

Resident Forum

Resident Physicians Section

Feedback in Clinical Medical Education: Guidelines for Learners on Receiving Feedback

Feedback skills in clinical medical education are necessary, valuable, and easily taught. Courses designed to help faculty and residents become more effective teachers often include training in effective feedback methods. The ability of residents and medical students to receive feedback as active participants in the learning process is essential for effective learning.

Feedback must be received in a way that serves to improve learning and performance. Because skills in receiving feedback have not been emphasized, we developed the following guidelines.

1. Remember that receiving feedback effectively requires a degree of maturity, self-awareness, and a commitment to the goals of learning clinical skills and improving clinical performance.

2. Formulate learning goals for yourself and share these with your supervisor. Learning goals should be mutually agreed on at the beginning of a clinical rotation or learning experience. Feedback can then be linked to your learning goals.

3. Take an active rather than passive role in receiving feedback. Seek feedback as an ongoing part of your clinical learning, both on a day-to-day basis and in formal feedback sessions.

4. When receiving feedback, ask for specific examples if your evaluator gives none. Seek clarification wherever needed. Additional information can be helpful whether the feedback is positive or negative.

5. If you are given negative feedback, make sure you understand what the issue is, why it is an issue, and what can be done about it. Ask as many questions as needed to gain clarification. Be involved in formulating solutions to im-

prove the situation. Where appropriate, develop a concrete plan for implementing improvements. Because negative feedback can be (though rarely is) a product of interpersonal conflict between you and your evaluator, if you feel this might be the case, use a trusted adviser or friend to help sort out the issues.

6. Consider the feedback you receive as an opportunity for growth and learning. Use your adviser, mentors, and friends as sources for gaining an enlarged perspective.

7. When receiving feedback, discuss not only what you can do to improve, but also what you are doing well, your strengths, and your progress. If learners are unaware of things they are doing well, they may drop some of the positive behaviors from their repertoires.

8. Accept positive feedback as an opportunity to gain a clearer sense of your strengths and to provide an impetus for further growth.

9. Do not be too hard on yourself; you may be your harshest critic. Give yourself credit for what you do know and what you do well.

10. Timing is important. If a feedback session is offered when you are stressed or rushed, ask to reschedule.

Feedback is an important teaching method that plays an essential role in the clinical teaching process and in optimizing patient care. Skills in giving and receiving feedback can be learned and refined; developing an open and inquiring attitude toward feedback reception can facilitate learners becoming active participants in the learning process.

Elizabeth A. Rider, MSW, MD
Children's Hospital
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Mass

H. Esterbrook Longmaid III, MD
New England Deaconess Hospital
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Mass

IT HURTS TO BE NUMBER ONE.

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in the United States. It strikes nearly 40 million Americans. It attacks in more than 100 different forms. Some forms of arthritis disable. Some last a lifetime. All of them hurt.

Fortunately, the Arthritis Foundation has programs to help you move easier and with less pain. We also support research for a future free from arthritis.

For more information, contact your local Arthritis Foundation. To find the office nearest you, call 1-800-283-7800.



ARTHRITIS
FOUNDATION®

Your Source
for Help and Hope®