



At the heart of a positive, resilient workplace is the ability to give each other feedback in a way that builds our strengths as a team and increases our capacity to help each other deal with the day-to-day challenges of our roles.

*'Giving feedback' has almost become synonymous with criticism – which is unfortunate because the research tells us that strong, resilient teams are built on a six to one ratio of positive or reinforcing feedback to 'corrective' feedback. That means that we should be letting each other know what we are doing well six times more often than letting each other know that things need to be done differently.*

More recent research shows that not only does feedback that reinforces things going well build emotional resilience; it is also a better way to build skill. This is because this style of feedback taps into intrinsic motivation to help us learn and develop.



**Intrinsic motivation**

Drives people to do something because they find the activity enjoyable or interesting.



**Extrinsic motivation**

Drives people to do something because it leads to a particular result.

When people are motivated primarily by external rewards or punishments, as soon as those rewards or punishments are removed the motivation drops off. An over reliance on extrinsic motivation creates a type of dependence.

Feedback that focuses on the gradual mastery of particular skills promotes intrinsic motivation.

Yet much of our feedback to colleagues focuses less on skills than on our working relationship. For example: 'That's great; I'm really pleased!' is a report about our general feelings. In contrast: 'I notice you listened intently during the meeting' is an observation of a particular skill.

FOCUS ON THE RELATIONSHIP	FOCUS ON THE SKILL
Offering general positive comments	Describing specific concrete actions
Mentioning personal responses	Non-judgemental
Focusing on the wider group	Not fostering dependence on the feelings of the speaker

Feedback which draws attention to a skill, without making an overt judgement and without reporting on our feelings, turns out to be most likely to prompt intrinsic motivation. As a general rule, we should offer more feedback that is purely descriptive and observational – and the more specific, the better.



## The script

### 1 REINFORCEMENT FEEDBACK

**STATE** *precisely* the goal, work expectation, standard, or desired behaviour.

**DESCRIBE** the observed behaviours/actions that relate to the expectation.

**EXPLAIN** *why* the behaviours/actions are important and how they impact.

**ASK** that the behaviours continue.

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

'I noticed in our project meeting today that you had completed stage 2 of the implementation. Your feedback on that task was given clearly to the group – which enabled everyone to understand where their work fitted. Could you continue this at each of the following project stages?'

### 2 REDIRECTIVE FEEDBACK

**STATE** *precisely* the goal, performance expectation, standard or desired behaviour.

**DESCRIBE** the observed behaviours/actions that relate to the expectation.

**EXPLAIN** *why* the demonstrated behaviours are not effective and how this affects group goals.

**ASK** what actions the person will take to meet the expectation.

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

**Colleague A**

'Being on time to our project meetings is critical to knowing how everyone is going and how your work might need to adapt. I have noticed that you have been very late to the last three meetings. This has left you without enough time to give your feedback to the group and has now delayed the completion date. How do you see the situation?'

**Colleague B**

'Yes, I can see the impact of my lateness. I have a new project that requires my attendance at Head Office with only 30 minutes left to reach our meeting. I just can't make it on time.'

**Colleague A**

'Do you have any ideas on what could be done?'

**Colleague B**

'Well, a solution would be to stay at Head Office and phone in to the meeting from there. I could also send my updates by email beforehand so everyone has them in front of them.'

**Colleague A**

'That would be helpful – your feedback is always clear.'