Strategies for Delivering Effective Feedback

Who:
- What is your relationship with the person?
- “Know your audience”
- Depersonalize the message: focus on the BEHAVIOR not the PERSON

What:
- Give Specific and Descriptive Feedback
  Clarify which particular behavior needs to be changed to avoid confusion.
  Be cautious to try and use factual feedback rather than inferential feedback
  - Factual: The person was late
  - Inferential: “why you THINK the person was late”
- Provide suggestions for corrective action
- Don’t dwell on the past
  Bring up only the current issue. Do not bring up past issues.

When:
- Feedback should be given within a relatively short period of time
- Feedback should be given regularly to be more effective
  Increase the number of stand-alone positive responses to everyone with whom you maintain consistent, ongoing, significant contact. Critical comments are more effective when they are the exception, not the norm.
- Consider the other person’s “attitude” and emotional state at the time

Where:
- Never deliver feedback when other people are around
- Consider possible distractions and choose a location to minimize them
- If at ALL possible, deliver feedback in person

Why:
- Examine your motives, don’t use feedback as an opportunity to “get back” at someone
- Focus on what outcomes you are seeking or what behaviors you want to change
- Give feedback with the desire to help the person and/or team

How:
- Be tactful
  Dignity and respect must be maintained at all times.
  Never structure communication to cause anyone to lose face.
- Identify the positive
  Critical comments can be positioned with positive statements. Stand-alone negative messages create a predictable and understandably defensive response in the receiver.
- Use assertive, not aggressive, communication
  Assertive: “I”- based messages. Reduces negative emotive impact that results when making you statements, encourages receivers to listen, and increases willingness to process your message.
  Aggressive: Harsh “you”-based messages. They increase negative emotive impact, shut down listening activity, and reduce objective consideration of your communication.
1. **Seek honest feedback.**
   - Consistently provide others with the opportunity to offer constructive criticisms of your efforts.

2. **Give others permission to disagree with you.**
   - Repeatedly say to yourself, “Not everyone thinks as I do, and others have a right to see things their way.”

3. **Accept critical comment with a commitment to learn.**
   - Input can help you to: consider alternatives, better understand the sender’s thought process, identify more efficient methods, develop an idea of your own vulnerabilities, see how others’ priorities may differ.

4. **Lower the stakes.**
   - Every discussion is not a battle that must be won.
   - Repeatedly say to yourself, “Whether or not I agree, I can still learn something from these comments.” This will help you to defeat your initial negative response.

5. **Depersonalize the issue.**
   - Do not interpret statements of disagreement, contention, or critical comments as personal attacks.

6. **Seek solutions.**
   - Use assertive probing questions to begin to identify alternatives: “Help me to understand how I could have done this differently.” “What are some options for correcting (overcoming) this?” “Can I hear your thoughts on a better way of dealing with this?”

7. **Listen for accuracy, not emotion.**
   - Examine critical comments for content and avoid emotional response.
   - Discard preconceptions.