

EDITORIAL: EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK: NEED OF THE TIME

It is the job of educators to support their trainees and to teach them. They should guide them on safe and effective practice. They should supervise them and provide effective feedback.

Feedback in this context is “Information describing students’ or house officers’ performance in a given activity that is intended to guide their future performance in that same or a related activity.”

Feedback is important to the learner. It clarifies goals and expectations. It reinforces good performance. It provides a basis for correcting mistakes (formative assessment). It serves as a reference point for ultimate (summative) evaluation at the conclusion of the educational programme. It offers insight into actual performance and consequences versus what the learner thought or intended. It reduces reliance on self-validation. It reduces anxiety and insecurity about performance. It demonstrates interest about the learner as a person. It promotes two-way communication. It provides guidance.

Feedback experiences should not be negative. To achieve this the feedback provider should avoid public humiliation. We should not pass comments about personality. We should avoid one-way discussion. We should not show lack of personal interest in the learner. Feedback should not be too general.

We should avoid feedback that is too brief and/or too long after the event to be useful.

To make our feedback experiences positive we should show active listening and mutual respect. Our criticism or praise should be specific. We should show a genuine desire to help. It should not be done in a hurry. We should spend adequate time.

Providing feedback if practiced effectively will go a long way in improving the performance of our trainees at every level.

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