

Feedback - Success of an Organization

By Gloria Stephens

Essential to achieving better relationships among people and for the success of organizations, is feedback. In order to effectively relate to other people we need to know something about the way we are affecting and influencing them. Feedback provides a way in which we can evaluate this impact. If we are interested in changing an organization in some way, or to evaluate the activities of the organization, feedback can provide us with a fuller understanding of how we are doing or how we should change.

Giving feedback is a difficult skill and requires a good deal of experimentation and practice in order to do well. This requires that the giver of feedback be in fairly good contact with his/her own feelings and judgements, and that he/she have adequate language for communicating them. On the receiving side one needs the ability to receive feedback without necessarily feeling attacked or condemned. This requires some confidence or security on the part of the recipient so that feedback can be tolerated and utilized for corrective action.

To clarify some misconceptions about what is meant by feedback; feedback is the communication of an individual(s)'s feeling or reactions to the behavior of a person or a situation. Giving feedback is not "psychologizing" or motive interpretation. It is simply a reaction to what was observed. Feedback, to be successful, goes in two directions and is the responsibility of the "sender" to verify the understanding of the feedback.

Acceptance of feedback with critical examination and testing for validity is the most constructive use of feedback in which the recipient listens to and attempts to understand and to digest what is being said. Assumptions made on feedback must always be "checked out" as a wrong assumption will invariably create a wrong behavior. Therefore, all feedback must not be blindly accepted nor blacked out or rejected.

Both positive and negative feelings and reactions are equally useful in feedback. Feedback is not a form of criticism but a form of reporting observations and reactions. Feedback becomes the property of the recipient and he/she alone needs to decide what to do about it; to defend, rationalize, accept, make some readjustments or change.

We give and receive feedback daily in our personal and professional lives, and it is important that we understand the dynamics involved in utilizing this skill. Use it to its fullest in your relationships with your nursing colleagues and your superiors, as well as with your professional nursing associations and the board of ORNAC.

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