

TC-L4 Giving and Receiving Feedback

Feedback is central to evidence-based learning – it facilitates the development of self-awareness, offers options and encourages a broad spectrum of professional development. It is very important to learn how to give and receive constructive feedback. Constructive feedback does not mean only positive feedback – often the most useful feedback is constructive, given in a way which may enable the recipient to hear the point being made. If applicable, agree any specific learning objectives for the session beforehand so it is clear what the observer will be looking to observe and then provide feedback on.

Our capacity to give, receive and assimilate constructive feedback can be enhanced through personal work on relevant emotional issues such as rejection, self-esteem and defensiveness.

Destructive feedback refers to that which is given in an unskilled way – feedback that leaves the recipient simply feeling defensive, with seemingly nothing on which to build or any options for using the learning.

Some general ‘rules’ for giving skilled feedback:

- Own the feedback.
- Deliver a “feedback sandwich” – start with positive feedback, followed by some constructive commentary. Then end with more positive feedback.
- Be specific and descriptive.
- Consider the medium in which feedback is being given – if delivering feedback online, ensure your camera is switched on so the other person can see you. Ensure you speak clearly and be prepared to repeat your verbal feedback if the internet connection drops.
- Give an example of what was said to demonstrate your point.
- Refer to behaviour that can be changed.
- Avoid using jargon
- Use challenge appropriately.
- Offer alternatives.
- Check the recipient understood your feedback.
- Leave the recipient with a choice.

Some general 'rules' for receiving feedback:

- Ask for the feedback that you want (i.e. on any specific areas).
- Wait until the observer has finished commenting before responding. If you are meeting online, consider muting yourself while you listen and especially if there is noise in your background.
- Where appropriate, turn your camera on so the observer can see you when providing feedback.
- Accept feedback as a learning opportunity.
- Use paraphrasing and summarising to check understanding of the feedback comments and to move from the vague to the specific.
- Use open questions and probes to help bring to the surface key issues and themes.
- Remember the purpose of receiving feedback is to support the development of counselling skills.
- Thank the observer for their feedback.

Evidencing criteria from peer feedback

All candidates need detailed comprehensive feedback from their peers to provide testimony evidence in their portfolios/Candidate Learning Records. It is important to avoid general statements and offer instead specific detailed feedback which can be used to claim evidence of meeting criteria.

e.g. "I thought you explained the boundaries of the session well. You explained clearly that you were a student counsellor and that you could offer 50-minutes. You asked the client if they were happy to have their counselling sessions online and they said yes. I didn't hear you mention your ethical framework and I wonder how you might have included that. As well as covering confidentiality, you explained the agency policy on record keeping and your supervision arrangements."

This is much more useful than: *"You set the boundaries of the session well."*