



# A Primer to Receiving (and Giving) Feedback On the Court

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When it comes to the art of feedback, both giving and receiving it "on the court" – that is, in the moment, during the heat of events – is a skill that can dramatically influence the dynamics of any interaction, especially in high-stakes environments like retreats or intense workshops. The key is not just in the delivery or reception of feedback but in ensuring it is constructive, timely, and, most importantly, received with gentleness and ease to maintain harmony and encourage growth.

## The Approach:

Feedback "on the court" means there's little time for pondering; decisions and communications need to be swift yet effective. This requires clarity, empathy, and precision from the communicator. Whether you're at the giving or receiving end, the goal is to foster understanding and improvement, not defensiveness or conflict.

## Core Steps and Questions to Guide the Process:

### Set the Stage for Openness

- **Explanation:** Before any feedback is exchanged, establish an environment of trust and respect where feedback is seen as a tool for development, not criticism.
- **Question:** "Can we discuss how we give and receive feedback here? I want to ensure we're all comfortable and see it as a way to help each other grow."

## Express Intent Clearly

- **Explanation:** Clearly state that the purpose of your feedback is to improve the situation or behavior, not to judge the person.
- **Question:** "I'd like to share some observations with you to see if we can work together on this. Is now a good time?"

## Be Specific and Objective

- **Explanation:** Focus on specific behaviors or events, not on the person's character. Use "I" statements to express how the situation affects you or the group.
- **Question:** "When I noticed that [specific action], I felt [emotion]. Can we explore different ways we might handle this next time?"

## Listen Actively

- **Explanation:** When receiving feedback, listen actively and with the intent to understand, not to reply. This shows respect for the giver's perspective and helps you understand the full context.
- **Question:** "Can you elaborate on that point a bit more? I want to make sure I understand your perspective fully."

## Ask for Examples

- **Explanation:** If the feedback is vague, ask for specific examples to avoid misinterpretation and to get clear on expectations.
- **Question:** "Do you have an example of when you saw this happening? It would help me understand better and address it more precisely."

## Acknowledge the Feedback

- **Explanation:** Whether you agree with the feedback or not, acknowledge that you have heard and understood the other person's perspective. This doesn't mean you agree, but it shows respect for their input.
- **Question:** "I appreciate you bringing this to my attention. Let me reflect on this so I can improve."



### Request Time to Process

- **Explanation:** If the feedback is complex or emotional, it's okay to ask for time to process the information before responding fully.
- **Question:** "Thank you for your honesty. May I take some time to think this over and get back to you by [specify time]?"

### Provide Gentle and Constructive Feedback

- **Explanation:** When giving feedback, especially in a sensitive context, phrase it gently and focus on the behavior that can be changed or adjusted.
- **Question:** "I've noticed [specific behavior], and I wonder if there's a way we can adjust that moving forward. What are your thoughts?"

### Follow Up

- **Explanation:** Feedback is a process, not a one-time event. Follow up after the initial conversation to revisit the topic, see if adjustments have been made, and offer additional support or feedback if necessary.
- **Question:** "How have things been going since our last talk? I've noticed some positive changes and wondered how you're feeling about the adjustments?"

Embracing these steps not only makes the path to effective communication smoother but also builds a foundation of mutual respect and continuous improvement.

Remember, every piece of feedback is an opportunity to enhance skills, deepen connections, and refine practices. Let's turn these moments into opportunities for growth and learning together.

This primer should help you handle feedback with finesse, ensuring it is both given and received as a means to constructive development rather than criticism. Keep these guidelines in mind to maintain a positive atmosphere and encourage a culture of open, supportive communication.