



Positive communication

Growth mindset and feedback

From Fixed to Growth Mindset

Challenge | Mysterious structure

Goal: Recreate the structure using only paper in 3 groups.

Rules:

- You have **5 minutes**.
- Use **only one sheet of paper** and a **pair of scissors**.
- You may look at the original structure, but **you may not touch it**.

Group 1: Sofie, Toni, Maria, Lilija, Etina

Group 2: Ida, Nathalie, Andrejs, Guna, Louise

Group 3: Marina, Dace, Enija, Līga, Mārtiņš

Solution

Step 1:

Fold the sheet of solid paper in half.

(In the picture, two colors were used to help visualize the process)

Step 2:

Make three cuts along the folded edge:

Two cuts on one side,

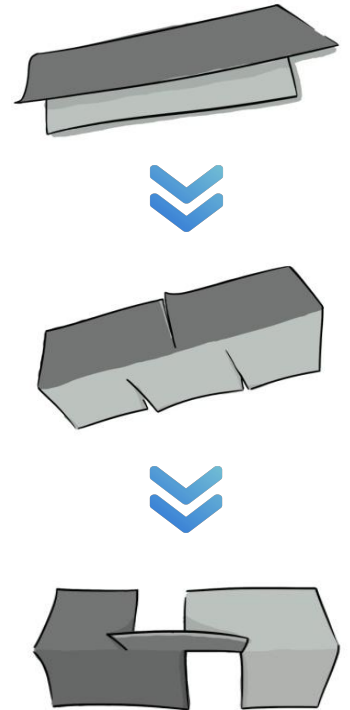
One cut on the opposite side.

(Do not cut all the way through—just enough to create flaps.)

Step 3:

Twist and refold the middle section as needed to complete the structure.

(This may require some trial and error—observe carefully and adjust your folds!)



Two mindsets that can influence your thinking

FIXED MINDSET

We are who we are,
and I can't do much to change that.



GROWTH MINDSET

Anyone can change
with enough work.





Growth mindset

A belief that intelligence and other abilities can be developed through effort and perseverance. **Intelligence is not fixed**; it can be cultivated and improved.

- **Think of it like training a muscle:** by putting in effort and embracing challenges, you can become smarter.
- Just like regular workouts build physical strength, consistent effort can enhance your intellectual capabilities.

The growth mindset encourages students to focus on the learning process, rather than simply trying to appear smart.

Fixed mindset

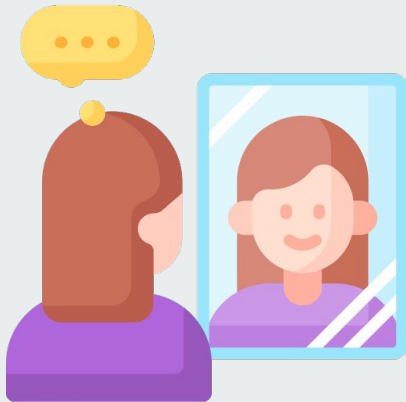
People believe that intelligence and abilities are fixed traits that cannot be changed.

- Individuals with a fixed mindset tend to **blame themselves** when they fail, often seeking shortcuts or comparing themselves to others who performed worse to **protect their ego**.
- It manifests in two ways:
 1. When people feel they have high skills in a subject (e.g., "I'm good at Biology"), they perceive high control and motivation in that area.
 2. Conversely, if they feel their skills in a subject are low (e.g., "I'm bad at Biology"), they perceive low control and motivation.



Reflection

Task for a Growth Mindset

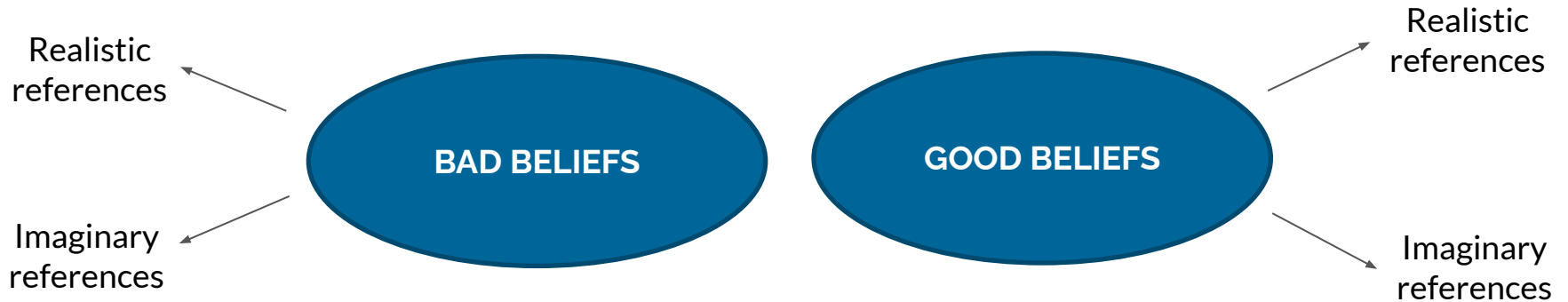


Write quickly, without thinking too much, about:

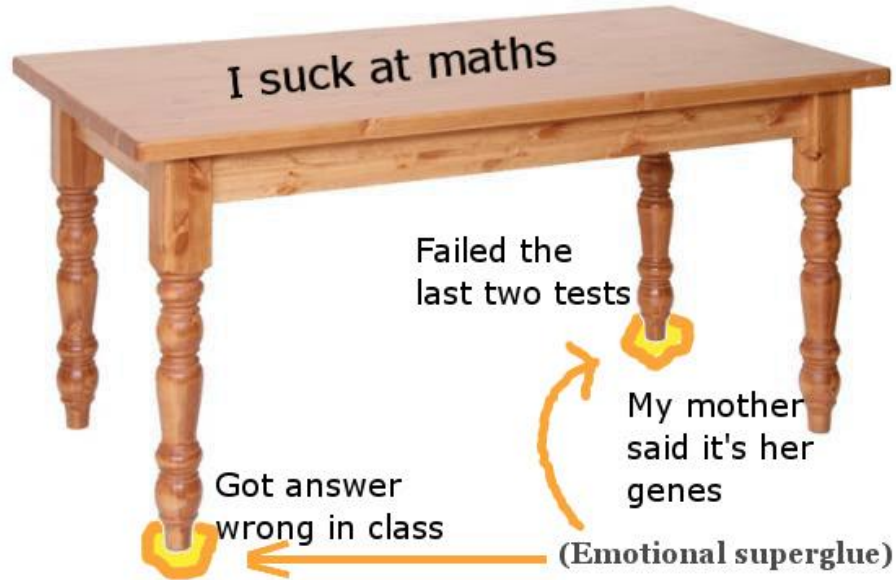
- One thing you've always been good at
- One thing you think you'll never be good at
- One thing you weren't good at but got better at over time
- One thing you used to be good at but lost over time

What is a belief?

Beliefs are **internal references** we have about ourselves that derive from our experience and can be based on **realistic facts** or on **imaginary references**.



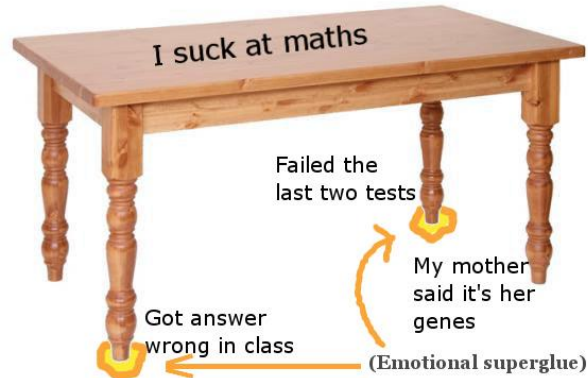
How is a belief structured?



Activity | Facing bad beliefs

Write down **three beliefs** that you feel are holding back your growth.

Then, list the **“legs of the table”** - the supporting references or experiences that reinforce these beliefs.



Activity | Facing bad beliefs

In groups of 3, choose one limiting belief per person. Together, brainstorm possible actions or best practices that could help you overcome this belief.

- Analyze the references the belief is based on: are they real?
- Try to overcome them and to create new positive references.

Group 1: Sofie, Ida, Marina

Group 2: Toni, Nathalie, Dace

Group 3: Maria, Guna, Enija

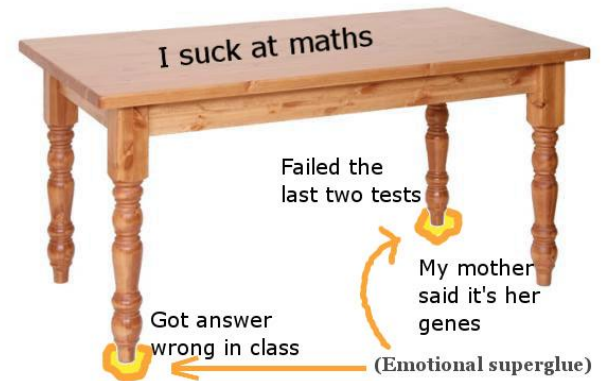
Group 4: Andrejs, Līga, Elina

Group 5: Louise, Lilija, Mārtiņš

Debriefing

Was questioning the belief easy or difficult?

Did the other people's point of view help you?



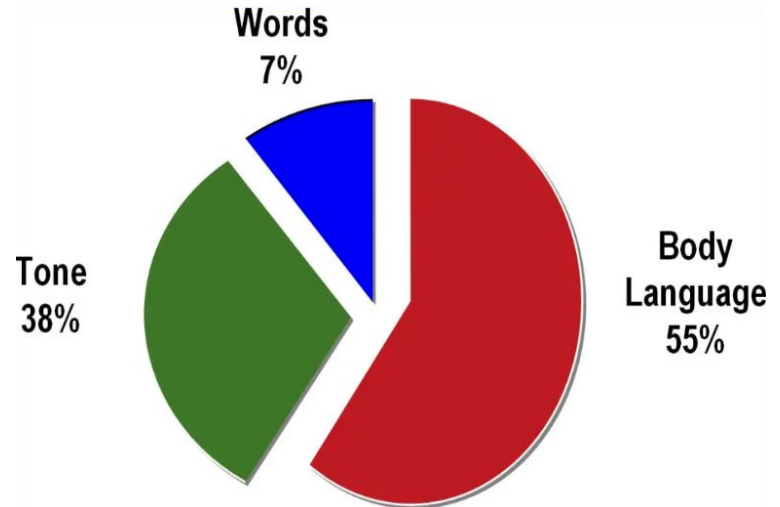
How to overcome a Fixed Mindset

- Emphasize effort over ability
- Pay attention to the language you use when praising and/or normalize struggles
- Encourage students to practice self-compassion when they fail
- Build positive relationships with students

Language matters

Cultivating a growth mindset depends **enormously** on what kind of language and communication you promote in the classroom

Remember: Your language is **WHAT** you say and **HOW** you say it.



Language matters: examples

Good catch!

GROWTH MINDSET

Process is praised, not the **person**. It's linked to an **action**.

Nice! You're a natural!

FIXED MINDSET

The ability is considered a **stable trait**, it is not praising the **process** used to achieve the result.

You got it! // Nice!

NEUTRAL

These examples don't identify neither an **action** nor a **stable trait**.

Let's play!

You will see several examples of sentences for two frequent situations:

1. When we **praise** students for good work
2. When they **face a struggle** or a problem

For every sentence, choose the **appropriate category** and if it is **fixed** or **growth** mindset.

Reference

Praising | Solutions

TRY TO SAY THIS...	...INSTEAD OF THIS
<p>Good job! I can see how hard you worked on that.</p>	<p>Good job! You must be smart at this!</p>
<p>I know you've been using the new study strategies we discussed and your improvement shows they're really working for you.</p>	<p>See, you are good at English. You got an A on your last test.</p>
<p>I like the way you tried all kinds of strategies on that math problem until you finally got it.</p>	<p>You got it! I told you that you were smart.</p>
<p>It looks like trying a new strategy really paid off.</p>	<p>See, I told you there was hidden talent in you.</p>

Facing struggles | Solutions

TRY TO SAY THIS...	...INSTEAD OF THIS
<p>Some of these problems are hard so remember, when you have to think harder, it makes you smarter!</p>	<p>Some of these problems are hard. Just do your best (can signal low expectations for success).</p>
<p>You've made some mistakes, but when you think hard and learn from them, you are actually growing your brain.</p>	<p>You've made a lot of mistakes on this (lack of scaffolding to seeing mistakes as helpful).</p>
<p>Nobody starts out an expert. You become an expert by learning from your mistakes. Tell yourself... "I'm not good at this YET"</p>	<p>Just try harder next time (can signal low expectations for success).</p>

Tips for Growth Mindset



In the same groups as before, create a list of tips and suggestions to express yourselves with a **growth mindset**.

Which are the rules?

- *Focus on strategies, processes, effort and behaviour*
- *Do not generalize, be specific*
- *Give explanation*
- *Temporary (I'm not good at this YET)*
- *Give suggestion and focus on next steps*
- *Give support*
- *Build trust (I can see you are improving...)*
- *Give feedback on what is right*

The power of *yet* VS the tyranny of *now*



The power of believing that you can improve. By Carol Dweck

Growth mindset | Teaching practices

1. Avoid ability groupings

Sorting students into ability groupings (high performers together, and low performers together) can reinforce a fixed mindset and signal to students that you have different expectations of students based on their past performance

2. Set growth mindset as a norm

Teaching students about the malleability of the brain helps them understand the scientific evidence for why it is true that we can all grow our abilities.

3. Feedback & assessment opportunities

Opportunities to receive feedback on a performance are an essential part of improving our abilities and reinforcing a growth mindset.

Sun, K.L. (2015). *There's no limit: Mathematics teaching for a growth*. Stanford University, Stanford, CA

Giving and receiving feedback with a growth mindset

What is a feedback?



- Information about **reactions** to a person's behaviour or performance, to a product or a service, used as a basis for improvement
- The process in which part of the output of a system is returned to its input in order to regulate its next output
- The **transmission of evaluative or corrective information** about an action, event, or process to the original or controlling source

Purpose of feedback

- How can we expect people to **change** and **grow** if they don't know **what** they need to change?
- Unless they get feedback, how do they know what they do well so they can continue doing it?

Continuous improvement



If used effectively, feedback offers a positive reinforcement of good behaviours:

- Show personal awareness
- Ask for feedback
- Be seen to act on feedback



How to use feedback

It's an an act of kindness, not a punishment!

- It is imperative that you engage in the feedback process in an **emotionally balanced** or **positive** frame of mind
- Never make the mistake of giving you feedback in the **heat of the moment**, it is unlikely to be balanced or constructive. You may say something you will later regret.



The Johari Window

Known to you

Unknown to you

Arena	Blind spot
Facade	Unknown

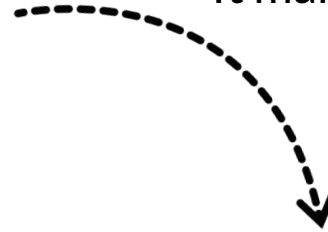
Known to others

Unknown to others

Effects of Feedback

Arena	Blind spot
Facade	Unknown

It makes the arena bigger!



Arena	Blind spot
Facade	Unknown

- Greater openness
- Increased trust
- Fewer surprises

3 stages to effective feedback

1. **Feed-up:** Students must be aware of the learning intention before receiving feedback. Feed-up establishes the context for feedback to be given by answering to the question “**Where am I going?**”
2. **Feedback:** The purpose of feedback is to track how well learners are doing in respect to the learning aim. Feedback answers to the question “**How am I getting there?**”
3. **Feed-forward:** This refers to the actions necessary to move forward on a certain learning objective. Feed-forward answers to the question “**Where next?**”

3 levels of feedback

1. **Task level:** It refers to how well tasks are understood and performed (e.g. whether the student's response was right or wrong; whether a response needs elaboration or revision)
2. **Process level:** It refers to the main process needed to understand and perform tasks
3. **Self level:** It is about personal praise of the learner (not informative, so it should be kept separate from the other levels)

DOs and DON'Ts of feedback

- In groups, **think** about your personal experience with giving and receiving feedback
- Then, **analyze** what behaviours, words or attitudes made the feedback **effective** or **ineffective**



Avoid *but* statements

Using **BUT** after a positive statement cancels out the praise and shifts focus to the **negative**.

Instead, try these approaches:

- ✓ Use "and" or "at the same time" – These words connect ideas without negating the first statement.
- ✓ Use a full stop – Simply pause, then continue with your next point.
- ✓ Restructure your feedback – Start with the positive, pause, then offer suggestions for improvement separately.



A 4-step formula for giving feedback



A 4-step formula for giving feedback

- **The micro-yes:** Let the receiver know that feedback is about to be given (creates independence and clarity)
- **Data point:** State objectively and specifically what facts you are referring to
- **Show impact:** State the (emotional) impact these facts had on you
- **End on a question:** Wrap your feedback with a question able to create a joint problem solving scenario

The TRIC Model

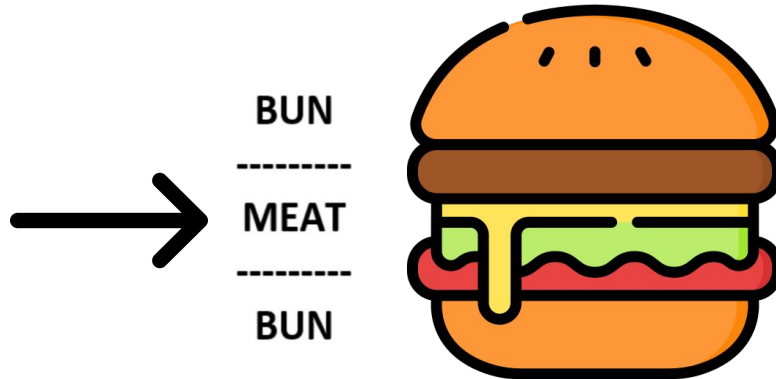
- **T**ell the specific behavior that you would like to have changed.
“When you interrupt me during the meeting ...”
- **R**ecognize what you are feeling about the situation or behavior.
“I get frustrated because it breaks my train of thought ...”
- **I**dentify the replacement behavior that you would like to see.
“What I would like to see happen is that you wait to add your comments until after I have finished speaking.”
- **C**onfirm understanding and end on a positive note.
“I think you have great ideas to contribute and I believe the quality of our meetings will improve as a result of sharing our thoughts in an orderly manner.”

Feedback Literacy *(Brown & Leigh's Feedback Rules)*

- **TIMELY**: given as close to the event as possible
- **SELECTIVE**: addressing one or two **key-issues** rather than too many at once
- **DESCRIPTIVE**: non-judgemental, based on behaviour - not personality
- **BALANCED**: the good and the bad
- **SUGGESTIONS**, not prescriptions: you **may**, not you **must**
- **DIRECTED** towards behavior that can be changed

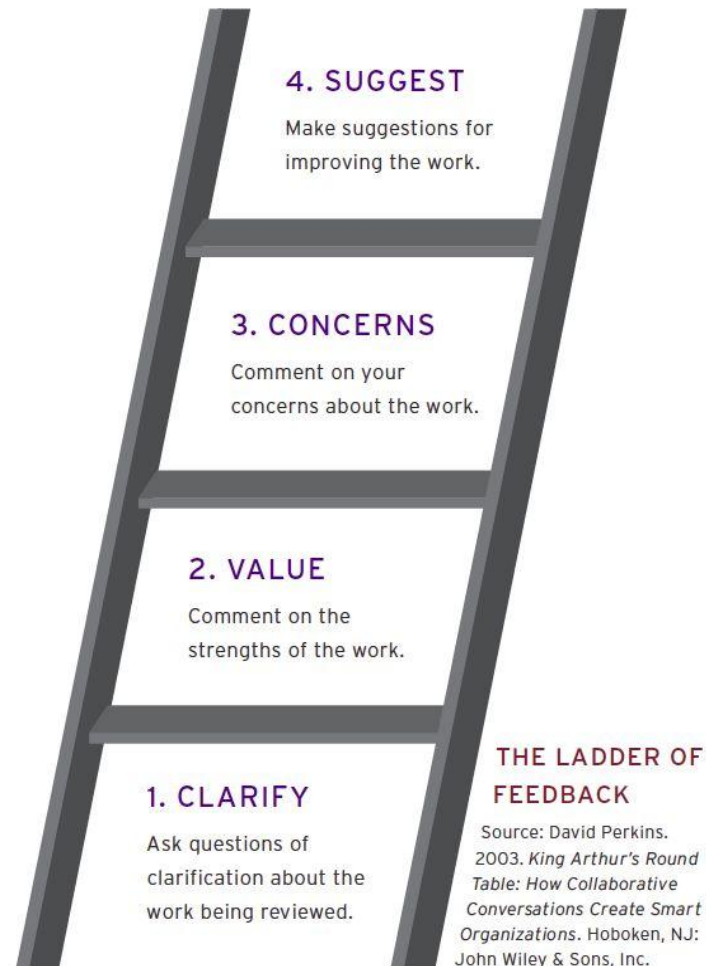
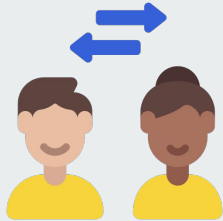
The sandwich feedback

- Start with something positive (giving examples, be descriptive)
- Give the feedback
- End on a positive note



The Ladder of Feedback

A tool to help promote **effective peer feedback** between students.





Peer feedback

- Students pair up and engage in a five-step process.
- Each step takes two minutes.
- When the first student is done, the partners switch roles.
- You, as a teacher, can keep a timer going and say, “next” when it is time to move to the next phase.

TIME	PHASE	DESCRIPTION	PARTNER A	PARTNER B
0'-2'	Elevator Pitch	Partner A explains the process, product or idea in two minutes	Explain your process, product or idea	Take notes on what you are hearing or listen actively
2'-4'	Clarifying Questions	Partner B asks clarifying questions without giving any feedback	Answer clarifying questions	Ask clarifying questions
4'-6'	Feedback	Partner B gives feedback to Partner A	Take notes on specific feedback you have gotten	Offer feedback in the form of two things that worked well and one idea for an improvement
6'-8'	Paraphrase	Partner A paraphrases what he or she has heard from Partner B	Paraphrase what you have heard	Listen to see if the paraphrased information is correct
8'-10'	Next Steps	Partner A makes a list of future revisions	Make a list of future revisions	Check the list of revisions

Feedback is *not* criticism!

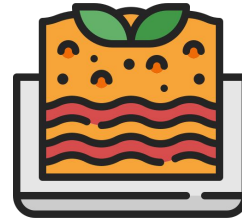
Common mistakes

FEEDBACK	CRITICISM
Focus on facts/behaviours	Focus on the person (fixed mindset)
Future oriented	Past oriented
Specific	General
Suggestions for improvement	Blaming / No advices
Motivating and encouraging	Prompts defensiveness
Descriptive, positive language	Judgemental, accusatory language
Positively supportive	Negatively evaluative

Negative

Positive

Specific



Generic



They reduce self-esteem and ruin the relationship ←
They are just judgments ←

- If used too much, they generate **performance anxiety**
- They convey **judgments**
- **Avoid** especially in **comparisons**

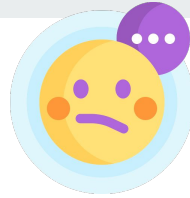
Receiving feedback



The **fight or flight** instinct is a primal and powerful response to perceived danger.

For feedback to be effective, it must avoid triggering either of these reactions, as doing so will cause the message to be **rejected**.

Receiving feedback



The person receiving feedback may react in different ways, such as:

- **Anger** – “I’ve had enough of this.”
- **Denial** – Often a reaction to the shock of feedback, like “I don’t see any problem with that.”
- **Blame** – “It’s not my fault. What can you expect when the patient won’t listen?”
- **Rationalization** – Finding excuses to justify their behavior, such as “I’ve had a particularly bad week” or “Doesn’t everyone do this?”
- **Acceptance**
- **Renewed Action**

The 5 steps for receiving feedback



Stay in silence



Listen



Thank



Separate collection/recycle



Act

Rules for receiving feedback

- Listen carefully to what is being said
- Don't reject it!
 - Learn to accept **both positive and negative** feedback
 - Avoid arguing or being defensive
- **When should we reject the source of feedback?**

When it comes from someone you do not like, you don't respect, who does not like you and can't realistically offer helpful feedback.

Rules for receiving feedback

- Acknowledge the giver of feedback and show your appreciation. The feedback may not have been easy to give.
- Involve mutual good will
 - Receiver should feel that the giver isn't their enemy
 - Giver has to be willing to help the receiver develop
 - People should be receptive to feedback and see it as helpful

Rules for receiving feedback

- Asking questions to clarify and seek examples
- Keep notes if needed
- Give it time to **sink in** and get into perspective
- Address areas for improvement

3 Stages to effective feedback

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Peer feedback



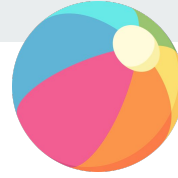
- Pair up with a partner: you will **take turns** as the **feedback giver** and **receiver**.
- Read the assigned scenarios.
- You will have **10 minutes** to prepare to give feedback on the scenarios.
- Once you're ready, **perform the scenario**: the **giver** will follow the feedback guidelines, and the **receiver** will follow the guidelines for receiving feedback.
- Afterward, we'll **share our thoughts** on how the feedback giving and receiving process went.

Debriefing



- Was it easy to give and receive feedback? Which was easier?
- What were the characteristics of the given and received feedback? Was it effective?
- How did the receiver react?
- What structure did you follow?

Ball feedback exercise



- Four volunteers temporarily leave the room.
- The remaining participants hide a ball somewhere in the room.
- Each volunteer is then invited back one at a time to search for the ball for **three minutes**, while receiving a **specific type of feedback** from the group (kept secret from the searcher).
- Finally, the group engages in a reflection and discussion about the experience.

Debriefing



- How did you feel while looking for the ball?
- What kind of feedback do you think you received when it was your turn?
- What thoughts or emotions arose from the feedback you received?
- How did the feedback impact your performance?
- What did the feedback prompt you to think or feel about others in the room giving it?

Further references

- [Growth Mindset Professional Development Activities](#)
- Saxena, P. (2015). Johari Window: An effective model for improving interpersonal communication and managerial effectiveness. *SIT Journal of Management*, 5(2), 134-146. Chicago
- [The secret to giving great feedback](#)
- [Teaching and Learning - Feedback](#)