

# Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

If we are on the receiving end of feedback, we can help ourselves by encouraging the giver to use some of the skills outlined above. That is:

- Ask the person to tell you what you do that is positive.
- Only receive as much feedback as you can understand and work with.
- Ask for feedback on your behaviour, not your person/personality.
- Ask for feedback about your actions in a specific situation, not on abstract behaviour.
- Ask for feedback that focuses on the 'here and now' not on the 'there and then'.
- Ask for feedback that is descriptive rather than judgmental.
- Ask for perceptions and feelings, not advice.
- Only reflect on feedback on aspects of yourself that you can change.

Other things you can do to make receiving feedback a positive experience are:

## **Listen to the feedback rather than immediately rejecting or arguing with it**

Feedback can be uncomfortable to hear, but we may be the richer for hearing it.

Remember that people do have their opinions about you and will have their perceptions of your behaviour, and it can be helpful to be aware of those. Do, remember, however, that you are also entitled to your own opinion and you may choose to ignore their view as being that of little significance, irrelevant, or referring to behaviour that, for some reason, you wish to maintain.

## **Be clear about what is being said**

Avoid jumping to conclusions or becoming immediately defensive. Make sure you understand the feedback before you respond to it. A useful technique can be to paraphrase or repeat the feedback to check that you have understood. You could start with. "So what you are saying is..."

## **Ask for feedback if you want it**

Feedback is important, so ask for it if it does not occur naturally. Sometimes the feedback we do get is restricted to one aspect of our behaviour – again you may have to request feedback that would be useful regarding the other areas.

## **Check the feedback you have received with others, rather than relying on only one source**

If you rely on only one source of feedback, you may imagine that that individual's opinion is shared by everybody, whereas, if you checked it out with others you might find that other people experience you differently. This will allow you to have a more balanced view of yourself and to keep the feedback in perspective.

## Decide what you will do as a result of the feedback

We can use feedback to help our own development. Each of us needs to know how other people experience us to extend our self-awareness, (which is incomplete if it is merely our own version of ourselves). When we receive feedback, we can assess its value, the consequences of ignoring or using it, and finally decide what we will do as a result of it. In the final analysis, it is always your choice whether to accept or reject the feedback.

## Thank the person for giving the feedback

Thank the person giving you feedback for the following reasons:

- It may not have been easy for the person to give you feedback;
- You might benefit from it; and
- It is a valuable practice to reinforce in any organisation or relationship.

If you can demonstrate that you can receive feedback well, you will encourage people to continue giving you feedback. This can only benefit you in the long run, provided you ensure they follow the guidelines of giving feedback.

This document forms part of my materials developed for HELM  
See [www.clairenewton.co.za/helm.html](http://www.clairenewton.co.za/helm.html) to download a copy.

*Claire Newton*  
Psychologist | Speaker | Trainer | Coach | Hat Lover

Phone: +27 (0)31 764 2616  
Mobile: +27 (0)82 491 1136  
Email: [claire@clairenewton.co.za](mailto:claire@clairenewton.co.za)

[www.clairenewton.co.za](http://www.clairenewton.co.za)

Address: 3 Impunzi Place, Kloof, 3610, South Africa