

Positive and Constructive Feedback

Definitions

Feedback is a behavior-specific description of a person's actions or performance that is intended to guide future behavior. It does not judge behavior. Feedback describes the process of helping staff assess their own actions, identify areas where they are right on target, and provide them tips on what they can do better in the future.

Feedback is different from praise, which often provides very general, positive verbal rewards such as "great job" or "well done."

Positive feedback: describing specific behavior and emphasizing the strengths and competencies demonstrated by the behavior.

Constructive, corrective feedback: describing the behavior and offering or eliciting an alternative action, asking what the person could have done differently.

Examples

1. Jordan has developed a very detailed, comprehensive plan to take a group of young people to a science museum. They explain the timeline and all the transportation logistics to you.

Possible response: This is great, Jordan!

Positive feedback: I like the detail you put into this. You worked out the logistics and made sure that they all line up. I appreciate all the effort you put into it.

2. Caleb is gathering a group of young people to start a new project they had discussed a few days ago. He asks them to come together in a circle. Tyler moves toward the group but seems to be reluctant to join. Caleb goes over to him and engages him in a one-to-one conversation. Soon after, Tyler joins the group.

Possible response: Caleb, you did a great job with Tyler!

Positive feedback: Caleb, you did really well checking in with Tyler. Talking with him one-on-one, giving him your undivided attention, and drawing him out with a few open-ended questions – this all helped him get comfortable and able to join the group.

3. Jennifer is developing activities for a healthy nutrition program. She has collected a set of recipes and started to put together a list of supplies. She is planning to instruct young people using the recipes.

Possible response: Hold on, Jennifer, this is not going to work! Think this through a bit more.

Constructive feedback: Jennifer, you did well gathering recipes and cooking supplies. Let's think about how you can introduce young people to cooking. Many may not have had any experience cooking or following recipes. What can you do to get young people interested and engaged? What kind of fun activities could you start with?