



## TEN WAYS TO BE POWER POSITIVE

### #7 BEFRIEND FEEDBACK

Take a moment to notice what your response is to hearing someone say: “I have some feedback for you.” Some people feel curious, excited, appreciated and open to an opportunity to grow and become more effective. That’s the way we’d like it to be, of course. But for most people, the response is to tighten up, feel defensive, become frightened of being hurt or disempowered. On the other side of the picture, when you are in the position of giving feedback, the felt-experience can be just as varied. Some people feel connected, compassionate and effective. But many others experience giving feedback as a burden or worry that it will cause harm to the other or to the relationship.

Giving and receiving feedback can be tough and challenging, but in cultivating a positive use of power, it is one of the most important skills to develop. Feedback is simply information you get about yourself from others or from your own self-awareness. This information helps you understand and refine your impact on others or a job you are doing. However, for many people, it carries a huge charge because most of us have felt hurt by unskillful feedback.

The feedback process can be made more manageable by separating it into four aspects.

**ASKING FOR FEEDBACK.** We can be proactive by asking for feedback. In this way we can control the timing and manner of feedback in both personal and workplace relationships. Exercise your curiosity and openness to specific feedback by trying questions like: “How clear was my explanation? Can you suggest any changes?” “This was a challenging conversation. Did you feel I was being defensive?” “I’m interested in how you experience my use of my power.”

**RECEIVING FEEDBACK.** Here’s another place where we can have more control. We can help ourselves receive it well by how we set it up. Try: “This is not a good time for me. Can we set up a different time?” “Please slow down. I need to take a minute to reflect on what you said.” “It would help me if you could give me a specific example.” “Actually, I only feel available for positive feedback right now.”

**GIVING FEEDBACK.** There is an art to this. We want to give feedback in a form in which it can best be heard. Consider three kinds of input: Appreciating feedback. It communicates “thanks,” but also conveys, “I see you,” and “you matter to me.” We never outgrow, and don’t need to outgrow, our need for acknowledgement. Coaching feedback. This focus is aimed at trying to help someone learn, grow, or change to be more heartfelt, skillful or effective. Coaching requires skill and sensitivity. Evaluating

feedback. This is a responsibility belonging to a role of authority. Evaluation tells you where you stand. It's a performance review. It could also be used in personal relationships to review and then explore how the relationship is going. Observing feedback: For example: "This is what I see from my perspective." Impacting feedback: Here's where you can describe how you have been affected by the other. (The above five kinds of feedback have been adapted by Right Use of Power Trainers, Peg Syverson and Amanda Aguilera from *Thanks for the Feedback* by Stone and Heen.)

USING FEEDBACK. Because feedback comes through another person, it will always contain a personal bias. This doesn't mean the feedback is not useful, because it describes the impact you are having on another. It is useful to know if your impact doesn't match up with your intention. However, as the owner of your power, you can self-reflect and decide how you want to use whatever feedback you get. My suggestion is that you "don't take everything personally and you don't take nothing personally." Look for the gem of truth and "with a breath of kindness, blow the chaff away."

Developing your skill at asking for, receiving, giving, and using feedback will be a booster-rocket to your effectiveness in enjoying power-positive relationships.

TRY THIS: Separate out the four aspects of feedback.

Day 1: Ask for specific feedback from three people.

Day 2: Reflect on how you can use the feedback from your three people.

Day 3: Give some feedback. Get clear about whether you are giving Appreciating, Coaching, Evaluating, or Observing feedback.

Day 4: Reflect on how your feedback was received.

*Dr. Cedar Barstow*