

21. Praise, Criticism, or Feedback

JUST THE FACTS: In a work setting, we give and receive many different types of information. The purpose of this activity is to help participants determine the differences between criticism, praise, and feedback - not only how to offer it, but how to receive it as well.



Time

20 minutes



Materials

- One set of “Praise | Criticism | Feedback” cards for each group. Alternatively, you might choose to hang three pieces of chart paper - each with one of the words on it. Slips of paper could be made with the statements below.



Directions

Discuss the difference between praise, criticism, and feedback and ask participants for examples of each.

- **Praise:** an expression of approval
- **Criticism:** an expression of disapproval based on perceived mistakes or faults
- **Feedback:** information about a person’s performance of a task - used primarily as a basis for improvement

Divide the group into pairs of two. Read the following statements aloud - one at a time. It is suggested that the facilitator use different voice tones to truly help participants differentiate the intended meaning of each sentence (which, by the way, can certainly vary). After each statement, give each pair 10 seconds to decide whether the statement is criticism, praise, or feedback. Someone from each team should hold up the card that represents a collective decision. If chart paper and sentence strips were used, participants could move around the room to match each statement to what they believe to be the correct match.

1. Mr. Jones told me how much he appreciated your thank you note after the job interview. He thought it was a great personal touch.
2. Your desk is such a mess. Are you sure you are not trying to grow your own paper?
3. I noticed that you’ve been coming in late the last couple of days.
4. How many times do I have to tell you how to file these documents?
5. You look great today.
6. It would work better for me if I could explain my version of the story out loud before you ask questions.

7. You've improved a lot this week.
8. I found it difficult to evaluate this resume because it was messy.
9. I liked it much better when we got to choose the projects instead of being assigned to one.

With the larger group, discuss the different ways people may react or respond differently to praise, criticism, and feedback. It is inevitable that we will all receive criticism at some point on the job, and the way in which we respond can impact our own attitude and the attitudes of those with whom we work. Discuss with the group how they, personally, respond differently to praise vs. feedback vs. criticism.



Conclusion

Take the opportunity to rephrase the way in which any of the above statements were made. How might rephrasing get a different response or reaction? If you had to make a rule for how you would like to receive feedback and criticism, what would that rule be?



Journaling Activity

How does it make you feel when others criticize the work you do? Are you able to respond to feedback differently? Think about a time when you criticized someone else. What happened? How did that situation ultimately make you feel?



Extension Activity

Often times, the inability to give and/or receive criticism and feedback might cause conflict in the workplace. Reach out to the National Institute for Advanced Conflict Resolution (<http://www.niacr.org/pages/about.htm>) to find local, no-cost training opportunities or workshops for participants. You might also try your state or county's mediation center (often connected to juvenile services) to see what programs are offered.