

Provide Feedback to Trainees

Compliments of CORE Faculty Development

I. Overview

Providing regular feedback to the trainee regarding his/her work with you is the most powerful teaching tool a faculty has. It is also the area most commonly cited as lacking when trainees evaluate medical faculty. Quite simply, feedback is the sharing of information about the trainee's performance. Positive feedback serves to sustain behavior that is appropriate and effective. Negative or corrective feedback serves to change behavior that is inappropriate or ineffective. Thus, the trainee should receive a mixture of positive and corrective feedback. The feedback should be specific enough that the trainee understands which behaviors are appropriate and which ones need to be changed. General comments such as "you're doing a really super job!" may be pleasant to give, but do little in the way of teaching. Feedback is most meaningful when it is based on solid data obtained while observing or interacting with the trainee. This teaching skill becomes easier with deliberate practice. An experienced faculty who has worked on developing this skill can incorporate feedback comfortably and quickly into regular interactions with a trainee.

II. Definition

Feedback is giving specific information about a trainee's current behavior in order to help him/her either continue the behavior or modify the behavior.

III. Purposes

- Provides a basis for maintaining or improving performance
- Provides a forum for assessing needs and planning additional experiences

IV. Timing and Setting

- Most useful immediately following the experience
- Process established during orientation
- Brief, en-route encounters

V. Characteristics of Effective Feedback

- It is specific and performance based.
- It is descriptive, not labeling.
- It focuses on the behavior, not the trainee.
- It is based on observations, repeated if possible.
- It begins with "I" statements.
- It balances negative and positive comments.
- It is well timed.

- It is anchored to common goals (for example, the trainee's learning or quality patient care).
- It provides for two-way communication, soliciting, and considering the receiver's input.
- It is brief. (Be alert to signs of resistance).
- It is based on trust, honesty, and concern.
- It is private, particularly if it is negative.
- It is part of your regular teaching process, not an exception to the norm.
- It provides for follow-up.

VI. Guidelines for Providing Constructive Feedback

- All comments should be based upon observable behavior and not assumed motives or intents.
- Positive comments should be made first in order to give the trainee confidence and gain his/her attention.
- Language should be descriptive of specific behaviors rather than general comments indicating value judgments.
- Feedback should emphasize the sharing of information. There should be opportunities for both parties to contribute.
- Feedback should not be so detailed and broad. It should not "overload" the trainee.
- Feedback should deal with the behaviors the trainee can control and change.
- Feedback requires the ability to tolerate a feeling of discomfort.

References

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