

Get Some Feedback

What is this?	A way to learn how to give effective feedback, through the experience of receiving some.
What does it do?	Helps you learn what works and what does not work, plus how it actually feels to be focused on in this way.
When would I use it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you want to accelerate your own learning or self-awareness in a specific area, e.g. 'how professional do I appear to others?' • When you decide it's time to improve your skills at giving feedback messages to others.

Find a practice partner

Choose someone who knows you well (whom you trust); they will be your practice partner for this activity. As a word of caution, there can be no guarantees that you'll like what you hear or agree with what's said. Remember, to give supportive feedback yourself you need to know what works and what doesn't.

Stage one – Set-up

You're going to ask this person for some feedback on a topic that you feel comfortable discussing, for example:

- Your managing style at work
- Your parenting style at home
- Your ability to build warm and supportive relationships

Or any other area that you're interested in getting better at. If you're interested in a stretch, ask them to think about how they experience you generally, as a person.

Stage two – The questions

Ask them to consider the following three questions, about the topic or area you've requested feedback on:

- What am I good at? / What do I do well? / What are my strengths, etc.?
- What am I not so good at?
- What could I do differently to improve?

When your partner has answers for each section, continue to stage three.

Stage three – Explore and understand the messages

Ask your partner to give you their responses to each question. Make sure that you understand each response, and use questions to clarify, e.g. 'Can you tell me a little more about that?' or 'Can you think of an example?' Receive all feedback graciously, maturely, and don't contradict the other person's view – after all, it's simply their view. If they say something that you don't like or disagree with, first find out a little more about what may have caused this view. When your partner has finished, thank them.

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Stage four – Identify your learning

Now, on your own, sit down with a piece of paper and write answers/notes to the following questions:

- What did I learn about myself from that conversation?
- What will I do differently as a result of that conversation?
- What worked well about the way they gave me feedback?
- What didn't work about the way they gave me feedback?
- What can I learn? e.g. what principles will I use when giving feedback now?

Think also about how the conversation was useful to you generally. What was it like seeing yourself through the eyes of the other person?

Stage five (optional) – Share your learning

If you feel it is appropriate and useful, share your answers to the above questions with your practice partner. Ask them first if they'd like to hear them, as a way of sharing your learning. Remember, you'll now be in position of giving feedback yourself, so please employ all your learning and care!

Summary

What you hear in this exercise might not be what you imagined. For example, you might have your attention drawn to a behaviour that you didn't expect. Remember, what you hear is simply another person's perception. When we disagree with someone's perception of us, it's often easier to accept that we created that perception in some way, e.g. by what we have done/not done. Obviously, what you choose to do as a result of someone's perception, is up to you.

Additional support & reading, by Julie Starr

- The Coaching Manual, The definitive guide to the process and principles of personal coaching, (Pearson Education)
- Brilliant Coaching, How to be a brilliant coach in your workplace, (Pearson Education)
- The Mentoring Manual, Your step by step guide to being a better mentor, (Pearson Education)

For additional information and free downloads, check out www.starrcoaching.co.uk