

# Providing Effective Feedback



*caregivers*

PREVENT  PROTECT  PROMOTE  
*abuse/neglect* *clients* *dignity*

## PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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# Learning Points

Let's review the main learning points.

- Ask the Right Questions
- Provide Effective Feedback
- Communicate Observations Timely
- Communicate Assertively

# Providing Effective Feedback



The following is a guide to providing effective feedback to your staff members.

- Ask open-ended questions and listen actively
- Communicate observations
- Practice positive reinforcement
- Communicate responsibilities and expectations
- Establish goals and follow up

# Asking and Answering Questions

## Why Ask Questions?

- To create independence in others
- To establish ownership of the ideas, and a greater investment
- To determine the person's awareness of the problem
- To foster agreement that a problem exists
- To aid in exploring possible solutions

## When Asking Questions

- Ask general, open questions. Questions that begin with “What” and “How” help you to get more information.
- “Why” is not recommended because it probes for a motive and may result in defensiveness.
- If the other person has difficulty in answering, say: “Let me rephrase the question...” and ask another question that provides additional clues.
- Ask permission before directly providing information. Ask: “Could I make a suggestion?”

## Examples of Questions to Ask

- “What are your concerns about this task?”
- “What do you think we can do to improve this situation?”
- “What changes would you like to see in the way it is done?”
- “What other changes could be made?”
- “What improvements can be made to the way we do things here?”
- “Which of these changes should be tackled first?”
- “What were the results of that action?”
- “What is the first thing that needs to be done?”
- “If you do that, what might the consequences be?”
- “How could you prevent that problem from occurring?”
- “If the problem occurs in the future, what could you do now to reduce its seriousness?”
- “What support do you need from me?”
- “How can I help?”

Instead of...	Try this one...
“Are you sure you like doing this?”	“How do you like doing this?”
“Do you think you need to do this better?”	“Are there ways to do this even better?”
“Don’t you think things could be changed here?”	“What concerns do you have about doing this?”
“Why do you have such a hard time with this part?”	“What parts of this are the most challenging for you?”
“Why is this so challenging for you?”	“What do you see as the reasons that make this challenging?”

## Questions To Ask When Following Up

Once a project has been completed, or a goal has been reached, be certain to follow up with your staff.

- “How do you feel about your progress in carrying out your plan?”
- “What did you learn from this experience?”
- “In hindsight, what would you do differently if you had to do it all over again?”
- “How else could I have helped you?”
- “Now that you have completed your original plan, what do you see as the next step?”

## Listening

***Give your full attention.***

- Stop what you are doing and keep good eye contact

**Clarify what is being said and confirm your understanding.**

- Briefly paraphrase the substance of what was said

**Be respectful.**

- Use both verbal and non-verbal responses

The more interested you are in what the other person has to say, the more that person will be interested in what you have to say.

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## Communicate Observations

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- When you see it, say it—never let good work go unnoticed
- Don't beat around the bush. Be gentle but direct. Say exactly what you observe in a non-judgmental way. Get to the point quickly.
- Be specific and concise by stating **expectations followed by observations**. State what was agreed upon and exactly what you observe.
- Be objective and non-threatening
- Be aware of your body language, voice intonation, and facial expressions
- Avoid sending someone else to do your job for you (i.e. asking a supervisor who "knows the person better than you" to address the issue)
- Avoid using the "good news/ bad news" ploy
- Do not use sarcasm, insults, or accusations

**Prepare preliminary questions.** When you observe an individual's behavior, think about answers to the following questions:

- What is the person doing or not doing effectively? Be as precise as you can.
- What impact does the person's behavior have on achieving your group's goals or individual objectives?
- What impact does the behavior have on other members of the team?

**Avoid premature judgments.** Be very careful not to make premature judgments about the person. Try to be a neutral observer.

**Test your theories.** Continue to observe, particularly if you don't feel comfortable with your perceptions. Where appropriate, discuss the situation with others—trusted peers or

colleagues—to get their perspectives. Consider any cross-cultural issues that might help you better understand the situation or person involved.

**Examine your motives.** When coaching someone you think is a problem performer, take a close look at your own behavior first. Ask yourself how you might be contributing to the problem.

**Unrealistic expectations.** Ask yourself, *"Am I using my own performance as a yardstick to measure others?"* You've probably progressed in your career by setting high expectations and achieving an outstanding track record. Assuming that others have identical motivations or identical strengths may be unrealistic and unfair.

**Interfering feelings.** Ask yourself, *"Is it hard for me to identify with someone who's having a problem?"* Be self-aware and recognize when your own feelings, such as anger or frustration, may keep you from appreciating what someone else might be feeling—and may cloud your observation and analysis skills.

**Failing to praise.** Ask yourself, *"Have I remembered to give positive feedback?"* Often managers forget to take the time and look for opportunities to give positive feedback. Over time, an absence of positive feedback could contribute to problem behaviors or attitudes.





# Assertive Communication



Communicating assertively with others does not come naturally for many people. Most of us need to learn how to be assertive communicators, rather than passive or aggressive. What does it mean to be “assertive?”

- Assertiveness is about standing up for yourself, but also about respecting the opinions and needs of others.
- When we communicate assertively, we are clear about our opinions and wishes, but we are also open to others’.

## Passive, Aggressive, Assertive Traits

Each of the three communication techniques uses very different approaches. Most of us use techniques that will be found in more than one area. In order to recognize a technique, let’s discuss some common traits of each.

### Passive

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- easily intimidated by others
- worries about others getting angry
- sometimes feels like a “doormat” (walked on by others)
- believes that his/her rights and opinions are not as important as those of other people
- avoids eye contact
- appears shy and has difficulty saying “no” when asked to do a favor
- overly-courteous and might do just about anything to avoid a fight, argument or disagreement
- gets angry when someone violates her rights, but isn’t likely to stand up for herself directly
- feels put down, taken advantage of, or abused
- intimidated by authority and has a hard time dealing with supervisors
- at high risk for being used or taken advantage of
- rarely gets what she wants or needs



NOTE: In a dangerous situation, it is appropriate to behave passively in order to protect yourself.

## Passive/Aggressive

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- passive in communication; aggressive in actions
- agrees to a task then sabotages the outcome
- says one thing and then does another
- won't stand up to someone directly, but criticizes others behind their backs
- refuses to take responsibility for actions and prior agreements



## Aggressive

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- Ignores others' feelings and rights
- Believes that her rights, opinions and needs are more important than others' (her way or the highway)
- Violates others' rights and boundaries in an effort to get what she wants
- Sends the message: "I matter more than you do, so get out of my way"
- Uses a loud tone of voice, violates personal space, "in your face"
- Is demanding, angry, and hostile in getting to her goal
- Exaggerates the facts
- Often does not get her needs met because she alienates others



## Assertive

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- Respects the opinions and needs of others (empathetic)
- Uses a calm tone of voice
- Believes in her own opinion and right to be heard (self-respect)
- Makes eye contact and respects the personal space of others
- Avoids labels and judgments
- Asks rather than demands
- Values herself and values others equally
- Is neither a "doormat" (passive) or a "steamroller" (aggressive)
- Uses "I" statements to get the message across
- Does not exaggerate the situation
- Sticks to the facts
- Often gets her needs met because she is respectful of others



# Tips for Assertive Communication

## Making Assertive Statements

Since assertiveness doesn't come naturally to most of us, let's practice a bit to perfect your technique. Take a look at the sample sentence structures below.

Use this template to communicate more assertively:

When you \_\_\_\_\_, I feel \_\_\_\_\_."

For example:

"When you raise your voice, I feel threatened."

Sometimes you need to tell a person how their behavior affected you:

"When you \_\_\_\_\_, then I \_\_\_\_\_, and I feel \_\_\_\_\_."

For example:

"When you arrive late, I have to wait, and I feel frustrated."

An assertive person may also need to tell the person what they want:

“When you arrive late, I have to wait, and I feel frustrated. *Can I count on you to be on time tomorrow?*”

## Do's and Don'ts

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### Do:

- Express feelings honestly – take ownership of your feelings
- Be realistic, respectful and honest
- Express preferences and priorities
- Choose your response carefully, especially when emotions are high

### Don't:

- Depersonalize feelings or deny ownership
- Say "You make me mad"
- Exaggerate, minimize, or use sarcasm
- Agree just to be sociable or agree unwillingly

## Using Assertive Body Language

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**Posture:** Erect but relaxed, shoulders straight

**Facial expression and gestures:** Relaxed, thoughtful, caring, genuine smile, eye contact

**Voice:** Even-toned, calm, not too loud or soft

## Techniques to Avoid

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**Handing over Your Power:** “You make me feel so frustrated!” Actually, no one can make you feel anything. You are the owner of your feelings! Beginning the sentence with “You make me” also puts the other person on the defensive.

**Making Judgments:** “I got here on time. You could have, too.” You may feel embarrassed after the person explains that the babysitter was late. Don't assume that you have all the facts.

**Applying Labels:** “If you weren’t so disorganized, you might be on time more often.” The person you’re speaking to begins to defend themselves about being disorganized, and forgets all about the original message, being late.

**Over-generalizing:** “You’re always late.” The person probably isn’t *always* late, so they will focus on “always” instead of hearing your message.

**Finding Fault:** “It’s not my fault you’re late.” Again, the focus instantly goes to who caused the situation, and veers away from the message.

**Failing to Empathize:** “I can’t understand why you’re always late.” A good rule is to try and put yourself in the other person’s shoes.

## **Activity: One Conversation, Three Styles**

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Let’s take a look at a situation in which two people have a conversation that demonstrates each of the 3 styles. After each scene, we’ll discuss which style was demonstrated (passive, aggressive or assertive).

Sara is a caregiver in a small group home for persons with moderate developmental disabilities. Sara works the third shift, from 10 pm to 6 am, so that she can be home during the day with her 3 year-old daughter and get her 7 year-old son off to school. Another caregiver named Audrey relieves Sara each morning. Sara can’t leave the facility until another staff person is there.

It’s Thursday at 6:15 am, and Audrey is late for the third time this week. Sara knows that Audrey has a new boyfriend, and Sara suspects that Audrey is out late every night with him. Sara is upset because she needs to get home to her family. Sara also thinks Audrey is taking advantage of her.

At this point, Audrey breezes into the group home with a big smile on her face.

## Scene One

1. Which communication approach did Sara (the overnight caregiver) choose to use with Audrey (who was late)?
  
2. Why do you think so?

## Scene Two

1. Which communication approach did Sara (the overnight caregiver) choose this time to use with Audrey (who was late)?
  
2. Why do you think so?

## Scene Three

1. Using an assertive approach this time, Sara got what she wanted from Audrey, an agreement to be on time in the future. What traits did Sara use in this scene?
  
2. Audrey also responded very differently this time? Why do you think so?

# Why Assertiveness is Important



Can you think of some reasons why it may be better for you to use an assertive communication style, rather than passive or aggressive?

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How does assertive communication result in better care for clients or residents?

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## Wrap-Up

- Ask the Right Questions
- Provide Effective Feedback
- Communicate Observations Timely
- Communicate Assertively

**NOTE:** This material was developed by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services- Division of Quality Assurance and the UW Oshkosh Center for Community Development, Engagement and Training (CCDET as part of the federal Caregiver Abuse and Neglect Prevention Project.

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