Credits

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Personal thanks to Fredrick Lee Ohlsson for giving me my first life-changing feedback session and showing me the power that feedback can have. Your, and many other people’s honesty, openness and care over the past years have helped me shape myself to who I am today. I am eternally grateful to be allowed to call you friends.

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Chris Tripp,
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Preface

Feedback is a powerful communication tool. As such, it can have incredibly deep, positive effects. Good feedback can open a world of insight for the people involved, can strengthen friendships and clear rivalries – used prudently and wisely; feedback can change our experience of the world, our understanding of our place in it, and our relationship to it. Used carelessly and with malice, it also has the potential to be personally damaging. During feedback, both parties are more open and vulnerable – susceptible to the other’s whims and mistakes.

A more in-depth manual on feedback felt necessary for a feedback based organisation. As an educational organisation, EYP aims to provide every individual with an opportunity to reflect on their behaviour, attitudes and skills, and to learn from the activities they have attended. Feedback enhances the personal growth dimension of our organisation, making it an essential tool for our programme. We hence hope that this manual will enable better and more powerful feedback, improving the EYP experience for all its members.

This manual is meant as a practical course on the use and usefulness of feedback. It can be read as a guide or as a ‘refresher’ concerning roles, scripts and mind-sets. We have also added a chapter on training – as a trainer, you may wish to consult this chapter for suggestions on how to conduct a feedback module in your training session.

By no means is this manual comprehensive – there are numerous scripts and approaches beyond what can be found here, and the reader is encouraged to read further into the topic. Nevertheless, we have done our best to provide an in-depth overview of the current thinking on the subject.

For the purposes of readability, the person giving feedback will be referred to as the ‘Giver’ and the person receiving will be referred to as the ‘Receiver’. For simplicity’s sake, the third person singular is always referred to in the male form – we have made a conscious effort to make the examples gender-balanced.

With this overview, we are attempting to support the Giver in giving good, useful feedback. It is also meant to support the Receiver in making the most out of any kind of feedback, whether given well or in a less clear form.

We hope you are as enthusiastic, or become as enthusiastic, as we are about the possibilities that feedback provides for your personal development and for your relationships with others!
Feedback can change our experience of the world, our understanding of our place in it, and our relationship to it. Used carelessly and with malice, it also has the potential to be personally damaging.
Chapter 2: What is feedback?

2.1 DEFINITION OF FEEDBACK

‘Giving feedback is sharing the impact that the Receiver’s behaviour had on the Giver with the purpose of helping him grow, self-develop or become more self-aware’.

In a nutshell and on a higher aggregate level, feedback is a tool to allow a free flow of communication and messages, and to help conversations begin at eye level. It is a script that ensures – if used correctly – that the Receiver is able to accept a message while minimizing the risk of his building barriers to his understanding and acceptance of the message proper.

Feedback is generally used when communicating a personal observation about another person’s behaviour to that person².

Feedback requires at least two people, namely the Giver and the Receiver. There are different opinions concerning the number of people that can and should be involved in any feedback exchange. Over the past years, ‘group feedback’ has become en vogue – however, in this manual, feedback will be considered only in the ‘private’ context of a two-person exchange³.

While the rules and scripts used for this exchange can easily be adapted to larger audiences, we believe that feedback is fundamentally personal at its core, and therefore, public feedback should be exercised with caution.

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1. Definition devised for and used by trainers of the Training for EYP Trainers (T4ET) 2012, and used for subsequent T4ETs.
2. Feedback is essentially subjective, unlike evaluation that is (or should be) an objective performance assessment based on competence criteria.
4. ‘Giving and Receiving Feedback’, p.3.
2.2 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF FEEDBACK

The aim of feedback, as mentioned, is to help someone grow, develop or become more self-aware.

On a practical level, its objectives are therefore:

- to ensure that the Giver’s message is clear and unambiguous by forcing the Giver to be concrete;

- to ensure that the Receiver does not build barriers by focusing on outcomes, not on responsibility, ‘objectivising’ the behaviour in question and personalizing only the impact of said behaviour;

- to ensure that both the Giver and Receiver meet at the same level, giving the message the highest opportunity to arrive.

Feedback aims to level the ‘emotional playing field’ between the Giver and the Receiver by objectivising and at the same time personalizing – to the largest extent possible – the message. On an objective level, feedback ‘provides us with information on what’s working, and what’s not’ [4].

2.2.1 A word on positive / negative / constructive etc. feedback

Often, you will encounter feedback described as positive / negative / constructive or suggestive. It is our view that these distinctions are either tautological or misleading.

The aim of (good) feedback, as just described, is always positive, and always constructive (i.e. helping the Receiver become more self-aware). Comments without a positive, constructive aim are thus either bad feedback, or not feedback.

What is meant by the positive vs. negative/constructive differentiation is, in fact, feedback supporting a certain behaviour or feedback requesting a change in behaviour. A more correct terminology could therefore be ‘supporting’ and ‘requesting’ feedback. We will be using this phrasing in the coming chapters.

In general, ‘requesting’ feedback is perceived as more challenging; therefore, this is what the manual will be focusing on. We have however also included a chapter on the value of ‘supporting’ feedback (Chapter 3.1).

This is a useful place to mention a new method, known as ‘Speedback’. In speedback, participants are set knee to knee and have three minutes to answer a question to the person opposite, such as ‘How have you experienced me during this event?’.

The method lowers inhibitions by putting participants in a short-lived context and forcing them to talk. Every underlying message implicitly includes the subtext: ‘Maybe I would not have mentioned this, because it is not important, but I have to, because it is part of the exercise’. This may provide participants of an event with useful – if unwanted – insights into (random) perceptions of their behaviour by (random) people.

It is, however, most certainly not feedback, and the clever play on words should fool nobody (See for example https://research.gigaom.com/2012/12/speedback-trumps-feedback/) – on top of this, it is often used incorrectly as “fast feedback” which is not however an actual concept.
2.3 MAIN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT CONCERNING THE SCOPE OF FEEDBACK

There are three schools of thought when it comes to the scripts used for feedback. Each defines its scope differently, leading to different opinions on what still constitutes feedback and where the feedback process ends.

2.3.1 Feedback as an observation

In this school of thought, feedback is merely the sharing of an observation about another person’s behaviour. Any discussion following this initial communication is by its nature no longer the original feedback, but a two-way follow-up to this original communication.

Example:
‘Karen, you didn’t show up to work yesterday and didn’t call in sick.’

The charm of this definition is that it focuses on the clarity of the original message without further ‘complicating’ descriptions. By this definition, feedback is a one-way communication.

2.3.2 Feedback as an impact assessment

This assumes that aside from the observation, giving feedback implies stating the impact of the observation on the feedback giver.

Example:
‘Karen, you didn’t show up to work yesterday and didn’t call in sick. I was unpleasantly surprised, because I ended up doing your work and wasn’t able to go home as early as I had hoped.’
2.3.3. Feedback as a request tool

On top of the observation and assessment, the third view on feedback assumes that this should be followed by a request or suggestion. In comparison with the previous two approaches, this one is more forward-looking, but also more 'aggressive'.

Example:
‘Karen, you didn’t show up to work yesterday and didn’t call in sick. I was unpleasantly surprised, because I ended up doing your work and wasn’t able to go home as early as I had hoped. I would appreciate it if you could tell us in advance when you can’t make it to work.’

2.3.4. Conclusion

All three scripts have the same basic mind-set: structuring communication in such a way as to ensure the least amount of friction. The differences, here, are merely in the definition of the end-point of the feedback exchange.

In this manual, when not explicitly mentioned, we will be working with the second definition. This impact assessment script is also used by many organisations and companies to enhance their internal communication.

As will be described later in more detail, a concrete request may be included after the feedback proper. Should the Receiver wish it, he can request suggestions for the future from the Giver – the request or suggestion is therefore no longer part of the feedback exchange, but a follow-up to the subsequent communication.

Feedback includes an observation on behaviour and an assessment of the impact of the observation behaviour on the Giver.

Note: as a perceptive reader, you will have noticed that the distinction between ‘supporting’ / ‘requesting’ feedback would suggest that the third script, which expressly includes a request, would seem to be the applicable script for ‘requesting’ feedback.

‘Requesting’ feedback solicits a change in behaviour, whereas the script in 2.3.3. includes a concrete suggestion for different behaviour. The two are fundamentally different: the former gives the Receiver room to draw his own conclusions and make his own decisions, and to autonomously decide how to act, the latter much less so.

You will also have recognized that, with this definition, feedback will often be a gateway to a constructive subsequent conversation. In this regard, feedback can be a powerful starting point of a constructive and empowering dialogue held at eye level.

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5. “Giving and Receiving Feedback”, p.43.
2.4. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEEDBACK- AND AN (EXPERT) OPINION

Feedback specifically deals with another person’s behaviour. Any observation on the quality of someone’s work output, circumstances, materials etc. are what we will refer to hereafter as an (expert) opinion.

Examples:
- ‘Damien, you used a yellow marker for the presentation. I recommend using a blue one, because the text was not visible from the back of the room’.
- ‘Ronald, your speech was good, but it might have made more sense to take the questions you asked in the beginning and add them at the end’.
- ‘Courtney, considering the time, it might be wise to shorten this teambuilding game’.
- ‘Andris, your presentation overview slides are not numbered. Please number them in future, it makes it easier to keep track on the printout’.

Please be aware that this is not the definition found in most textbooks on the subject. Most often, you will find attempts to define feedback in an all-encompassing way, using the scripts on a variety of different situations, including human-to-machine interaction.

Here, we use a narrower, more focused definition, allowing a deeper view into the mechanics and ramifications of feedback. However, as you can see, the line between a description of behaviour and an observation on work, circumstances and materials can seem quite fuzzy. After all, all the examples describe some form of behaviour, even if their thrust is in a slightly different direction.

The easiest distinction and a rule-of-thumb test is therefore whether the observed behaviour evokes an emotional response. The examples above are technical in nature – a normal observer would not respond emotionally to e.g. the use of a certain type of pen. Without an emotional response, the comment the Giver passes on to the Receiver will be considered as an expert opinion and not as feedback.

Feedback requires an observation on a behaviour and an emotional response to this observation behaviour from the Giver.
The scripts provided for feedback are most necessary in contexts in which there is a higher chance of the Receiver considering the message a comment concerning his personality. Here, the scripts restrict the danger of such a reaction.

In more ‘sterile’ or professional contexts, i.e. when the message is clearly limited in scope to the situation at hand, is more technical in nature or pointedly impersonal, the feedback script may still be useful, but is not as crucial as in more volatile, personal or emotional situations.

2.5. THE POWER OF FEEDBACK – JOHARI’S WINDOW

Feedback is an incredibly powerful tool.

To describe the effects of continuous, well-formulated and insightful feedback, we would like to present you with a basic interpersonal relationship model: Johari’s Window⁶.

It is a model developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (hence: “Joe”, “Harry” – Johari) in the 1950s and is often used as a tool to chart interpersonal relationships.

The four sections of the ‘window’ describe four sections of any relationship based on the simple distinction of ‘known / unknown’ and ‘self / others’.

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What is feedback?

The Arena (Open):
This quadrant represents the things I know about myself, and at the same time are known to others – all openly available and observable factual information, character traits, mannerisms and behaviours. In the beginning of any interaction or relationship, this window is rather small, as there has not yet been enough time for a significant exchange of information. Later, with more shared experiences, this space grows.

In this space, it is easiest to interact with others, as reactions can be foreseen, behaviour is understood etc.

The Façade (Hidden):
This quadrant represents things I know about myself, but that others are unaware of, such as personal motivations, values etc..

Many misunderstandings occur when two people speak about issues that are hidden behind the Façade, as these underlying themes cannot be taken into consideration. The more two people interact, the more information moves from this quadrant to the Arena through self-disclosure, so that feelings, motivations and values may well become part of the Arena.

The Blind Spot:
This quadrant represents what others know about me, but I am unaware of. This often includes: (i) the impression I make on others, (ii) the reactions my behaviour provokes or (iii) my unconscious reactions to certain situations and stimuli etc.

Blind Spots are the space where gaps between self-perception and external perception occur. When I evoke unexpected reactions, these are either due to others’ Façades or my own Blind Spot. Once I am aware of other’s perception regarding my behaviour, this knowledge becomes part of my Arena.

The Unknown (The Unconscious):
This quadrant represents the things neither I nor others know about myself. More can be found out about the contents of this quadrant (and thus be dragged into the Blind Spot, the Façade or the Arena) by experiencing or putting myself in situations I have never been in before.

Examples may include:
- my reactions to crisis situations;
- my behaviour as a leader (if I have not yet taken on that role);
- my reactions to serious personal provocations;
- my response to rejection.

7. Please do not wilfully place yourself in crisis situations merely to decrease your Johari Unknown!
It is easy to see that, to enlarge the Arena between two people, it is necessary to move information from the Façade or the Blind Spot. This is where feedback links to Johari’ Window.

By giving feedback, you are reducing the Blind Spot of the Receiver, helping him become aware of the impact his behaviour has on others (in this case: you), and that he may, in future, wish to actively watch for cues to similar reactions in other people.

‘Adriana, when you spoke in your calm voice, you make a very confident impression on me.’

In giving feedback, you are also reducing your own Façade, by implicitly also sharing something about yourself while feedbacking the Receiver on his behaviour that others may previously not have known⁸.

‘Ciarán, when you weren’t back on time after the coffee break – that made me nervous, because I am very conscious of our time pressure right now.’

In this sense, feedback serves a two-fold purpose. Not only does it help to clarify concrete past behaviour and others’ reactions to it, but it also discloses the Giver’s preferences and values.

Regular two-way feedback will automatically lead to a significant growth of the Arena between two people, making future interaction easier, more open and more fruitful.

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⁸. As Schulz von Thun pointed out, ‘You cannot not communicate’.
Chapter 3: Feedback Mentality

The aim of feedback is to help someone grow, self-develop or become more self-aware. This has important ramifications regarding the mentality and spirit corresponding to good feedback.

In an ideal world, the Giver, wishing to support the Receiver, makes caring, supportive remarks in a safe, calm atmosphere, and the Receiver, knowing and trusting the Giver, accepts these with grace.
In fact, both Giver and Receiver have a responsibility to this ideal.

As a Giver, check yourself before giving feedback. What is your personal intention for giving the Receiver a message? Should you wish to

- Strengthen your authority? (Example: ‘I have been in the organisation for a long time and I can tell you now: that idea is not going to work!’; ‘Excellent idea! I thought of that in 2013, too!’)

- Vent your anger: (Example: ‘Don’t even think about trying that again!’)

Or if your motivation is in any other way generally focused on yourself, you may wish to rethink using the vehicle of feedback.

If, however, your intentions are focused on the Receiver, through support, warnings or constructive criticism, with the aim of helping someone grow, develop or become more self-aware – then you are on the right track.

Give feedback to the Receiver, for the Receiver!

Feedback requires an observation on a behaviour and an emotional response to this observation behaviour from the Giver.
3.1. THE VALUE OF ‘SUPPORTING’ FEEDBACK

With the mentality described above, you can already see that feedback is far more than criticism and remarks on how to improve, but is – possibly even in the majority of cases! Feedback is also meant as a tool for encouragement and support.

Many people have Blind Spots right above their strengths. They do not realize what it is they are especially good at. This is perfectly natural.

Example:

_When learning a language, you start knowing you know nothing. Your expectations towards yourself, and your progress, are dictated by the knowledge that you have much to learn. Native speakers slow down and use simple language to communicate with you._

_Once you improve, however, your frame of reference for how much you know and are capable of shifts. You may be confident or fluent in a language - suddenly, native speakers no longer slow down for you and begin using more complicated sentences. Your lack of understanding of the ‘flavours’ and hidden meanings in expressions and sentences become however painfully obvious. It is easy to lose sight of how far you have progressed – you may still consider yourself a beginner, even though you are practically fluent._

Of course, with skills such as language, there is a reference framework of other people around you, who do not possess these skills. It is comparatively easy to recognize that you are much better at a language when you speak it fluently than someone who only knows a few expressions.

This may be different in the case of social skills. Being a good storyteller, a good motivator, a good leader, a good listener, a caring supporter, a respectful challenger, a good team player – as we all share these ‘skills’ to a certain extent, the frame of reference is sometimes less easy to grasp, and the expectations towards oneself rise with one’s own level of skill.

Pointing out to people their strengths is therefore far from pointless. On the contrary, these messages are often the most powerful, as the Giver can thus provide the Receiver the self-confidence to pursue their strengths further.

Often, ‘supporting’ feedback is considered ‘less constructive’ than ‘requesting’ feedback, because it does not help the Receiver identify the areas he could work on or further develop in. Knowing one’s strengths however is equally important, as it allows the Receiver to focus his energy on areas that do need improvement9.

9. Additional thoughts and cautions on supporting feedback can be found in ‘Giving and Receiving Feedback’, Section 7, p. 81.
Chapter 4: The Three Dimensions of Feedback

There are three dimensions to feedback. Feedback can not only be given and received, it can also be asked for. In the following, we will take an in-depth look at the scripts and rules you can use to increase the effectiveness and empathy of your feedback.

4.2. RECEIVING FEEDBACK

When receiving feedback, there are essentially only two rules you need to take into consideration: ‘Openness’ and ‘Clarifying Questions’. The underlying mentality to this is respect – Respect for the effort of the Giver, but also respect for yourself.

Receiving Feedback: Openness -- Clarifying Questions -- Respect

The receiving role is not simply a passive one – the Receiver need not accept everything that is handed to him. It is therefore also his responsibility to actively make the most out of the feedback he is given.

4.2.1. Respect

When receiving feedback, we often forget that giving it also requires a fair share of effort and courage. The Giver is passing on to you a personal observation, thus opening himself to your rejection.

Even if the Giver’s feedbacking skills are sub-par, making this effort deserves, if nothing else, the respect of the Receiver. Respecting the effort of the Giver implies giving that person the opportunity to bring their message across without undue interruption. Expressing this respect comes on two levels: Openness and Clarifying Questions.

‘Respect’ can also be seen as the respect for oneself. This implies striving to make oneself grow, and in this sense, actively engaging in the feedback process.

There are feedback ‘gifts’ that you, as a Receiver, may choose to ignore or reject. This is your sovereign choice, respecting your own wishes and needs. If you choose to do so, it pays to keep the analogy of rejecting a gift in mind. What would you do if you received a gift you did not want? You may choose to accept it with grace, and simply place it in the shelf, or place it back in its wrapping paper and put it in the cellar. You would probably not throw it away in front of the gift giver.
4.2.2. Openness

The most natural reaction to comments on one’s own behaviour is the building of emotional defences: denial, disagreement, rationalization and justifications. Even ‘supporting’ feedback can cause this reaction.

‘(...) a good part of our self-image is based on how others view us. When we find that someone sees us in a less-than-positive light, we may feel devastated. (...) feedback implies that we could be wrong. What could be more personal and threatening?’

We are also culturally biased to mistrust personal comments – searching for the underlying criticism in every praise, to the point that, for some, accepting praise is a real challenge.

It is prudent to exercise caution and to weigh the Giver’s words carefully – but in order to truly accept a message, it is important to resist the urge to build these defences, especially through justifications such as ‘Yes, but...’ etc.

‘Openness’, therefore, means listening attentively, it means resisting the urge to justify – inwardly, or expressly. It does not mean being defenceless! Personal attacks, negatively motivated comments etc. can be dismissed actively or passively, at your leisure.

If you have difficulties with ‘calming’ yourself to the point of being open, this analogy may help:

Imagine you are a city, and the feedback message is a cart waiting outside the city gates. It may be a cart full of gold – chances are favourable that it will be filled at least with silver!

If you feel you cannot open the gate to let the cart through, let the cart wait outside for a while. Have a sleep over it. But make sure you do take a look at the cart in the morning and decide actively whether you will let it in and have a closer look or not!

4.2.2.1. Listening attentively / active listening

Active listening implies openness to the message and encouragement through body language to the person you are listening to continue his message.

While listening to someone, we tend to automatically start thinking of our response. This distracts us from actively listening – we listen to reply, rather than listening to understand.

10. ‘Giving and Receiving Feedback’, p. 3.
11. Both expressions can be used synonymously. A distinction could be: active listening is the outward appearance you give to the person you are listening to: showing them your interest, your body language, such as eye contact, and your attentive questions. Listening attentively is the ‘internal’ counterpart – seeking to understand the messages you are being given, and deciding on which points you wish to focus on.
12. For more on active listening, see for example S. Covey, Seven habits of highly effective people, Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
Countless scientific studies have shown that our emotions and mind-set dictate our body language, and vice versa – it is difficult to disconnect our internal state with external body language cues. Consciously adapting your body language also helps adapt your state of mind. An open, attentive body posture can therefore also positively influence your own receptiveness.

At the same time, an open, attentive posture supports the Giver, giving them confidence to pass on their message.

4.1.1.2 Resisting the urge to justify oneself
Anything we do, any behaviour we exhibit, we do for a reason. We have control over these reasons and the action we take based on them. What we have no control over, however, are the reactions of others to our behaviour.

These reactions are what feedback allows people to express. Listening to and actively being aware of their reactions to your behaviour can give you valuable insights into the gap between the way you perceive yourself and other’s view on you.

Especially when receiving ‘requesting’ feedback, the main challenge for the Receiver is to distinguish between the Giver’s intentions and the impact that the Receiver’s behaviour actually had. Unintended consequences (Blind Spots) are the main causes for discrepancies between the assessments of situations. It pays when listening to feedback to ‘switch off’ one’s own expectations and prior intentions. These are the main drivers for a need to justify one’s own actions after the fact. These are, however, irrelevant when it comes to the actual past impact of your behaviour.

4.2.3. Clarifying questions
By asking clarifying questions you are supporting the Giver in getting across his message. Should any part of the feedback be unclear or omitted, clarifying questions allow the Giver to rectify this.

Examples:
Feedback: ‘You make me feel comfortable’.
Clarifying Question: ‘When did I make you feel comfortable? What did I do to make you feel comfortable?’

Feedback: ‘You often ignore me’.
Clarifying Questions: ‘Can you give me an example of when this happened? What was it exactly that I did that gave you that impression?’

Feedback: ‘I think you can do better.’
Clarifying Question: ‘What can I do better at?’
It becomes evident that clarifying questions are asked with the mind-set of giving the Giver the opportunity to make his feedback more precise.

Clarifying questions should not be misused to deliver a statement, an opinion or a hidden justification – in other words, clarifying questions should not be used to circumvent the other ‘rules’ of receiving.

Examples of ‘circumventing’ questions:
‘Don’t you think that what I did was the right thing to do?’
‘Can’t you see that what I really intended was…?’
‘Don’t you think that you are the only one who saw things that way?’

As you can see, these questions don’t help clarify the Giver’s message at all, but in fact obfuscate. These types of questions are not clarifying questions.

4.2.4 Dealing with bad feedback
At times you will receive feedback that is, simply put, bad. No amount of clarifying questions will get you to a helpful result. Be wary, though, if you have this impression to ensure it is not a self-defence mechanism to facilitate you blocking a message you don’t like.

Nevertheless, for those rare occasions, here some suggestions\(^{13}\):

- Take whatever was said as something regarding your work / performance / behaviour. Not as something regarding you as a person;
- See if there is any (other) value in the feedback you received;
- Whatever rules the other person is breaking, they still apply to you.

This last point is especially important. If someone is making an effort, even if they are not adhering to your personal set of rules or values, that effort is worthy of respect.

‘Criticism is something we can avoid by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing.’
- Aristotle

\(^{13}\) Taken from ‘Feedback. The Creativity Killer’ by Francisco Inchauste (2009).
4.2.5 Summary
How to deal with feedback is entirely your choice. The evaluation of the feedback you receive – its accuracy, value and importance – are in your hands. Regardless of your reaction, of whether you agree or disagree with the messages you are given, or even if you question the motives of the Giver, it pays to abide by the guidelines set out here\textsuperscript{14}.

4.3. GIVING FEEDBACK
The central part of any feedback interaction is the act of giving feedback.

Find the right moment, the right words, the right atmosphere, and you have the opportunity to create unique, potentially life-changing moments!

At the same time, be aware that ‘small’ observations are often that most useful and that feedback should not only be given when there are life-changing observations to be communicated! Also, no Giver should delude themselves that their feedback will always automatically be especially relevant or insightful – it is up to the Receiver to decide how much weight he gives to the Giver’s message.

There are a variety of different scripts that describe feedback. All of them have essentially the same basic aim and objectives. Their main differences lie in the understanding of what feedback actually is (see Chapter 2.3). Here, we would like to present you with a usable, well-known script\textsuperscript{15}: SBI.

4.3.1. SBI (Situation – Behaviour – Impact)
S – B – I\textsuperscript{16} (Situation, Behaviour, Impact) is a simple, powerful script that, when used correctly, ensures that (i) the Giver formulates his message clearly, concisely and comprehensibly and that (ii) the Receiver has no cause or opening to disagree with the message given.

In short, as the Giver, you are asked to:

4.3.1.1. Describe the Situation
Describe the situation in which the behaviour occurred in such a way that the Receiver can picture it in their mind’s eye.

\textsuperscript{14} Further recommended reading: CCL publication, ‘Ongoing Feedback – How to get it, how to use it’ by Karen Kirkland and Sam Manoogian, pg. 16. (from now quoted as CCL “Ongoing Feedback”).

\textsuperscript{15} Another well-known script can be found in Non-Violent Communication (Observation – Feelings – Needs – Request). Used as the author intended, the script is a powerful and affirming tool. However, the NVC concept has numerous critics, as the script can also easily be used in a ‘violent’ way. For further reading: ‘Nonviolent Communication’ by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Puddledancer Press, 2015 hereafter (Rosenberg, Nonviolent Communication). Another script is DSAR, described in ‘Giving and Receiving Feedback’: Describe-Acknowledge-Specify-Reaffirm. It is closely linked to the above.
Examples:

‘Yesterday, during the break, while we were talking by the coffee table…’
‘After lunch, when we came back, you may remember, you were sitting at the corner of the table, I was at the front…’

A ‘perfect’ situation description is concise enough to not be worthy of further note or discussion, sets the scene, and is so clear and unambiguous that the Receiver has no need to comment.

4.3.1.2. Describe the Behaviour (of the Receiver)
Describe the behaviour in such a way that the Receiver can picture it in their mind’s eye. Describe it objectively, without inserting any personal interpretation of the intentions or reasons for the Giver’s behaviour. This is a major pitfall, as we are used to including ‘softeners’ (‘a little bit’, ‘somewhat’ etc.) and other evaluatory adjectives (‘totally’, ‘amazingly’, ‘absolutely’) in our descriptions.

N.B.: Feedback is not the same as storytelling. It is not your task to tell an absorbing story, but to describe a situation in such a way as to evoke as little emotional response as possible.

Examples:

‘You turned your back.’ or ‘You didn’t talk to me.’ vs. ‘You ignored me’
‘You arrived at 10:30.’ vs. ‘You were late.’

Your description should be concise and without personal interpretations or evaluator language.

4.3.1.3. Describe the Impact that the behaviour had on you
What feelings did the behaviour evoke in you? How did you react to the behaviour you described?

Examples:

‘I felt uncomfortable.’
‘I was (positively/negatively) surprised.’

It pays to elaborate a little, here, explaining what exactly evoked your response, and clearly linking situation and behaviour to the impact it had on you.


17. Should you be aware of the PEMS model, and consider yourself to have more of an ‘M’ (= ‘mental’) preference in contrast to an ‘E’ (= ‘emotional’) one, you may wish to replace ‘feelings’ with ‘thoughts’. Be aware, though, that there will always be a feeling underlying your mental (thought) response. This feeling is the motivation for you to give feedback in the first place.
4.3.1.4. Optional: Request
Depending on your interpretation of the script, and whether the situation calls for it, you may wish to end your feedback with a request.

Example:
‘I would appreciate it if you …’

However, be aware that, according to the script presented here, the Giver can be invited by the Receiver to give suggestions for the future, but this decision should, in general, remain the Receiver’s. Other scripts (see previous Chapter), suggest a different approach. The underlying mentality of autonomy and respect, we believe, suggests you be careful forcing suggestions that work perfectly for you on the Receiver – they may not be the best suggestions for him in that specific moment.

Example:
‘Dimitris, when you use your phone during Committee Work, this is very distracting to me. Please only use your phone during breaks.’

Let us assume that Dimitris has serious family issues at home, of which the Giver was not aware. Immediately, other, much more sensible suggestions present themselves – Dimitris can make the decision on how to react (leave the room; continue texting in CW, as it is important for him to take part as much as possible – but possibly make the group aware of his situation etc.).

4.3.2. Mistakes to be avoided
The Giver has the power and the responsibility to ensure that his message has the highest possible chance of arriving unabridged, unchanged and correctly interpreted. Scripts such as the one described above ensure, when used correctly, that the chances of understanding are greatly enhanced.

There are a number of pitfalls inexperienced Givers can fall into, mainly from the understandable fear of causing pain or the wish to seem compassionate or likeable. A well-minded Receiver can help with clarifying questions – (good) feedback, however, should not require clarifying questions to be effective.

When Givers make mistakes, the Receiver’s respect is put to the test. Almost all feedback can be saved by a respectful Receiver’s benevolent, active support!

In the following, we would like to present a variety of such pitfalls and describe their inherent dangers. As you will see, the Receiver can, through use of clarifying questions, lead the Giver back to the original script and getting the feedback communication train back on track.

18. This is why feedback tends to be less effective when individuals or groups are still in the ‘Inclusion’ phase (FIRo).

4.3.2.1. Generalizations

**Example:** 'You are never there for me!'

**Possible root cause:** Laziness. Generalizations are almost never correct, and are therefore an immediate breeding ground for the Receiver’s defences. A Giver who feedbacks with generalizations is either too lazy to give a concrete situational description or example, does not have concrete examples to give or – worse, tries to overestimate his point and make it harmful.

In fact, this mistake is easily avoidable if the SBI-script is used, as a concrete situation that justifies a generalized complaint is hard to imagine.

**Consequences:** Generalizations make it difficult for the Receiver to observe the ‘Openness’ rule and forces clarifying questions. The chances the Receiver will assume a defensive, justificatory stance are greatly heightened. By generalizing, the Giver turns the description of a certain behaviour in a specific situation into the description of a personality trait – which is to be avoided at all costs. Overall, the Giver’s intended message will not get across, the aim of feedback will be far from achieved and the relations between the two parties most likely affected.

**Helpful Receiver reactions:** Can you give me some concrete examples of when this happened?

4.3.2.2. Talking about Personality

**Example:** ‘You are so arrogant / supportive / inspiring.’

**Possible root cause:** Inexperience. It is very easy to fall into this ‘trap’ if one is not careful about the exact wording one uses. This mistake is often made in lieu of describing concrete behaviour or impact.

**Consequence:** The Receiver cannot simply change his personality. Behaviour is (more) easily adaptable however. Feedbacking another individual on their personality is therefore by necessity futile. Also, comments on personality are speculative, as the Giver usually does not have such an insight into the Receiver as to be able to make valid assumptions about the core of the Receiver’s being. Therefore, comments on personality are seldom considered helpful, whether they are negative or positive. In addition, the former can be hurtful to the Receiver.

The Receiver is again forced to ask clarifying questions (e.g. ‘What did I do to give you this impression?’) which almost always impedes the flow of the message.

**Helpful Receiver reactions:** What did I do to make you feel this way?

20. The only things we always do are breathing, sweating, and having a heartbeat.
21. ‘Giving and Receiving Feedback’ gives us a good technique for dealing with generalizations with ‘Fogging’ on p. 26ff: ‘Calm acknowledgement of the possibility that there may be some truth in the critical feedback’ - this gives the Receiver the choice of what to accept and what not to.
4.3.2.3. Speaking for others

Example: ‘… and others see this exactly the same way.’ / ‘Everybody thought…’

Possible root cause: Insecurity. The Giver is not secure enough to talk to the Receiver on the basis of his own observations, but needs to include the observations of others to give more weight to his feelings.

Consequence: The Giver gives the impression of claiming to know what others think and feel. However, it is impossible for the Giver to really speak for others, even if others gave the Giver very concrete comments. This can only illicit a negative or disbelieving response from the Receiver, as it contributes to making him feel cornered or overwhelmed. This also due to the fact that it is easier to adapt one’s behaviour towards one person, but it can feel very challenging to have to do that as regards a group of individuals.

Helpful Receiver reactions: How did you experience that situation?

4.3.2.4. Talking about behaviour the Giver did not personally experience

Example: ‘I wasn’t there, but someone told me that you …’

Possible root cause: (possibly well-intentioned) Meddling. The Giver hears a grievance from a third person and wishes to be supportive / to solve the problem / to take control of the situation.

Consequence: Feedback becomes porous. The scripts mentioned above cannot be kept, as the Giver is not even able to describe the situation with any great detail. The behaviour cannot be described properly, and to increase the impact, one’s own feelings need to be substituted for someone else’s (see above).

More often than not, the Giver was given a skewed description by the third party, both of the situation, the behaviour and the impact.

Helpful Receiver reactions: There isn’t really a helpful reaction here, as neither the situation nor the behaviour can be adequately described. One possibility to salvage the situation may be: ‘Have you personally experienced the behaviour you are describing in a different situation? What was your impression, then?: If anything, having been informed of your behaviour having had an impact upon a third person, it might be interesting to approach the respective individual to request for his feedback.

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21. ‘Giving and Receiving Feedback’ gives us a good technique for dealing with generalizations with ‘Fogging’ on p. 26ff: ‘Calm acknowledgement of the possibility that there may be some truth in the critical feedback’ - this gives the Receiver the choice of what to accept and what not to.
4.3.2.5. Inventing excuses for the Receiver

**Example:** ‘I understand where you are coming from, and I would have done the same. (But…)’

**Possible root cause:** Pandering or aversion to/desire to minimise potential conflict. The Giver’s need to ‘be friends’ with the Receiver is such that he needs to be on the Receiver’s ‘good side’ at all times.

Defending the Receiver can mean a number of things, amongst others:
Either the Giver had no emotional reaction to the described situation (as they already understood the Receiver’s motives and could empathize) or the situation did not warrant any further comment (as the behaviour was completely understandable and relatable).

**Consequence:** In either case, the message is watered down and the Receiver is confused. The excuses may even contradict what a well-meaning Receiver is trying to take from the message. The Receiver’s defences are ‘ready-made’ for him by the Giver, thus negating any potential effect.

**Helpful Receiver reactions:** Thank you, but let’s not get into potential excuses, tell me how you felt.

4.3.2.6. Delaying feedback

**Example:** ‘Two weeks ago,…’

**Possible root causes:** Procrastination or fear. The Giver is not comfortable with discussing the issue ‘on time’. Best case, there was no suitable situation in which the feedback could be given.

**Consequence:** The Receiver (or the Giver) may not be able to clearly remember the situation or the behaviour in question. The counter-question is almost inevitable: ‘Why did you not tell me that straight away?’ (Although this question is neither helpful, nor a clarifying question!). Situations have a ‘half-life’, generally up until the point that both the Giver and the Receiver can reasonably be assumed to remember the details of the situation – after this, the situation is ‘lost’ as a basis for feedback.

**Helpful Receiver reactions:** Can you help me remember the situation (better)? Have there been other instances of this behaviour since then?

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22. This is especially easy to see in cases of ‘supporting’ feedback: ‘I thought it was awesome that you helped the homeless guy on the bus. Of course, your religious beliefs require you to help the needy, so...’
343.3 Dealing with ‘difficult’ Receivers

Your Receiver may not react in the way you had hoped, i.e. by becoming defensive, justifying his actions, accusing you or changing the subject.

It is up to you whether you want to press the subject or not, possibly with an adapted approach – but know the limits! If someone is not willing to accept your well-intentioned feedback, there is a point after which further effort on your part is counterproductive/useless.
You may wish to change your tone (‘I expect you to...’ – parental tone), but be aware that this no longer fits the definition of feedback. You are then in a different type of interaction.

4.3.4. Balancing ‘supporting’ and ‘requesting’ feedback

There are many schools of thought regarding the ‘framing’ of requesting feedback.

Some suggest the ‘sandwich model’: ‘supporting’ – ‘requesting’ – ‘supporting’ feedback. Forcing you to think of two ‘supporting’ pieces of feedback before you can articulate one ‘requesting’ piece is actually a great way to ensure a mind-set of respect and an ethical use of feedback, and we encourage you, before giving ‘requesting’ feedback, to take a minute to think of something ‘supporting’ to say to your Receiver. If you cannot find anything, then you may want to look you’re your own motivation before delivering your feedback.

Nevertheless, a rigid rule like the sandwich model has two disruptive side-effects:
- Your supportive comments become shallow, as you are merely trying to find something supportive to say so as to be ‘allowed’ to make your request.
- After having been ‘sandwiched’ regularly, the Receiver, hearing a piece of supporting feedback, automatically sets up defences, in expectation of the requesting feedback. Even if your supportive comments could have been meaningful and helpful, there is a danger they will be overheard.

In general, it pays simply to give feedback when feedback is due, be it ‘supporting’ or ‘requesting’. This can happen in normal conversations without any framework or setting.

At the same time it pays to avoid giving feedback ‘in the heat of the moment’. Take the time to think it through calmly.

23. Should you have nothing positive to say about someone, this may be an indication that you are negatively emotionally biased towards them – your feedback may therefore be tainted in the same way, and you may find it more difficult to adhere to the suggested mentality of respect.
24. See also ‘Giving and Receiving Feedback’, p. 48. CCL ‘Feedback that Works’, p. 11, even lists it as one of their 10 Feedback Mistakes.
4.4. ASKING FOR FEEDBACK

One of the most underrated tools for your own personal development is asking for feedback.

Asking for feedback can be a powerful learning tool – if used properly. It gives the Receiver in spe the opportunity to ‘steer’ the Giver and to take an even more active role, choosing what to ask about and, more importantly, who to ask for feedback.

It pays to be concrete in your request: questions such as ‘Would you give me feedback?’ or ‘Let’s feedback each other!’ usually don’t allow for the full feedback potential to be achieved. Asking the potential Giver to comment on general issues is confusing, the feedback will be less deep and meaningful and, in the course of time, the goodwill of the Giver will be used up if your questions are continuously unspecified.

In the following, we have listed a number of questions you can ask yourself to prepare powerful, helpful feedback requests.

4.4.1. Knowing what to ask

The most important aspect of asking for feedback is knowing beforehand what to ask about. What behaviour do I wish to have feedback on? Do I wish to have feedback on my punctuality, my reactions to critical situations, my presentation presence? No general request for feedback, but a clear, focused question. The more exactly you know what you wish to know about, the more precisely your question can be phrased.

This, of course, bears the risk of the Giver paying selective attention to certain behaviour. It therefore pays to remember two additional guidelines:

- give as few hints to previous feedback as possible (refrain from e.g. ‘In the past, people have mentioned that I…’);
- phrase the question openly and give room for additional insights (‘Please tell me about …, but if you have any additional thoughts, I’d love to hear them.’).

25. A more detailed list and explanation of what characteristics you may want to consider in the person you are asking for feedback (who), when to ask and how to ask for it, can be found in the CCL publication ‘Ongoing Feedback – How to get it, how to use it’ by Karen Kirkland and Sam Manoogian, 1998, ISBN 1-882197-36-4, p. 7ff.
4.4.2. Knowing *when* to ask

To get the most out of the feedback you wish to receive, the best time to ask for feedback is before the situation in question.

Examples:
- If you wish to know about your stage presence during a presentation, ask before the presentation begins.
- If you wish to learn about your debriefing technique, ask before the debriefing session begins.

In this way, the Giver can pay attention to relevant behavioural cues and can consciously perceive and remember his own reaction.

4.4.3. Knowing *who* to ask

There are four simple guidelines to deciding on who to ask (in order of importance):

- someone who actually had the opportunity to perceive my behaviour;
- someone I respect and who I believe will give me their honest opinion;
- someone who has experience or knowledge in the field I am asking about;
- someone who, if possible, has a different approach to me, and can therefore give a different, new perspective.

Of course, someone without experience in public speaking could still provide useful comments on your presentation, your behaviour will still impact them. Here, it is up to your common sense to keep in mind the skill level necessary for valuable feedback. The last point – different approach – is also more a suggestion. Asking close friends or collaborators often leads to getting the answers you expected.

A person with a different approach may surprise you, and you will get more from the requested feedback. It can be tricky at times to find someone with a different approach whose opinion you would truly value and not dismiss simply as based on this difference – be aware of the fact that you may hold someone in less esteem than they deserve simply for this reason. The people who baffle you are sometimes the ones who can give you the most valuable insights.
4.4.4. *How to ask*

The rules for asking for feedback are exactly the same as those for giving it. Situation – Behaviour – Impact.

Example:

‘Tomorrow in the course of the day, could you watch my reactions to the group we are leading and give me your impressions afterward?’

Make sure you commit yourself to a space and time shortly after the situation you wish to be feedbacked on to reap the fruits of your asking.

“When asking for feedback, ask beforehand and think about what to ask, who to ask and how to ask!”
Chapter 5: Ethical use of Feedback

As you can see from this manual, feedback can be used to support other people’s growth, but there is a flipside to the coin. Snide comments disguised as feedback can be incredibly hurtful, a damning judgement of another’s personality.

As a feedback Giver, it is not your task to impress the Receiver with your insights; it is your responsibility and privilege to support him in his development.

Approaching feedback with the mind-set of respect, care and support ensures that you do not stray from the path. This is especially important in hierarchical situations in which the Receiver perceives you as ‘above’ him or in possession of deeper knowledge, such as the relationship between participants and officials in EYP events.

Also, not every situation requires feedback as a response. Use feedback prudently, and don’t try the Receiver’s patience with inconsequential comments.

Ethical use of feedback therefore means ensuring that:

- your mind-set is constructive; you are not attempting to impose your world view on others;
- the atmosphere of the feedback conversation is safe;
- your comments are directed to behaviour and not personality;
- your message has come across correctly and has not been misunderstood.

And now: enjoy!
Chapter 6: Training on Feedback

6.1. INTRODUCTION

So you are intending on doing a feedback module as a trainer? First of all, let us congratulate you on becoming a trainer! It’s awesome, isn’t it? Good luck – and good preparation! – with all your future training experiences.

Before suggesting potential modules and approaches, please be reminded of the place and value of feedback in training courses in general.

Even if you do not have a module explicitly on feedback in your curriculum, you will be making extensive use of this tool throughout your training course. The feedback you receive at the end of the training day, the (often involuntary) feedback you receive from the participants throughout the day, and, especially, the feedback you give to participants are an integral part of any training course.

As trainer (or chair), you are – whether you like it or not – an authority figure to your participants. This means that you should take special care when giving feedback. Doubly recheck your motives and mind-set. Doubly ensure your underlying ethics. Think carefully about how you wish to make your point. The words you say, the way you say it, the feeling you convey, weigh more than in other situations.

As a trainer, you have a huge opportunity to help your participants grow. At the same time, you have an even more grave responsibility not to hurt your participants’ own development (and their feelings).

6.2. TRAINING FEEDBACK

This contents of this entire guide follows the training logic, starting with a definition of feedback, moving to mentality or mind-set and then focusing on the practical aspects. We close, as we should always do in training, with words of caution, here on the ethical use of feedback, and encouragement, to practice and experience. It is based on a training course with a group size of around 10 to 20 people.
Here, we would like to present some practical suggestions for modules to train feedback. The suggestions here assume that you have about 1 ½ days of training dedicated solely to this topic. If you have less time, or only a short time slot, this overview may still prove useful as a source of ideas.

Please note that the methods suggested herein are mere examples the appropriateness of which will vary depending of the group at hand, their needs and the objectives of the specific module.

### 6.2.1. Module 1: Defining Feedback

A participative beginning to your feedback training might look like this:

1. What is feedback to you? Individual time for reflection (5 min), come up with your personal definition. For a more advanced group and an additional challenge, you can also push it to asking them to choose an object in the room that represents feedback to them.

2. Split into 3 groups – each group has 10 min to pool their definitions and find common agreement on what feedback is (not necessarily a sentence-definition, but common traits of your definitions).

3. Presentation of results (10 min).

4. Come to common understanding (Discussion including the Trainer) + Explanation (5 min).

Instead of simply presenting a result, this method fosters discussion amongst the participants and ensures that, overall there will usually be a general consensus on what feedback is. It is usually easy to pick out the relevant aspects you wish to focus on in your definition (see Chapter 2). The main point of note, here, is the ‘direction’ of the definition, the purpose of feedback – less focused on the ‘mechanical’ message, more on the overall aim of the message. Depending on the group, it might be useful to insist on what is not feedback.

### 6.2.2. Module 2. Feedback Mentality

Overall, your aim is to instil in your participants a deep understanding that, to reach it’s intended aim, feedback needs to be given (and received) with a certain mentality (see Chapter 3). Simply stating this as fact usually leads to a shrugging of shoulders and “yeah, that’s obvious” responses, but it pays for participants to seriously reflect whether they are capable or have at least made the effort of checking with themselves before giving feedback to someone else.
6.2.2.1. Option 1: Brainstorming
The first approach sees us brainstorming situations in which you give feedback, and then grouping these situations according to the intended goal of the Giver (at this stage, you can still have 'bad' goals included). Afterward, have the group discuss the different situation / goal groups with the aim of establishing which situations are conducive to good feedback and which are not.

At the end of the discussion, ask the question: **who is responsible for reaching this (good / positive) goal?**

The answer: the Giver.

6.2.2.2. Option 2: Card Pairing Exercise
Instead of having an open discussion, present the group with cards corresponding to different “motivations” and “desired effects” such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Effect (What I want to achieve) &quot;I want to...&quot;</th>
<th>Motivation (Inner Motivation) &quot;I feel...&quot;, &quot;I want to feel...&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have others learn from past situations</td>
<td>As a mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce</td>
<td>Like a guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid conflict</td>
<td>Like a peace-keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build trust</td>
<td>Like a safety net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>Spiteful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be confirmed</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be given attention</td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impose my authority</td>
<td>Insecure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show off</td>
<td>Superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulate</td>
<td>The need for control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice my concern</td>
<td>Like a 'doctor'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce</td>
<td>Like a pillar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivate</td>
<td>Supportive / like a fan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show affection</td>
<td>I want to be included</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have the group pair up the respective cards and discuss which are conducive and which are not conducive to good feedback. There will be ‘grey zone’ cards, these are the ones that are interesting to discuss. Feel free to add or change the card pairings presented above.
6.2.2.3. Exercise (Non-Violent Communication)

A powerful exercise for this comes straight from Marshall Rosenberg’s ‘Non-Violent Communication’:\n
- Divide the groups into pairs, standing in two rows facing each other. The description of the exercise is as follows:

- ‘You will each be taking on a role for a very short role play. We will do the exercise twice, each role play will last two minutes, I will be timing you. The first time, I want both sides to be defensive and try to get your own way. The second time, I want both sides to try and understand what is going on’\n
- Group 1: you are a single mom/dad and your small child is sick. It is late in the evening and the child needs to sleep to get well, but the neighbours upstairs are making a lot of noise, loud music, laughing, plates banging etc. You decide to go upstairs to confront them.

- Group 2: you are a member of a Muslim family celebrating the end of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr), your family has come together to celebrate, something that rarely happens, and you are having a great time. There is a knock at the door.

- Go!’

It should be noted that this exercise is heavily biased – by starting with the ‘aggressive’ stance, you are not only giving the chance for participants to exaggerate and overdramatize their play-act, but also preparing them for a ‘better’ experience the second time.

Nevertheless, the results can often be quite powerful. In debriefings after this exercise, we have encountered pairs that had physically felt the anger and rage boiling up in them in the first exercise, racial slurs and threats of police and deportation being thrown around the room even before the first minute was over. In fact, I once had to stop the exercise after 90 seconds because the noise level had exploded so that further conversation was impossible.

In contrast, the second round often quietly and calmly leads to simple, common solutions, with invitations to dinner the next evening, invitations to join the party, support for the child etc.

The realization that, even in the short time span of 2 minutes, mentality is everything, is something participants can powerfully experience with such an exercise.

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26. Rosenberg, Nonviolent Communication
27. If you have chosen to introduce Rosenberg’s concepts of Wolf and Giraffe, the first round is played as “wolf”, the second as “giraffe”.
6.2.3. Module 3: Giving / Receiving Feedback

Dealing with giving and receiving of feedback at the same time is simply a way of saving time. If you set your training up along the lines Explanation – Experience – Reflection, it pays to have completed the explanation of both sides of a feedback exchange before moving to the exercises.

Depending on the experience level and energy of your group, you can brainstorm the different ‘rules’ of SBI or your preferred feedback script and the guidelines for receiving. It pays to emphasize mentality, here.

Especially if you have had an immersive, active module on mentality, you may wish to tone down the explanation from a participant involvement point of view and stick to a more passive input session.

Johari’s Window is a nice addendum, but not necessary for a first introduction to the concept.

6.2.3.1. Mistakes

It helps to clarify the basic concept and its power by introducing some of the common mistakes described in chapter 3.3.2.

One short approach is to write feedback sentences that have ‘mistakes’ or unclear / generalizing language in the ‘Situation’, ‘Behaviour’ or ‘Impact’ part respectively, and ask participants to reformulate the phrases to make them ‘good’ feedback.

Note: The formulations will usually vary, as participants have to invent new parts to the original phrase to make it clear. This is a nice debriefing point, namely that the ‘bad’ feedback can be understood in many different ways.

Alternatively, if you have more time, introduce (some of) the mistakes described in chapter 3.2.2. and ask participants whether they have experienced this kind of feedback before (the answer is almost certainly yes!). Ask them to share what that felt like / what it meant to receive feedback like this and ‘build the case’ around each mistake similar to the structure found in this manual.

Regarding the “Experience” part of this module, nothing goes beyond experiencing and reflecting actual feedback. Two methods that have proven useful for this are detailed below.
6.2.3.2. Feedback in groups of three
Divide the group into small groups of three. Each group has three roles: a Giver, a Receiver and an Observer.

The Giver gives feedback to the Receiver; the Observer then gives feedback on the ‘quality’ of the feedback (how well was SBI used, clarity etc.) and the reactions of the Receiver (good clarifying questions?). Then, the roles switch, so that each person is Giver, Receiver or Observer at some point.

Notes: This is especially useful if you are conducting a longer training and the participants have had the opportunity to experience each other’s behaviour. When introducing the exercise, you may encounter the complaint that “I have nothing to feedback this person on.” A smug response would be: “Well, what does that say about you?” – your reaction to this should be more constructive, but the point is: As a participant, you should also be looking around and consciously experiencing your participants. If you have very little to feedback on, then think of something – even if it is something small – to ‘seriously’ feedback on for the sake of the exercise.

6.2.3.3. Feedback role play
Design two or three short scenarios (suggestions below) in which one person gives another feedback. Have these pairs play out the scenario in front of the group. Afterwards, debrief each role play.

Suggested Scenario 1:

Giver: In your role as chair of a committee, you notice that one delegate has begun constantly fiddling with his mobile phone. The group is distracted by this behaviour*, and you yourself are worried how to continue. Until now, the delegate was an important driver of the group bringing good ideas to the table, and this momentum has gone lost. You hope to get him back to the table.

Receiver (Version 1): You are a delegate who has just received news that your sister has gotten engaged! You are very excited and are texting with her; during the coffee breaks, you try and get in contact with your family.**

Receiver (Version 2): You are a delegate who, after enjoying teambuilding, is currently rather bored with Committee Work. Your fellow delegates are not moving at the speed you hoped, and you have started facebooking (with occasional fact-checking for yourself) to wile the time away.**

29. It is important, for this exercise, that you have passed the initial stages of the FIRO-cycle. Otherwise, participants will hesitate to give honest, open feedback, and the Observers may also not support the learning process with honest meta-feedback.
*Please note that this is a ‘trick’ part of the description; as a Giver, you should not be instrumentalizing ‘the group’ to support your message!

** Please note that these descriptions may be used to justify by the Receiver – again, this can be seen as a ‘trick’; a good Receiver should first try not to explain their circumstances. If this does happen during the exercise – and it will! – ask the group at some point in the debriefing where feedback ended and where the conversation began. (see 2.3.4.)

**Suggested Scenario 2:**

**Giver:** You are a head organizer of a session. After a few mix-ups on the first day of the session, your President, Christine, has sent one of her VPs to the orga meetings. You feel that the VP is disrupting your meetings – instead of sitting quietly in the back, he has been undermining your authority* by introducing himself into the discussions and re-opening issues that had already previously been agreed on (such as the amount of coffee-break food, wake-up times etc.).

**Receiver:** You are the VP of a session. Your President, Christine, has asked you to join the orga meetings as the communication between orgas and chairs has been difficult. On joining the meetings, you have felt that they could be more structured, and have tried to help move discussions forward. Also, some decisions made in the orga team make the chairs’ task more difficult – such as early wake-up schedules and very little food for the coffee breaks, and you have made this clear to the organisers.*

* Please note that, again, part of the description is slightly deceptive “undermining my authority” is a value judgement on the part of the Giver!

** Please note, again, that these descriptions may be used as justification by the Receiver (see above).

**Suggested Scenario 3:**

**Giver:** You have a very quiet first-time delegate who has spent the time between coffee break and the end of the day really making an effort. He has voiced his opinions, tenaciously fought for his convictions – though quietly – and a number of his (constructive) suggestions have found themselves in the current phrasing of the resolution. You want to congratulate him and ask him to keep it up the next day.

**Receiver:** You are a first-time delegate who has needed a few days to ‘warm up’ to the whole EYP thing. Now that you understand what is going on, you feel more
secure in your role and have been more active than in the beginning. You have been receiving some nice comments from your fellow delegates.

Where you come from, compliments are not given lightly, the saying “Not being reprimanded is praise enough” is typical for your home town. You know that your fellow delegates meant well, but and you have the feeling that their compliments are shallow and without meaning.

*This scenario is more tricky than it looks, because the Giver can quickly get into a condescending position if he does not accept that the reaction of the Receiver is not what he necessarily expected. Also, be prepared for this scenario to end quickly if the Receiver does not actively play the role (which is, as we have seen, the ‘correct’ behaviour). If this happens, not to worry, get the Giver / Receiver to tell their feelings and then discuss the Receivers feeling of alienation in the group.

Notes:
It pays to have the role-playing pairs experience the other role-plays – this way, the quality of the feedback interaction increases with each role play you discuss (Remember to stress that the first group is the ‘brave’ group and should be judged less harshly on their performance).

This exercise is better for short training courses, with groups that have either not had a lot of time to experience each other ‘in action’ or have not / are not able to progress significantly along the FIRO-cycle.

After the role playing is done (5 minutes is usually more than enough time), it pays to give the actors the first chance to express their feelings – did it go well, was it difficult, how did the Giver/Receiver feel, what were they thinking during the exercise, were there turning points etc.; afterward, the floor can be opened to the rest of the group. It pays, also, to have the last word as a trainer. Give your insights, sum up the debate, and thank the actors (with a round of applause).

This exercise is especially good at showing participants that giving good feedback is not easy and not as self-evident as the explanation makes it out to be.

6.2.3.4. Exercise: dealing with ‘difficult’ Givers / Receivers
If you have the time and really want to get the message across, you may wish to have a short exercise ‘going to the next level’. For this, simply take a comparatively easy feedback subject – ‘supporting’ or ‘requesting’, and split the group into pairs. Have them alternate as Givers and Receivers- one feedback discussion need not take more than 3 minutes. Debrief extensively afterward.

Example scenarios (make these open to the group – it’s fine to be transparent about this!):
**The Giver gives very generalized / bad feedback.** It is up to the Receiver, through clarifying questions, to turn it into good feedback. The Giver should try and keep his answers to the questions vague, but does have to answer the questions properly.

**The Giver includes judging / accusing phrasing in his feedback.** It is up to the Receiver, through clarifying questions, to turn it into good feedback. The Giver should try and keep to his accusations (without working themselves up).

**The Receiver starts justifying his actions.** The Giver should try, by sticking to his message, to get the message across*.

**The Receiver picks up on the Giver's past behaviour (which was similar to that currently discussed), and wants to 'feedback back'.** The Giver should try and get his message across.

*Givers may start accusing Receivers in this scenario. Makes for an interesting debriefing!

**Notes:**

It helps to ask the participants explicitly to take an exercise such as this one seriously. It is very easy to fall into the 'goofing around' trap, here, but actually being in a situation with a difficult Giver / Receiver is far from fun. This is an opportunity for participants to practice and experience this situation in a safe environment, but this requires the co-operation of the other participants.

### 6.2.4. Asking for Feedback

This can be turned into an experiential session, but is probably easiest conducted as a short input. If you wish, ask participants to write down, for themselves, one person in the group they will ask to get feedback from, with a concrete situation / behaviour in mind. Encourage participants to collect that feedback in the course of the training.

### 6.2.5. Ethical use of feedback

This can be conducted in form of a discussion, storytelling on your part (examples of good/bad feedback and the ramifications of it), or storytelling from the participants. You may wish to ask the participants what experiences they have had with you (throughout the course) and feedback, to show that no one is infallible, and that you can accept their feedback well.

It is recommended this module is held in a sincere atmosphere, slightly more intense than other, ‘lighter’ parts of the training course.
Training on Feedback