



Part 2 of 2 parts

The Art of Receiving Feedback

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Part 1 of this series discussed crafting and delivering feedback that is specific, balanced, descriptive, behavioral, and delivered in bite-size pieces. Still, even the most effectively worded feedback is rendered useless if it is not heard.¹ When receiving feedback, the listener's emotional vulnerability often causes distortion of the message. Then, only the negative aspects are heard, and the insightful messages are tuned out.

Feedback is information gleaned about oneself through life experiences and interpersonal interactions.² Accepting feedback should not be difficult. Listening for what went wrong is easy, but then what went right can be missed. Reframing the negative and honing in on what is helpful takes practice, patience, and a growth mentality. (See **Resource.**)

See related article, **Feedback: The Art Is in the Delivery**, at brief.vet/feedback-part1

Mindset Over Matter

To keep feedback in perspective, consider how it is perceived through the lens of a fixed versus a growth identity.³ “Identity is the story we tell about ourselves—what we are like, what we stand for, what we are good at, and what we are capable of,” says author Carol Dweck.⁴ A fixed mindset reasons that traits and abilities are stagnant and set in stone (eg, *I am who I am, and I am not going to change*), whereas a growth mindset implies that characteristics and capacities are in flux, adapting, and progressing (eg, *I am constantly growing, learning, and changing*).

When receiving feedback, what is absorbed and what is deflected is based on the mindset of the person listening.⁵ A growth mindset reframes deficits into opportunities for growth and setbacks into challenges to tackle. Taking a growth perspective promotes personal and professional evolution. Failures are seen as occasions to learn and feedback is welcomed. In contrast, a fixed mindset reacts defensively or retreats in fear, and feedback is seen as self-threatening. (See **Cultivating a Growth Mindset**.)

BENCHMARKS

Leadership & CE

Twenty percent of continuing education offered by Well-Managed Practices focuses on building the team’s emotional intelligence and leadership skills.

SOURCE: *Benchmarks 2016: A Study of Well-Managed Practices*. Columbus, OH: WTA Veterinary Consultants and Advanstar Publishing; 2016:52.

Resource

- *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well*. Stone D, Heen S. New York, NY: Penguin Books; 2014.

Cultivating a Growth Mindset⁶

FILTER FEEDBACK

View feedback as a chance for *coaching* (ie, the aim is to improve through learning) versus *evaluation* (ie, performance-based, grade, ranking). Evaluative feedback triggers vulnerability, while coaching focuses on professional development.

MOVE PAST JUDGEMENT

When feedback is truly evaluative (ie, about a performance evaluation, client complaint, review), break it down into 3 parts: assessment, consequences, and judgement.

- **Assessment** is your standing (ie, 3 out of 5 for client satisfaction)
- **Consequences** are the real-world outcomes of the assessment (ie, no merit raise)
- **Judgement** is the assessment and its consequences (ie, you disappointed the practice owner)

Take a look at each part and determine the greatest

trigger (eg, fear of disappointing the practice owner). Then use the trigger to focus your feedback discussion.

How do you feel about my current client satisfaction scores?

What would you like my target to be?

What ideas do you have to increase my client satisfaction ratings?

RATE YOURSELF

Give yourself a second self-review following the feedback and assess how constructively the feedback was handled. Feedback is in the giver’s hands, whereas the assessment and response are in the receiver’s hands. There are lessons and meanings to be gleaned by facing tough feedback head on.

How long did you take to recover?

What did you learn?

What are you doing differently?

What are the results?

Questions & Receptions

Enhancing receptivity to feedback takes time, patience, and practice. It is a delicate dance of determining what was heard and what was actually meant. Remain open to feedback by eliciting the sender's viewpoint and considering how a different perspective could be helpful.

Ask clarifying questions:

- *So, because I was in a hurry at the beginning of the visit, the client perceived that I did not care about her pet's problem.* [reflective listening]
- *How could I have handled that differently?* [open-ended check]

Asking for specific examples builds on clarifying questions, allows assimilation, and develops a clear channel to see the possibilities for change.

- *Could you provide a concrete example so I can get a better understanding of what you mean?* [asking permission]

- *In what other scenarios did you see this happening?* [open-ended inquiry]

Seek an outside perspective. Asking for coaching promotes professional growth and provides an outlet to put change into practice.

- *What do you suggest I do differently?* [open-ended inquiry]
- *Would you mind observing my next appointment for these behaviors?* [asking permission]

Conclusion

Receptivity to feedback starts with a growth mindset that transforms failures into learning opportunities and feedback into welcome input for progress. Asking clarifying questions, seeking specific examples, and obtaining outside perspectives enhance understanding and usefulness. ■■■

References

1. Brookhart S. *How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students* 2nd ed. Alexandria: ASCD; 2017.
2. Hattie J, Timperley H. The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*. 2007; 77(1):88-112.
3. Stone D, Heen S. *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well*. New York, NY: Penguin Group; 2014:24-25.
4. Stone D, Heen S. *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well*. New York, NY: Penguin Group; 2014:183.
5. Stone D, Heen S. *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well*. New York, NY: Penguin Group; 2014:183-196.
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BENCHMARKS

Plan for Team Development

A detailed team development plan provides team members with a clear direction on how to increase their skills, take advantage of opportunities, and advance their careers.

SOURCE: *Benchmarks 2016: A Study of Well-Managed Practices*. Columbus, OH: WTA Veterinary Consultants and Advanstar Publishing; 2016:61.

TAKE ACTION ✓

- 1 Cultivate a growth mindset by considering feedback as an opportunity for self-improvement; be receptive and view it as information that will help growth.
- 2 Elicit the sender's viewpoint to better understand, clarify, and stay open to his or her feedback.



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