

Assertiveness, Managing Conflict and Feedback

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ICE Breaker ...

Everybody up!

Definition

- **What is Assertiveness?**
 - A “mid-point”

Passive – **Assertive** – **Aggressive**

Assertive behaviour allows us to;

- Refuse requests.
- Ask for favours and make requests.
- Express positive and negative feelings.
- Initiate, continue and terminate general conversations.

**Lazarus AA, Behaviour Therapy & Beyond.
(McGraw-Hill 1971)**

Why be assertive?

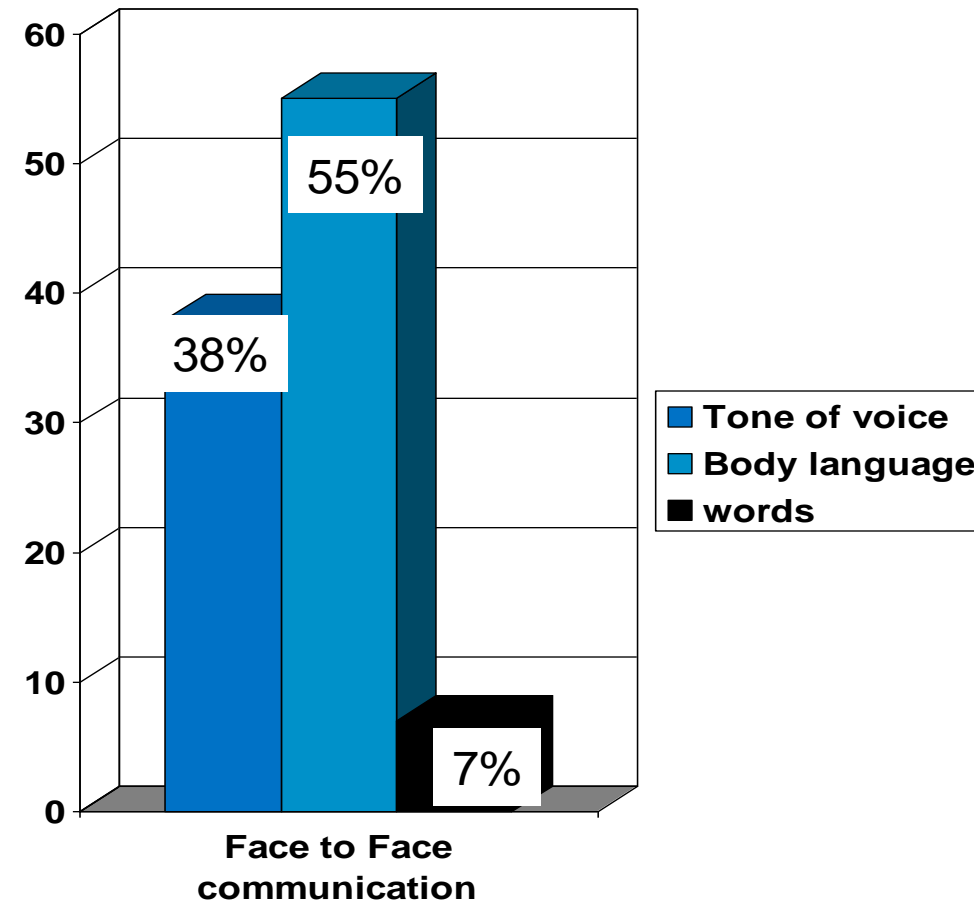
To help individuals to:

- Ensure personal rights are not violated
- Deal effectively unreasonable requests from others
- Recognise the personal rights of others
- Change the behaviour of others toward them
- Avoid unnecessary aggressive conflicts



Modes of communication

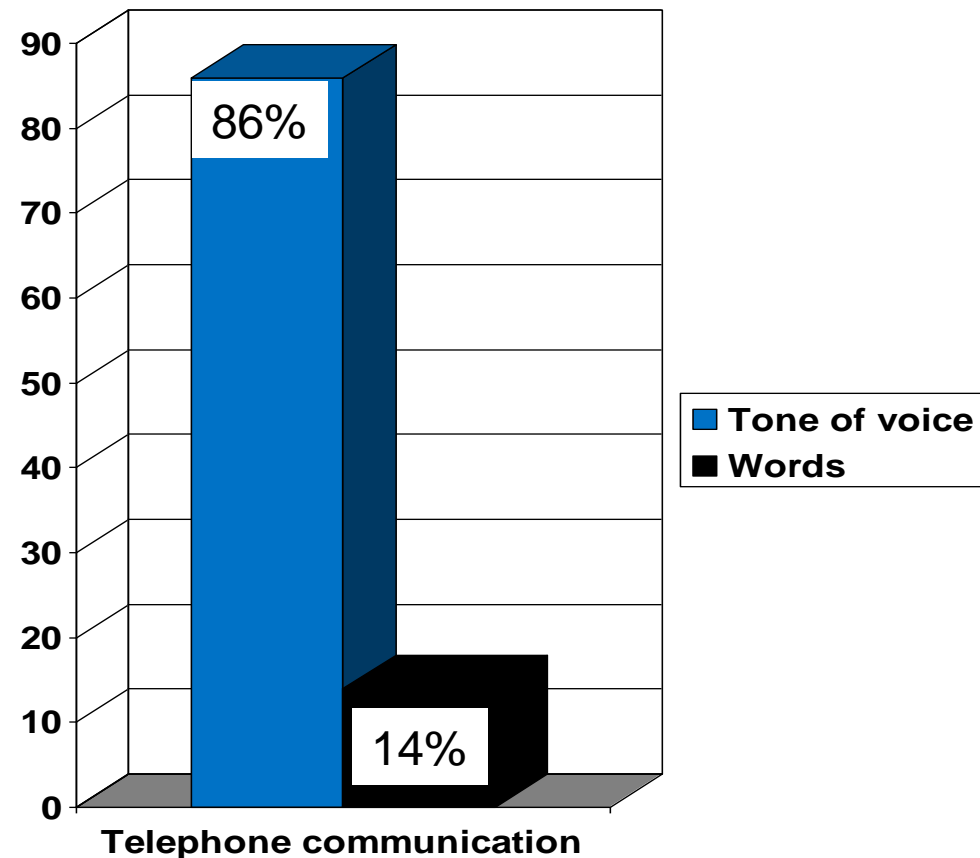
- **Face to face**
 - In a **face to face** situation it takes **60** seconds to make an initial impression ...



Modes of communication

- **Telephone**

- On the **telephone** it takes just **10** seconds to make a good or bad impression!



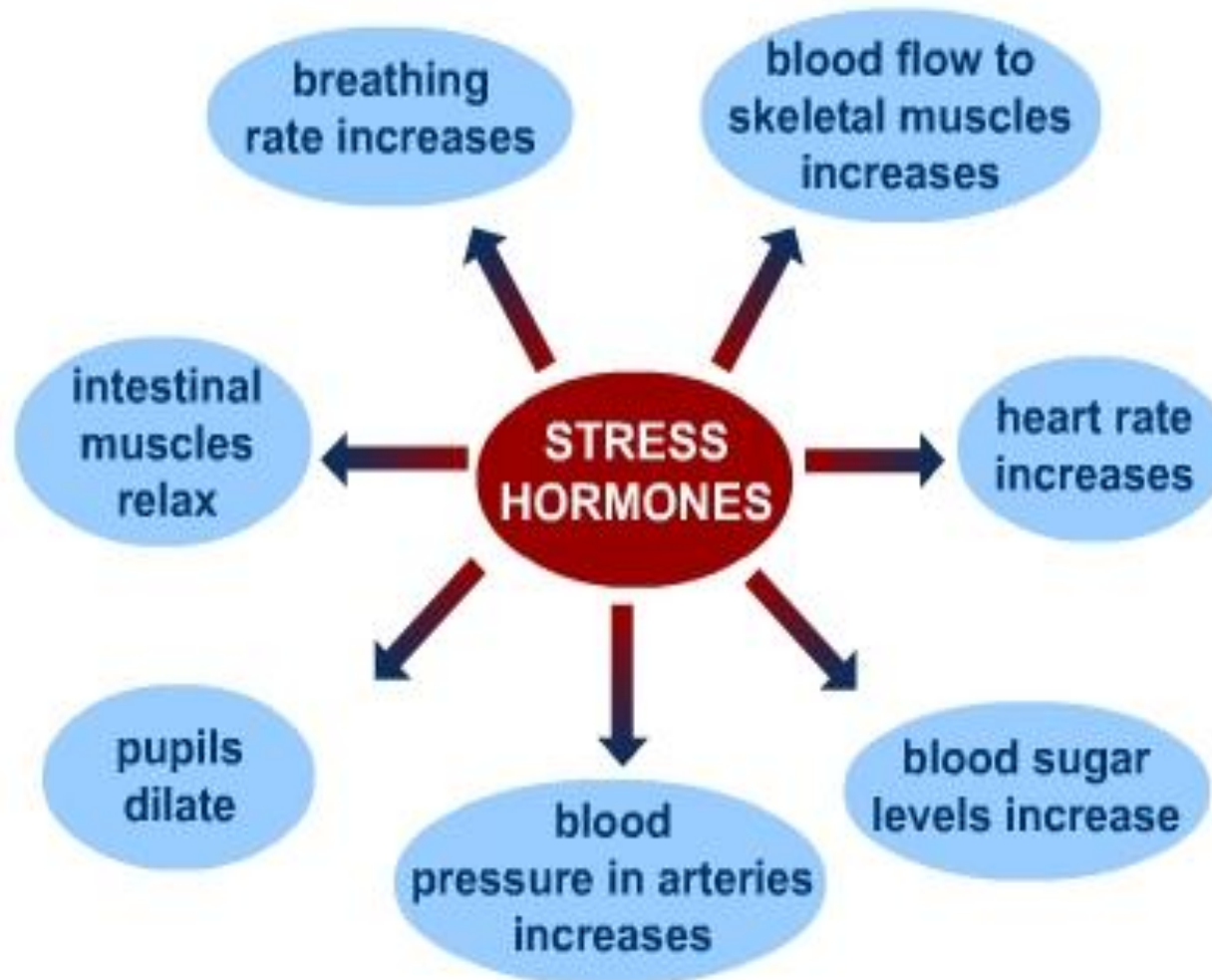
Response

- **Initial response can be emotional**
 - Irrational, anger, fear, excitement, love, fight or flight etc. ...
- **Rational responses are slower**
 - Calm, relaxed.
 - Involves higher brain function

Pause

- **We need to be able to**
 - Take a mental breath
 - Calm the situation down
 - Take control
- **Rather than succumbing to a “knee-jerk” response.**

Not always easy ...



Good communications skills will help ...

- **Phone manner**

- How you answer the phone **Very** important – sets the mood.

- **Inflection and tone of voice**

- Critical

- **Pacing**

- To help control the conversation

- **Volume**

- Beware background noise that may make you or the caller have to raise their voice

Defusing conflict – when dealing with conflict we need to:

- **D**etect early signs of escalation
- **E**mploy self control
- **F**ocus on a solution
- **U**se active listening
- **S**ignal non-aggression
- **E**mpathise



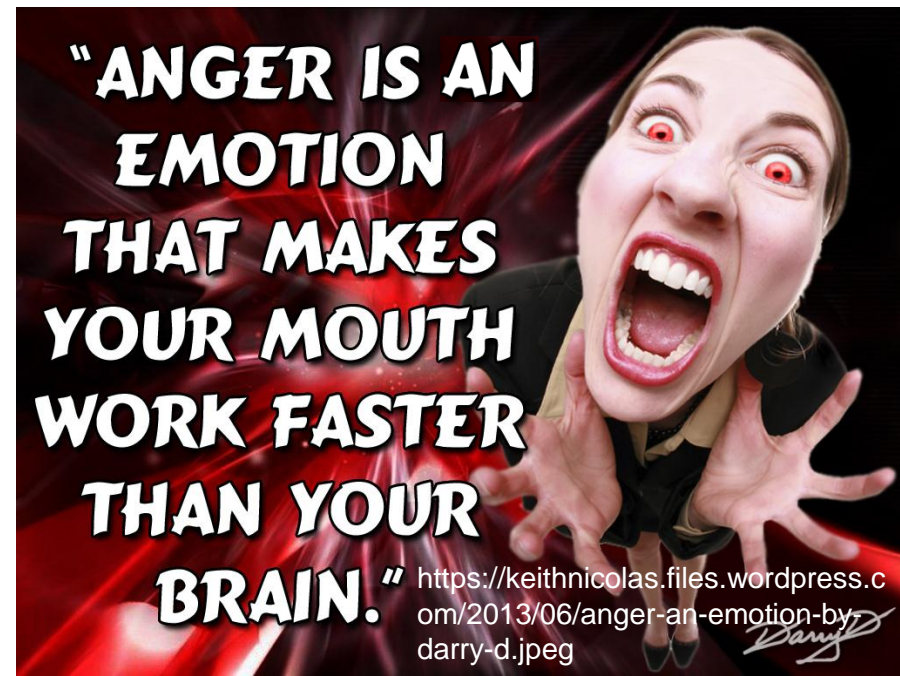
Detect early signs of aggression

- **Remember fight/flight symptoms**
- **Lack of basic courtesy**
- **Interruptions and over-talking**
- **Pitch of voice starts to rise**
- **Volume increases**
- **There may be vulgar / abusive or threatening language**



Employ self control

- **Control your own fight / flight response**
- **Take a deep breath (don't hold it!)**
- **Do not get pulled into a conflict**
- **Do not 'bite' in response to personal abuse or threatening language**
- **Retain your state of independence**
- **Maintain your professionalism!**



Focus on a solution

- **Move the debate on to the future and the solution, rather than dwell on past occurrences**
- **Involve the caller in finding a solution**
- **If possible, offer choices or options to the caller**
- **If they have asked for something that you cannot provide, tell them what you can do instead**

Use active listening

- **Focus your attention on them**
 - don't just spend the time when they're talking composing your reply
- **Use verbal prompts such as “I see” and “I understand” rather than “OK”**
- **Be patient & don't interrupt**
- **Ask open questions (when, where, how etc.) to enable you to fully understand the situation**
- **Summarise your understanding of the situation back to the caller when they have finished talking.**

Signal non-aggression

- **Remember**, the caller, cannot see you,
 - so it's best to:
- **Talk clearly at a steady pace**
- **Keep your tone of voice calm and relaxed (inflection)**
- **Avoid interrupting**,
 - show what they have to say is important to you
- **Don't be condescending**
- **If you need to address their conduct – be ASSERTIVE**

Empathise

- **It is about being able to see and understand another's viewpoint, putting yourself in their shoes**
- **It is not to be confused with sympathy**
 - **It is not about feeling sorry for someone or pretending to feel sorry for them**
- **It is a good way of building rapport**
 - 'I am sorry that you are disappointed/ unhappy with...'
 - 'I can hear that this has upset you'
 - 'I understand how you must feel about this'

Use the correct language

- **Try not to be negative**

- Try not to say “Unfortunately ...” or “I’m afraid ...”

- **Don’t apologise**

- or say “can’t”, explain the facts and give information, “I’m unable to because ...”, Offer a solution

- **If you don’t think you can help**

- Suggest someone who can, if you can, put them in touch rather than giving them the run-around

- **Empathy**

- ‘I understand your position, however...’

Don't forget to thank them ...

- **Thank you for bringing this to my attention'**
- **'Thank you for giving me the chance to put things right'**
- **'Thank you for being so patient'**

Being Assertive



**Ineffective
performance**
Accepting abuse
Mumbling
**Apologising for
what you are doing**

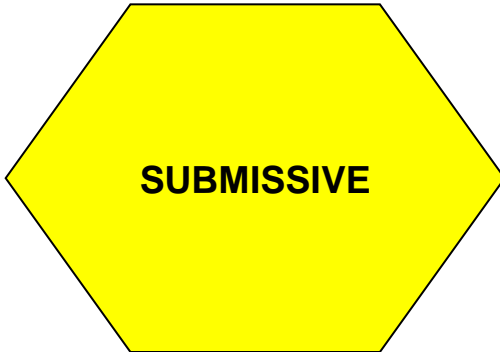


**Clear, steady and firm
speech**
Remain calm
**Point out issues without
triggering aggression**
Professional



Giving orders
Raising voice
Admonishing
Hanging up
**Failure to
resolve**

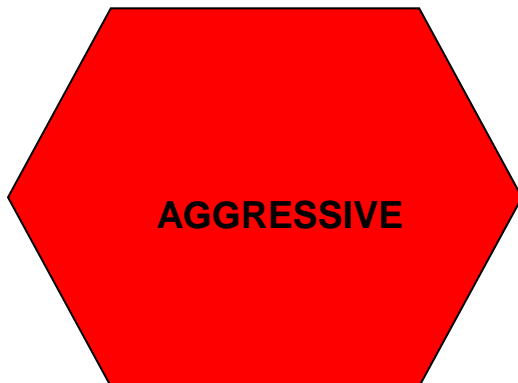
Typical statements



“I’m sorry but it’s not my fault, it’s hospital policy...”



“I can see that this is important to you and I really want to help, but your shouting is making it difficult for me to do that. If you can stay calm, I will do my best to help”.



“We don’t tolerate that sort of request doctor, so you’ll have to calm down or I will terminate the call”

Remember...

- **DON'T SAY 'SORRY' FOR ENFORCING POLICIES / PROCEDURES**
 - but you can say sorry about how you've made them feel.
- **NEVER apologise for doing your job!**
- **DON'T SAY 'CALM DOWN' – try instead 'I can hear that you are upset. Let's stay calm.'**
- **BE POSITIVE and proactive**
- **KNOW what you want and understand what they want**

The Dual Concern Model

Assertive

Self

Not
Assertive



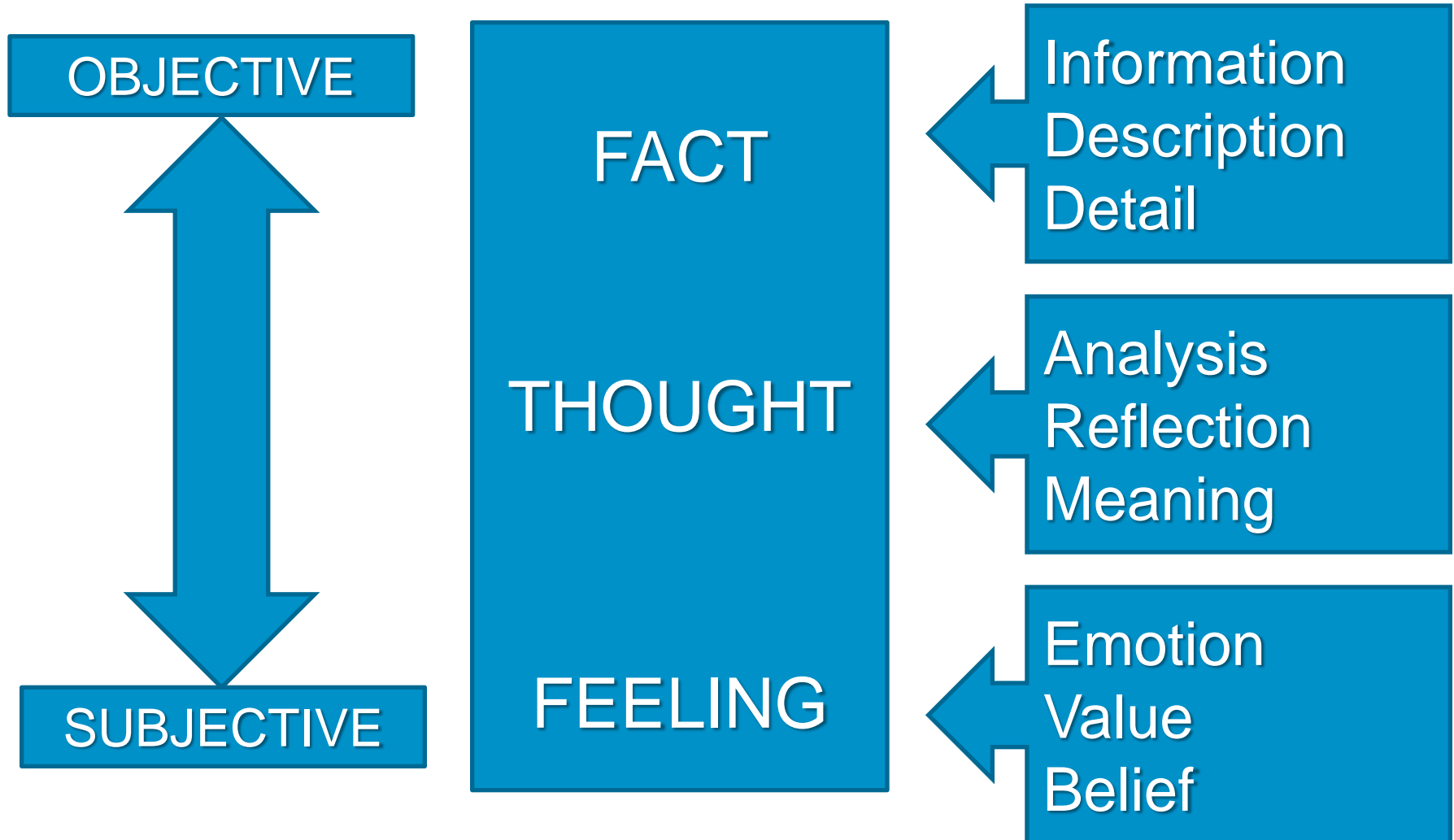
Not Co-operate

Others

Co-operate

Managing Feedback

Objective and Subjective Feedback



“Evidence Checklist” for appropriate feedback

- ✓ Reliable
- ✓ Relevant
- ✓ Important
- ✓ Objective
- ✓ Factually based
- ✓ Comprehensive
- ✓ Open
- ✓ Transparent
- ✓ Fair

Imagine ...

- You recently gave some feedback to a member of your team. You told him that their meeting agendas looked great, but they needed to improve their presentation skills.
- You follow up a few weeks later to find out why they haven't made any changes.
- You discover that they didn't understand what they could do to improve – your feedback simply prompted more questions.
- They were left thinking "What's good about my agendas that I can transfer to other documents?" and "What's wrong with my presentation skills?"

The Situation – Behaviour – Impact (SBI) Feedback tool

- An aid to deliver more effective feedback.
- It focuses comments on specific **situations** and **behaviours**, and then outlines the **impact** that these behaviours have on others.

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/situation-behavior-impact-feedback.htm>

Situation

- When you're giving feedback, first define the where and when of the situation you're referring to.
 - Put the feedback into context,
 - Give the other person a specific setting as a reference.
- For example:
- "During yesterday morning's team meeting, when you gave your presentation..."
- "When we were working in the clinic on Monday afternoon..."

Behaviour

- Your next step is to describe the specific behaviours that you want to address.
- This is the most challenging part of the process, because you **must** communicate only the behaviours that **you** observed directly.

- **DON'T** make assumptions or subjective judgments about the observed behaviours.
 - These could be wrong, and this will undermine your feedback.
- E.g. if you we're giving me feedback on this ppt and I'd made mistakes;
 - don't assume it was because of lack of preparation, simply comment that I'd made mistakes
 - ideally, note what the mistakes were.
- **DON'T** rely on hearsay,
 - It could contain the subjective judgments of others.
 - Again, this could undermine your feedback and jeopardize your relationship

Tip:

- Aim to use **measurable** information in your description of the behaviour.
- This helps to ensure that your comments are **objective**.
- "During yesterday morning's team meeting, when you gave your presentation, you were uncertain about two of the slides, and your calculations were incorrect."

Impact

- Final step; use "I" statements to describe how the other person's action has affected you or others.
- E.g.
- "During yesterday morning's team meeting, when you gave your presentation, you were uncertain about two of the slides and your calculations were incorrect. I felt embarrassed because there were some quite senior people present. I'm worried that this has affected the reputation of our team within the organisation."

Next steps

- Encourage the other person to think about the situation and to understand the impact of his or her behaviour.
- Allow them time to absorb what you have said, and then go over specific actions that will help him or her to improve.
- **Remember feedback should also be positive, so where someone has done something well, help them think about how they can build on this.**

Reactions to Feedback

Defensiveness - “I’m not the only one who does that”

Resistance - “There’s no way I can change – why should I?”

Denial - “I’m not to blame for that”

Justification - “I can explain”

Attack - “What about them, they’re not perfect”

Inward Focus - “Is this what people have been thinking about me? And all the time I thought they liked me”

Refusing to Listen - “Here we go again”

Excuses - “That wasn’t my fault – I was told the wrong things”

Distrust of the Person/Process - “It’s obvious – someone’s got an axe to grind”

Masking True Feelings - “I’ll rise above this – I don’t care”

Pre-prepared Arguments - “I knew they were going to bring that up. Well, let me tell you my side ...”

Concentrating on the person behind the feedback - “I bet I know who said that”

Feedback can be badly received when it's:

- **Too generalised** – not specific enough for effective action to be taken
- **Too personal** – based on the person, not the issue(s)
- **Cannot be actioned** - Based on something which is beyond their power to alter
- **Heavily critical** – without suggestions for improvement
- **Focused exclusively on the past** – recent changes/improvements not taken into account
- **Based on hearsay and gossip** – not enough facts to support the arguments
- **An excuse to seek blame** – rather than seeking solutions

Plan the conversation ...

- **Win/Win**

- What is my real need here?
- What is theirs?
- Do I want the conversation to work for both of us?

- **Creative responses**

- What opportunities can this situation and conversation bring?
- Rather than how it is supposed to be, can I see possibilities in what is ?

- **Empathy**

- What would it be like to be in their shoes?
- What are they trying to say?
- Have I really heard them?
- Do they know I am listening?

- **Appropriate assertiveness**

- What do I want to change?
- How will I tell them this without blaming or attacking?

- **Willingness to resolve**

- Do I really want to resolve the conflict?
- Is my resentment being caused by something in my past that still hurts or something I dislike in them?

- **Managing emotions**

- What am I feeling?
- Am I blaming them for my feelings?
- Will telling them how I feel help the situation?
- What do I want to change?
- Have I removed any desire to punish from my response?
- What can I do to handle my feelings?
- What can I do to help them handle their feelings?

- **Designing options**

- What are the possibilities?
- What options give us both more of what we want?

- **Negotiating skills**

- What do I wish to achieve?
- How can we make this a fair deal – win/win?
- What can they give me/ What can I give them?
- Am I ignoring objections? Can I include them?
- What points would I want covered in an agreement?
- Can I include something to help them save face?
- Is saving face important to me or to them?
 - Do I need to do anything?

- **Mediation**

- Can we resolve this ourselves or do we need help from a neutral third person?
- Who could do that for us?
- Can I create the right environment for people to open up, understand each other and develop their own solutions?
What might help?
- Is mediation the most appropriate role for me in this? If so:
How would I set up and explain my role to both parties?

- **Imagine a point in the future where your issue is resolved.**

- How did you or we get there?

Avoid Indecisive waffle ... use **DECISIVE** words

Speak what you know with confidence. If your words express doubt, your listener will doubt you no matter how true your words are.

- **Avoid**

- I should...
- I'll try...
- I might be able to...
- I sort of think...
- It's just my opinion...
- I would tend to think...
- You might want to consider...

- **Replace with**

- **I will...**
- **I will...**
- **What I can commit to is...**
- **I know...**
- **I believe...**
- **I think...**
- **I recommend...**

Avoid Negative waffle ...

use **POSITIVE** words

Our minds find it easier to make sense of positives, focus on what you want, not what you don't want. How will you solve a problem? How did you learn from a mistake?

- **Avoid**

- Everything went wrong...
- I'll have to...
- I can't...
- I am spending time...
- I'm not good at...
- You'll have to excuse...
- If only I had...

- **Replace with**

- **I learned from setbacks.**
- **I'll be glad to...**
- **What I can do is...**
- **I am investing time...**
- **I m getting better at...**
- **Here it is...**
- **Starting now I will...**

Avoid Absolute waffle ...

use ACCURATE words

We lose credibility when we speak in sweeping generalisations and absolutes. Stick to the facts. Don't use Always or Never. Support assertions with specific examples

- **Avoid**
- You always...
- I never...
- Everything you...
- **Replace with**
- **On several occasions you have...**
- **Up until now I have not...**
- **Many things...**

Use words that place **RESPONSIBILITY** or **EMPHASIS** where it is due

- E.g. If a colleague is continually late, instead of saying

“You make me angry when you come in late”

Or

“I get angry when you’re late”

- Use a phrase that puts the emphasis where it should be, e.g.

“Starting late causes serious problems and needs to be addressed.”

- **Do not say:**

- You are not being clear.
(Accusatory)
- I am not following you.
(Makes you the subject)

- **Instead put the emphasis where it should be**

- **Please clarify this point**
- **That last point is not clear to me.**

Ask yourself what you are really talking about, and make that the subject!

Avoid Hints and vague waffle ... use **SPECIFIC** words

- **Avoid**

- I really wish you would...
- I'd like to have something like...

- **Replace with**

- **Will you...**
- **I want ___ by ___ because ___.**

Avoid Emotional waffle ... use **INFORMATION** and **ACTION** based words

- **Avoid**

- I don't like this idea of yours

- I am angry about this delay from you

- **Replace with**

- **There are three serious problems with this idea.**

- **First...**

- **How do you plan to get back on schedule after this delay?**

Focus on the service not the person	Specific improvements on performance or behaviour you would like to give feedback on...			
performance	could	be	enhanced	by...
impact	possibly will	be	improved	if ...
outputs	can	be	Sharpened/ honed	up...
relationships	should	be	better/bettered	through
outcomes	might	become more	superior	if you consider...
results	ought	to be more	healthier	by thinking...
behaviour	may	be	changed	by trying...
quality	has to	lie in	elevated	when you...
service	is	likely to be	refined	by giving
processes			progressed	by going
standards			raised	
practice			lifted	
success			upgraded	
throughput			picked up	
change			boosted	
image			developed	
credibility			helped	
			promoted	
			tightened up	
			polished up	
			fine tuned	
			renewed	
			advances	

Final Activity

- Non verbal signals, posture and demeanour can influence the way we are perceived, but also ...

 **Testosterone**
(energy, confidence)

 **Cortisol**
(stress)

http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?language=en