

Teaching Tip # 2: Feedback

Definition of Feedback

Feedback is the constructive, non-evaluative, objective appraisal of a performance given with the intention to improve skills. In medical education feedback is "information describing students' or house officers' performance in a given activity that is intended to guide their future performance in that same or in a related activity." (Ende, 1983) It is a key step in the acquisition of clinical skills. Feedback is analogous to coaching.

Feedback Is Important because 1) Students/residents want to know how they are doing; 2) it is essential for learning and improving performance; it reinforces appropriate behavior and helps correct deficiencies, and 4) it encourages learners to try new skills.

Feedback is most useful when it is...

- Specific
- Positive
- Useful
- Right amount
- Given privately
- Based on first-hand observation
- Fair
- Timely (close proximity to the observation it addresses)
- Focused on behavior
- Suggestive for improvements

Feedback is least useful when it is...

- General
- Negative
- Impossible to change
- Too much/too little
- Given in front of others
- Hearsay and speculative
- Based on one incident
- Delayed
- A personality attack
- Not suggestive for improvements

Creating Feedback-Friendly Environment

- Conduct feedback sessions in a private and relaxed setting.
- Outline an agenda for the session.
- Allow student/resident to discuss their performance first. Listen.
- Share your information. Link to the learner's goals.
- Compare your assessment with the learners and discuss.
- Offer suggestions for improvement.
- Establish follow-up plans.
- Summarize.

The "**Feedback sandwich**" is a method for presenting information on:

1. What was done well, followed by
2. What could be changed or improved, ending with
3. How improvement might be achieved

You might consider a learner-centered approach to providing feedback- i.e. a multilayered club sandwich!

1. "What do you think you did well?"
2. "What do you think needs improvement?" (the student is usually on target)
3. "This is what I saw that went well."
4. "This is what I saw that needs improvement." (generally there is concurrence)
5. "How would you try to improve?"
6. "Here are some suggestions you might try."
7. "Which of these would you like to try first?"