

# A KICK-IN-THE-PANTS GUIDE TO:

## GIVING FEEDBACK

We often focus too much on what we need to say and less on how we're saying it. That leads to ineffective communication because how you say something is more important when it comes to the other person accepting your message.

1

### Identify your desired outcome.

Feedback goes over much better when you present the outcome you're hoping for from the conversation. We all know what we hope for won't necessarily happen, but being crystal clear about where you hope you can get with the conversation will remove some of the personal crap that is bound to come up both in you and the other person.

2

### Ask for their perspective first.

Engage them in the issue, and demonstrate that their point of view has value. Ask, "What were you hoping would be different in that meeting?" or "Can you explain why you made this decision?" Constructive criticism shouldn't be a one-way street. Giving the other person the floor eliminates the feeling of being trapped, tricked, or disrespected.

3

### Be thoughtful, not careful.

Careful centers you and your discomfort. It is more about how you feel than it is about the message itself or the other person. When we're being careful we are avoidant, indirect, unclear, and passive-aggressive. Thoughtful communication centers the other person. A thoughtfully delivered message is considerate of their feelings without shrinking or obscuring the message.

**Feedback will seldom be easy or bring you joy,  
but it can be effective and productive, which can feel  
really damn good at work.**

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## RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Taking feedback is one of the hardest things we have to do, at work and otherwise. Truly hearing it and incorporating it into our behaviors is even harder. Yet, we all have room to grow and get better and that's what feedback can help with.

1

### **Don't take it personally.**

This is a tough habit to break. We want to seek flaws in the other person, ulterior motives—any explanation that makes it not our fault.

There is no magic way to not take things personally. But sometimes even saying that to yourself (don't take it personally, don't take it personally) can defuse your immediate emotional response.

2

### **Ask for what you need in the moment.**

Know what you need to react appropriately. If you need time to think about the conversation or if you have questions, follow your instinct. If you're not in the headspace to be the person you want to be in the moment, acknowledge that and come back to the conversation.

3

### **Find the positive in it.**

The toughest lesson anyone learns in a workplace is that negative observations are opportunities for evolution and betterment. We all have blind spots, and ignoring yours is resigning yourself to a stagnant career (and life).

4

### **Clarify instead of arguing.**

We often want to argue and prove the other person wrong, but that won't feel good or get you very far. Feedback can raise a lot of questions within us—about our worth and our value, but also about our performance and contributions. You might need some of those questions answered to process and grow. Get the clarity you can.

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