

Eight Feedback Steps

1. **INTRODUCE THE CONVERSATION** so feedback recipients know what to expect.
2. **EMPATHIZE** so both the feedback provider and the recipient feel as comfortable as possible.
3. **DESCRIBE THE OBSERVED BEHAVIOR** so the recipient can picture a specific, recent example of what you're referring to. The more specific you are, the less defensive he will be, and the more likely he'll be to hear you and take corrective action.
4. **SHARING THE IMPACT OR RESULT** describes the consequences of the behavior. It's what happened as a result of the person's actions.
5. **HAVING SOME DIALOGUE** gives both people a chance to speak and ensures that the conversation is not one-sided. Many feedback conversations are not conversations at all; they're monologues. One person talks and the other person pretends to listen, while thinking what an idiot you are. Good feedback conversations are dialogues during which the recipient can ask questions, share his point of view, and explore next steps.
6. **MAKE A SUGGESTION OR REQUEST** so the recipient has another way to approach the situation or task in the future. Most feedback conversations tell the person what he did wrong and the impact of the behavior;" "only rarely do they offer an alternative. Give people the benefit of the doubt. If people knew a better way to do something, they would do it another way.
7. **BUILDING AN AGREEMENT ON NEXT STEPS** ensures there is a plan for what the person will do going forward. Too many feedback conversations do not result in behavior change. Agreeing on next steps creates accountability.
8. **SAY "THANK YOU"** to create closure and to express appreciation for the recipient's willingness to have a difficult conversation."

from "How to Say Anything to Anyone: A Guide to Building Business Relationships That Really Work" by Shari Harley

Example

"STEP ONE: Introduce the conversation. "John, I need to talk with you."

STEP TWO: Empathize. "This is a little awkward, and it may be uncomfortable. I want you to know that while I wish I didn't have to tell you this, I'm doing it because I care about you and I want you to be successful." Just because you're direct doesn't mean you're not empathetic. But remember, these are my words. You'll need to find your own words that you feel comfortable using to deliver such a difficult message.

STEP THREE: Describe the observed behavior. "John, I've noticed that you have an odor."

STEP FOUR: Share the impact or result of the behavior. "I know this is a very awkward subject (more empathy). We work in a small space. I don't want others to avoid working with you or say negative things about you. And as awkward as this is, I would rather you hear this from me than from someone else. Sometimes health conditions can cause certain odors, as can eating certain foods."

STEP FIVE: Have some dialogue. Ask the recipient for his perception of the situation. "What are your thoughts?" Give John time to say whatever he wishes to say.

STEP SIX: Make a suggestion or request for what to do next time. "Again, I'm really sorry to have to tell you this. Please make sure you shower every day before coming to work and wash your clothes regularly. And please tell me if there's something else you'd like me to know." Because of the awkwardness of this subject, skip STEP SEVEN, and go to

STEP EIGHT. "Thank you for being willing to have this conversation with me"