

Teaching Tips

Volume 5 Issue 8 August 2014

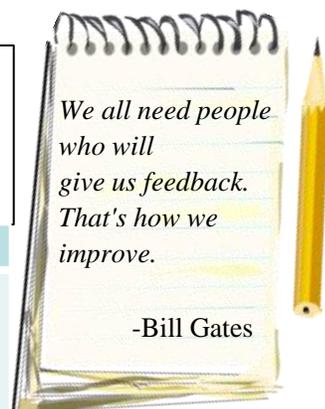
Department of Family & Social Medicine Faculty Development E-Newsletter



Written vs. Oral Feedback

Educators agree on the importance of giving timely, specific, clear feedback to learners; they devote considerable time and effort to providing feedback in different clinical and ambulatory settings. Still, there is minimal discussion regarding practical methods of providing feedback. The following table provides a comparison of the use of oral and written feedback methods.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Oral	<p>Dynamic, direct, simple, and conversational; it allows for feedback with spontaneous thinking, warmth and friendliness. Tone softened with opening sentences like <i>"It seems to me..."</i></p> <p>Helps in avoiding delays, red tape and other formalities; it can be the most accessible form of communication.</p> <p>Allows more flexibility; it can be retracted or any misunderstandings or conflicts can be resolved immediately.</p>	<p>Is informal and not as organized, structured or objective as written communication; it cannot be used as legal documentation. This can be mitigated by sending a written summary of oral feedback after an in-person meeting.</p> <p>Face-to-face feedback can be very time-intensive when compared to written feedback; it may make sense to use the time to increase the frequency of written feedback.</p> <p>Is difficult to find right words to correctly convey meaning in a short period of time; it can be highly subjective.</p>
Written	<p>Does not have to be delivered on the spur of the moment; it can be objective, planned and deliberate.</p> <p>Can be edited and revised several times before it is sent so that the content can be shaped for maximum effect; it can be more logical, organized and explicit.</p> <p>Provides a permanent record of the messages; it can be saved for later use.</p>	<p>Learner does not generally receive immediate feedback; it can lose its <i>timely</i> importance.</p> <p>Is not face-to face; it can miss non-verbal cues/communication.</p> <p>Is non-retractable and there is little opportunity for detailed discussions and self -assessment; it can be counter-productive.</p>



We all need people who will give us feedback. That's how we improve.

-Bill Gates

References / Resources:

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