

# Academy for Counselling and Coaching (ACC)

Counselling and Coaching Training - Worldwide - English Version

The Netherlands: [www.counselling.nl](http://www.counselling.nl) - [www.coachacademie.nl](http://www.coachacademie.nl)

Worldwide: [www.coachingcounselling.com](http://www.coachingcounselling.com)

## The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback

Paul van Schaik - Els Barkema-Sala

### **Preface.**

Together with the Code of Ethics and Counselling and Coaching Techniques and Models, Feedback plays *an essential role in the learning process*. Feedback is not only vital, but the way it is given and received determines the learning process. By learning and applying these rules, you help facilitate your learning process in a practical way.

Dutch Original: Feedback V6.0 (2008)

Author: Paul van Schaik

Final corrections: Els Barkema-Sala

© Copyright Owner: Academy for Counselling and Coaching - The Netherlands - Paul van Schaik

**All rights reserved. No part(s) of this book may be reproduced by any process whatsoever without the prior written consent of the copyright owner.**

# Contents

Preface .....	1
Contents .....	2
The Meaning of Feedback .....	3
Awareness .....	3
Conscious Feedback .....	4
Effective Feedback .....	5
Feedback Rules .....	6
How to put it into practice? .....	7
Defensive Behaviour .....	8
Rules for the Receiver .....	8
More Information .....	9

# The Meaning of Feedback

Feedback is a term that comes from the field of Physics. Nature, and in fact our society, is full of feedback loops. In learning processes we also use this term. In fact, it is not possible to learn something without feedback. Generally speaking: an action takes place - which gives a result - the originator of the action notices that result. In other words, the result of the action is fed back. Thereby it is possible to see if an action produces the desired result. If that is not the case, other action can be taken and then the new result that is perceived can be closer to the original aim. The perception of the result makes adjustment possible.

With biofeedback you can learn to recognize and change your heart beat, muscle tension, blood pressure and brainwaves. But also the presentation of commercial results is a form of feedback, that allows you to see whether marketing strategies have worked. Human relations are full of overt and covert feedback loops. Cold sweat for example is a form of (unconscious) perceptible feedback. When you are in love, you produce a specific odour. If a potential partner does this as well, there are better chances of a date (besides odour, there are other feedback channels active at the same time.) Internal feedback you can experience daily, like a sense of hunger that disappears after eating. Your stomach sends out signals, that you interpret as hungry or satisfied.

1. Give 5 examples of feedback.
2. Give an example of fast feedback and another of slow feedback.
3. Can you correlate learning effect to feedback speed?
4. What types of feedback are there?

## Awareness

As counsellor/coach you are of course aware of many kinds of feedback. You are open to your client and observe his/her signals. The better you are at this, the more you can notice. You also pay attention to sending out the right signals yourself. The aim of feedback is to help the client optimally toward reaching his/her desired goal.

5. What is the difference between automatic and conscious feedback?
6. When are you aware and when do you react automatically?

# Conscious Feedback

How do I give feedback the right way? A lot of feedback is given unconsciously and automatically. Sometimes that feedback is significant, in other cases it may be insignificant. We will concern ourselves with the easiest form of feedback: verbal feedback. This is useful in giving and receiving comments. A possible form of feedback is simply stating your opinion, e.g. when someone makes a mistake you might say he is stupid. This form of feedback is neither precise nor helpful to the recipient; even worse, it disturbs the relationship. By following certain rules in giving verbal feedback, you learn to give pure feedback (as correct, precise and helpful as possible) and chances increase that the receiver can use it to his/her advantage. It can deepen the relationship.

Pure feedback, given and received in the right manner, accelerates the learning process.

Consider good feedback as a gift.

During counselling, coaching, training lessons, supervision, intervision and workshops, it is recommended that you adhere to the following feedback rules:

You are not there just for yourself, or to learn by yourself, but also to learn to help others learn.

The better you can help others, the better you can counsel or coach.

A selfish person spouting sharp opinions and comments on what others do wrong, is likely to harm the learning process of others, both of his fellow-students, trainers, teachers, as well as the whole group. The trainer will then intervene in order to protect others and to teach all how better feedback can be given.

In the work environment of, for example, a production company being blunt may be ok, but as counsellor, coach, student, trainer and supervisor that is undesirable, because you then achieve the opposite of what you aim for.

To make it easier we have listed a number of set rules. Just like the ethical/professional code, these have evolved from experience (a lot of feedback loops). Practise the rules and stick to them during your training. They may be useful in other areas of your life as well, especially if they become a good habit. You may then be experienced as a nice person and people may want to imitate your behaviour and treat you with respect. Subsequently we just refer to the feedback as applied during the training of counsellors and coaches - feedback that promotes our learning process. In other settings different rules may apply.

You can flawlessly reflect.

7. Why is good feedback important?
8. Can you think of a way to give effective feedback?
9. Can you think of some feedback rules, before you read on?

# Effective Feedback

When is feedback effective? Feedback is effective when it is direct, explicit and useful and when it follows directly upon perceived behaviour.

In other words: Feedback...

- refers to observed and perceived behaviour and not to the person.
- is descriptive and not an interpretation of, or judgement about, the behaviour (you state purely your observation)
- is specific, not a generalisation, and based upon concrete and specific ways of behaving.
- follows directly upon the behaviour.
- is given at the right moment (when the recipient wants it or is ready for it).
- enables the recipient to do something with it. Never give advice.
- is formulated in such a way that you invite the recipient to respond.

10. Learn these lines by heart, say them aloud with your eyes closed.

11. Visualize yourself giving effective feedback.

# Feedback Rules

1. Take the time to consider what you want to say. You can then gain sufficient distance. If you like, write your feedback down first and check to see if it fits the rules.
2. Speak in personal terms: "I .....". that show you are describing your perception. Don't start with "You ....." because that tends to come across as an accusation or judgement.
3. Restrict your feedback to what you observed or noted in the present contact with this person (so do not refer to other times or incidents in the past).
4. Describe your own feelings and thoughts.
5. Describe the impact of the behaviour on you. "I felt..... when you first..... and as a result I..... and that made me feel..... That's why I reacted.....".
6. Use the sandwich technique: you start and finish stating what went well, in the middle mention things that could do with some improvement.
7. Both the giver and the recipient of feedback should profit from the feedback.
8. Give supportive feedback when you want to reward good behaviour, corrective feedback when you want to correct someone (this works best for younger children).
9. Aim for an open relationship and show each other respect.
10. Be open and vulnerable.
11. Listen well.
12. Be honest.
13. Make your intentions clear.
14. Take the trouble to mend earlier mistakes.
15. Indicate clear boundaries.
16. Always ask for permission first.
17. Give correct feedback.

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>12. Learn these rules by heart, say them aloud with your eyes closed.</li><li>13. Visualize yourself practising each rule.</li><li>14. Memorize these rules before every training.</li></ol> |
|--|

# How to put it into practice?

Possible formulations could be:

1. What went well? (positive feedback)  
"I liked it that you let me finish talking first, before you....."
2. What might be better? (constructive criticism)  
Mention things that could do with some improvement:  
"What was painful for me was that you continued your story after the confrontation."
3. How could you do it better?  
Seeking alternatives:  
"I would have appreciated it if you had given me the time to process it."
4. Is it clear?  
Ask if the feedback is understood and explain or expand on it, if necessary.

We frequently practise in triads of: Counsellor/Coach, Client and Observer (CCO). The observer presents what he/she has observed as feedback. He can also ask for the perception of the client and the counsellor regarding the conversation: What went well according to you? What would you have liked differently? How was that for you? As outsider I saw this and that, how did you experience that? After the observer, both client and counsellor can in turn give feedback on the interaction.

*Trust, Empathy and Respect* are crucial to the effectiveness of feedback and therefore for the learning process. You share the responsibility with everyone else.

Whatever you do or say, always keep your aim in mind and ask yourself:  
What am I aiming for? - Did I succeed?

15. What kind of feedback questions can <i>you</i> ask?
---

# Defensive Behaviour

It happens that the recipient reacts defensively to feedback that concerns observed behaviour. This may result in a less than subtle reaction from the feedback giver (which is not the intention.) In response to that, the recipient may show resistance or aggressive behaviour. The opportunity for learning is then lost, it will no longer be about learning but about 'being right'.

The following behaviour elicits resistance:

- judging the receiver in person.
- trying to convince the other person with a flood of arguments.
- trying to show the other person something in a covert way (feigned emotion).
- ignoring or denying the other person's emotions.

- |   |
|---|
| 16. What are defensive reactions?<br>17. How can you deal with defensive reactions? |
|---|

# Rules for the Receiver

The recipient of feedback should observe these simple rules:

- Ask for feedback.
- Be open to feedback.
- Try to understand the feedback.
- Do not argue or defend yourself.
- Listen carefully and ask questions for clarification, if need be.
- Show appreciation for the feedback to the giver of it.
- Assess the feedback as to relevance and usefulness.
- Do something with the feedback.
- Do not immediately take perceived criticism personally.
- Do not immediately become defensive - try to keep your emotions at bay.
- Be open to compliments, do not dismiss them as if they are not important.

Giving and receiving Feedback is like a tango.

- |   |
|---|
| 18. Visualize yourself receiving positive feedback.<br>19. Visualize yourself reacting to confrontative feedback. |
|---|

# More Information

For more information on feedback you can read the following workbook:  
Feedback - Criticism given and received - Marieta Koopmans  
Paperback | 100 Pages | Thema | ISBN13: 978.90.5871.388.9 - € 18,95

Internet:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feedback>