FEEDBACK DO'S

WHEN GIVING FEEDBACK

Describe your own reaction to the behavior. ("I felt shut out of the discussion when you didn't respond to my comments.") This gives the receiver the option to use or not use the information.

Be specific. Explain when the behavior occurred, what the person did, and how it affected you. ("During the group discussion when you were chairman, you made all the decisions. I felt unnecessary.") Focusing on what people do points out behavior to be improved, or, if it is effective, to be used more fully.

Describe in terms of "more" or "less". ("You were more persuasive during the third group discussion than those prior.") This points out the variability of behavior and encourages looking at differences as if on continuum of effective vs. less effective, depending on the circumstances surrounding the behavior.

Suggest alternative ways of behaving. ("A useful way to participate more is to ask questions of others.") This allows the individual to choose what (s)he wants to do to change behavior.

Account for the needs of the individual receiving the feedback. Focus on how the information will help him/her.

Focus on the individual's behavior. ("You talk rapidly. I find it difficult to understand what you are saying.") This allows the individual to take responsibility for changing behavior when receiving feedback.

WHEN RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Listen actively. Assume you have to paraphrase it back to the sender. This will help you focus on what is being said.

Maintain eye contact. This implies that you are concentrating on what's being said and lets the sender know (s)he's being listened to.

Acknowledge comments. Use verbal or non-verbal signs. ("I see," "Oh," "Um hum," head nods or a smile.) This encourages the speaker to continue.

Seek clarification. ("Tell me more about it." "When did you see it?" "Please go over that again.").

FEEDBACK DONT'S

WHEN GIVING FEEDBACK

Avoid evaluative comments. ("You dominated every conversation.") This can make the other person defensive and thus interfere with his/her opportunity to learn about their behavior.

Avoid general comments. ("When one does not listen to others, one tends to be a bore.") This fails to inform the individual of what (s)he personally needs to change.

Do not make absolute statements or use labels. ("You're shy." "You're super.") These are value judgments which connote a permanency to a trait.

Avoid directive advice – telling people how to behave. ("You should talk more forcefully.") Comments which begin with "You should" or "The real problem is" sound condescending. Often, as a consequence, such comments are automatically ignored or refuted.

Avoid seeking satisfaction of your needs. (For power, acceptance, etc.) In a helping relationship it's easy to slip into assuming a superior role. This detracts from the sharing atmosphere.

Do not comment on behavior over which the individual has no control. ("You are slow-witted") This merely leads to frustration.

WHEN RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Do not plan a rebuttal. "Yes buts" signal that you are planning a rebuttal. This interferes with what the sender has to offer.

Avoid looking away when there's a pause in the conversation. This limits your receptivity to what's being conveyed. You are likely to miss important nonverbal messages.

Avoid interrupting the speaker. The total message is likely to be missed unless it has first been received in full.

Do not dismiss the feedback. ("I'm not used to a video camera focusing on me, so I didn't do very well.") Justifying your behavior because the situation is unfamiliar or uncomfortable is a common reaction, but it gets in the way of learning more about yourself.