the way of further learning.
2. By being descriptive and specific and owning your experience of the feedback, you will avoid creating defensiveness, and help others hear what you have to say. You can’t argue with others’ feelings.
3. Sometimes when receiving feedback, you may not think it is valid. By understanding it and thanking the other for it—after all it is a gift-- and then thinking about it, you will learn something that may have relevance or significance later if not now. Often you will receive feedback because of a feeling aroused in another person by your behavior. That feeling is the result of your behavior even if the behavior was misinterpreted or misjudged, it may be a behavior you might want to reflect upon.

SUMMARY

Feedback helps make our experiences--of the team, or the organization, or partners--**grounded in reality**. It will develop trust and open up more learning.

The point of this exercise is to learn how to use these simple norms to practice managing any interpersonal behavior in their teams or in their other relationships.

Step 6: Prepare them for next week

Remind them next week is practicing impromptus.