GIVING FEEDBACK

Creating balance between censure and praise

Feedback usually consists of some form of praise or censure. Focusing solely on someone's faults can have a negative effect: the recipient can become demoralized and develop an attitude of "Nothing I ever do is good enough"—even if the intent was to provide "constructive criticism." This can result in a state of despair and decreased effort, since increased effort would seem futile.

Similarly, the recipient of high praise may become so prideful about his/her accomplishments, that further effort might seem unnecessary. He/she may become complacent by thinking "I've already arrived." Note that future effort is thwarted in each case. Thus, TRP seeks balance between these two types of feedback. We all need at times both correction and encouragement—mistakes should not be overlooked and good work should not go unrecognized.

In TRP, mistakes and failures are seen as essential and ordinary parts of life; they create opportunities to learn and grow (they are O-FLAG's—Opportunities for Learning and Growth). In fact, a large part of life is about learning from and correcting our mistakes; also, trying new things and failing, and then trying again. This indeed is how we learn competence in any field of endeavor or any area of life. Failures are necessary along the path to success—and we often learn more from failure than success. Take for example this anecdote from the life of Thomas Edison: upon hearing from an assistant that 10,000 experiments had failed, Edison is reputed to have remarked, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." This is the TRP attitude.

Moreover, providing "correction" or constructive feedback should always be placed in context of the ultimate goal—that of improving and developing competency so as to achieve eventual success. Praise, too, should be given in context of the larger picture—that we never reach perfection, but the efforts expended were on the right track. In other words, "You did a great job, now let's do more and keep improving." There is always more to do and learn, and further goals to achieve.

In summary, the key is to place both praise and correction in the context of a higher purpose or goal. Then praise can be followed by comments about "what else is needed to reach the goal." And mistakes, also, when seen in the context of having a purpose, are viewed as necessary steps along the way to reaching our goals.

See the following exercise and chart to learn more about giving TRP quality feedback.

GIVING FEEDBACK: TWO APPROACHES— TRP AND VICTIM MENTALITY

The following exercise will help us gauge how well (or not so well) we presently give feedback to others. It contrasts *"victim mentality"* thoughts, attitudes and behaviors with those of the TRP—as these relate to giving feedback. Use this exercise as encouragement to become more proactive and wise in providing feedback to the people in your life—whether they be family members, co-workers, colleagues or friends.

EXERCISE 1: PRACTICE GIVING FEEDBACK

Part 1. Use the following chart as a self-awareness tool to observe where you presently are on the scale. Read the "Victim Statements" in the left column and then the "TRP Statements" in the right column. Also note the scale of 1, 2, or 3 in the middle column, and—

- Circle "1" if you act strongly victim-like in your feedback to others.
- Circle "3" if you act strongly TRP in your feedback to others.
- Circle "2" if you are somewhere in the middle or fluctuate between the two approaches.

If your answer depends on *to whom* you may be giving feedback, circle the number that best describes your overall approach with most of the people in your life—professional or personal.

Part 2. After completing *Part 1*, go back and choose 3 to 5 of your lowest scores to improve in the coming weeks. Schedule these on your calendar as goals to achieve, and focus on one each week. Repeat until you have made "TRP feedback" a part of your normal routine—a part of your **TRP character.**

READ LEFT TO RIGHT   *Figure A. Giving Feedback Chart—Victim vs. TRP Approach*

	"VICTIM MENTALITY" THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS	RANK/ SCALE	TRP THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS
1	I procrastinate, give feedback late.	1 2 3	I give feedback in a timely manner, proactively addressing situations.
2	I am sometimes angry when giving feedback, i.e., my procrastination leads to a build-up of anger, because the other person has continued their inappropriate behavior.	1 2 3	I give feedback calmly and optimistically.
3	I give feedback because my job requires me to do it.	1 2 3	I give feedback because it is the right thing to do.
4	I think and care about myself, my discomfort at giving feedback.	1 2 3	I think and care about others and the organization and the success of our work. Even if I am uncomfortable about giving feedback, I give it anyway.
5	I care about myself: how I look and come across.	1 2 3	I think and care about others
6	I don't see feedback as a true gift but rather as something negative.	1 2 3	I see feedback as truly a gift that I am giving to others.

	"VICTIM MENTALITY" THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS	RANK/ SCALE	TRP THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS
7	I, myself, feel victimized when receiving feedback, so, naturally, I think others also dislike it.	1 2 3	I don't feel victimized by receiving feedback. I accept and value it. Therefore I trust others to also value it.
8	I am fearful: they won't like me if I give them feedback.	1 2 3	I am courageous: life is not about my "need" to be liked. Our goals are more important.
9	I am afraid they might react (go into victim), then I myself would go into victim.	1 2 3	Even if they do go into victim, I don't need to go into victim. Furthermore, if I give feedback calmly and optimistically—and early—they are less likely to fall into victim.
10	They wouldn't be able to accept my honest feedback. They are too weak, emotional, immature, incompetent, or judgmental of me. They "can't take it."	1 2 3	I see their strengths and their potential to use feedback as a way to learn and grow. Feedback is a demonstration of respect.
11	I give feedback reluctantly, defensively.	1 2 3	I give feedback in an optimistic, enthusiastic way.
12	Even though I give others feedback, I don't expect them to change very much in the long run.	1 2 3	As a manager, I am paid to help my direct reports' improve and grow—to bring out their highest potential.
13	My approach to feedback is immature and unprofessional—I dread it.	1 2 3	My approach is mature and professional—I see it as a valuable and indispensable tool.
14	I don't give feedback to "friends" for fear of alienating them.	1 2 3	I give feedback to my friends because I care about them and see them as mature adults—able and willing to grow.
15	I don't expect much to change even if I give feedback (I can't see it making any difference). Is it really worth it?	1 2 3	I have positive expectations of others because I, myself, benefit from feedback. My positive expectation—and positive view of them—helps them to grow and benefit from feedback. It is definitely worth it.
16	I have been seeing a small picture: "me" and my feelings, my fears and insecurities.	1 2 3	I can see the bigger picture: other people's growth and the welfare of the organization.
17	I won't call people on their "stuff," and so hopefully they won't call me on mine.	1 2 3	I am not afraid to help others, and I look forward to any feedback that helps me become a better person.
18	My motivation and purpose is about "me," and is ultimately selfish.	1 2 3	My purpose and motivation is to help the other person and is, ultimately, unselfish.

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EXERCISE 2. IMPROVE FEEDBACK WITH SPECIFIC PEOPLE

List 5 to 10 people in your life (personal and/or professional) to whom you can begin giving more constructive feedback—more TRP-like feedback. Refer to this list weekly, and when with them, listen for opportunities to offer appropriate feedback. Additionally, you may wish to keep a journal of your progress, or a running list of brief notes on your experiences and lessons-learned.

Professional—colleagues, co-workers, direct reports, team members, vendors, etc.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Personal—family, friends, etc.

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____