



# POSITIVE GOSSIP

*Students share appreciations for each other*

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will reflect on their experience and connect learning to their classroom and community

## MATERIALS

- Music to play in the background
- Plain paper (variation)

## TIME

30 min

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## LESSON INTRO

This circle-based, peer-led activity gets the group appreciating the individuals in their group.

Negative gossip is all around. This activity turns the tables, and creates a positive environment where students share out how their group members exemplify characteristics that the group appreciates.

## LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. Circle up the group, with a chair in the middle of the circle.
2. Explain to the group that this activity is a way to acknowledge the positive qualities that each member of the group brings.
3. Have each student get a turn in the middle of the circle for the class to share examples and characteristics of that person that are positive.

PROMPT: “What is great about so-and-so? What did you see this week/during the expedition/in general that makes this person an asset to our community”?

4. To keep things fair and on time, designate a certain amount of time (i.e. 2 minutes) for each student to be in the middle.

## VARIATIONS

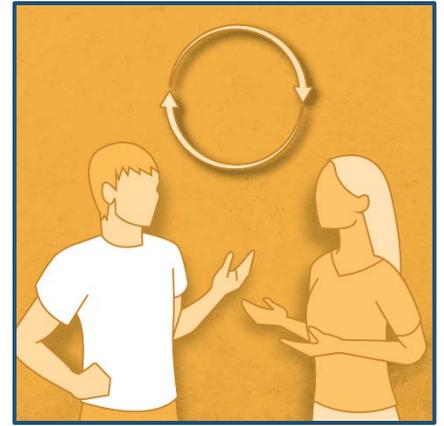
1. As a written variation of this activity, give each student a piece of printer paper. Have each student write their own name on top of the paper. Sheets of paper can be posted along walls or left on individual desks. Instruct the class to circulate around desks/room and write something positive on each classmate's paper.
2. For a fun (and shorter) variation, invite a small batch of students (three-four) to the front of the class to stand with their backs to the group. For a designated amount of time, the rest of the class shouts out positives and appreciations for the "blind" students. To add to an air of mystery all around, the appreciations don't have to be aimed at one particular student, for example "they have a great fashion sense" "they say hi to me every day". Switch out the student batches so that everyone has a turn.

## FACILITATOR TIPS AND NOTES

1. Put on background music. This will go a long way to fill in empty space as people think, as well as build a positive atmosphere. You can even 'time' the music so that the group knows when to start and stop sharing based on when the music starts and stops.
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## NOTES

**Educational Standards:** CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Social Awareness , P21: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, P21: Communication and Collaboration



# FEEDBACK: REFLECTION ON SELF & OTHERS

*Students give feedback to self and group*

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will reflect on their experience and connect learning to their classroom and community

## MATERIALS

- Giving and Receiving Feedback Handout

## TIME

45 min

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## LESSON INTRO

Students on expedition have most likely been given the opportunity to give and receive positive and constructive feedback by their instructors and peers. Offering a final feedback session allows students to reflect again on themselves - and to be a sounding board for their crew-mates.

## LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. Have the group circle up.
2. *Review* or *create* expectations or agreements for peer feedback. This is an important step—and may take a bit of time. Use the Feedback Handout as a guide for this step. You can print and hand out the resource and read it through together, or use it to create feedback agreements that you present to the group. Consider asking the group what feedback was like during their expedition, and what feedback they remember or felt impactful to them then.
3. Share with the group that this time is designed for the group to give feedback to each other and themselves now that some time has passed from the expedition. Often, with time, certain things stand out more clearly; and with some context of being back in school, students may view themselves, the group, or certain ideas or actions differently.

4. Explain that you will ask students take turns sharing positive and constructive feedback about themselves and/or each other.
5. Begin by asking the group to think back over the expedition for areas of feedback to give self and group. Give a good amount of time to think, have students write down notes for themselves. Consider prompting for students to think about different categories such as:

- Leadership
- Communication
- Perseverance
- Empathy
- Teamwork
- Group Relationships
- Idea Sharing
- Problem Solving
- Self-Awareness
- etc...

6. You can run this feedback session any number of ways, here is one suggestion:

Student #1 begins with self-feedback, then the class offers feedback about what they noticed concerning that student.

Student #2 goes next with self-feedback, next the class offers feedback to him/her, etc. and continues onward.

## FACILITATOR TIPS AND NOTES

1. Having students use feedback stems keeps feedback structured and following good feedback protocol. Here are some examples:
  - A positive trait I noticed about you was \_\_\_\_, I saw this when you \_\_\_\_.
  - I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_.
  - I noticed that you \_\_\_\_\_, this made me feel \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Next time you could try \_\_\_\_\_.
  - When you \_\_\_\_\_, it worked well/didn't work well because \_\_\_\_\_.

Post these in the circle for students to utilize.

2. Peer feedback is one of the most powerful forces of change and accountability! However, for feedback to work as a constructive element, the group must have a base level of trust and support. Running a feedback session with students who are not prepared, who may not follow feedback norms, or who may use this time to poke passive-aggressive comments will ultimately do more harm than good. If your group is not ready for a peer feedback session yet, work on getting there! Save this lesson for later if need be.

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## NOTES

**Educational Standards:** CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Social Awareness; P21: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, P21: Leadership and Responsibility, CCRS:SL3 Evaluate Perspective and Evidence



## Giving and Receiving Feedback: A Guide for Peers

### Introduction

One of the most valuable contributions anyone can make to another person's learning is a constructive comment. Whether as a student or as a teacher, each one of us has the capacity to provide useful information to other people that will help them to learn more effectively.

To bother to offer another person feedback about their work indicates both that you care enough about them to spend your time considering their situation and that their work is worthy of your attention. You are both affirming the worth of the person and offering them your views on something into which they have put some effort.

Everyone has the capacity for giving useful feedback and some people use it to more effect than others. The skills of giving and receiving feedback can be developed if attention is given to some of the attributes of worthwhile feedback and how it can be given in ways which enhance its contribution to learning.

### Good and Bad Feedback

Before looking in detail at useful feedback it is important to distinguish it from those types of feedback that can be unhelpful and sometimes positively harmful.

We all know what it is like to be on the receiving end of **bad feedback**: we feel 'got at', 'attacked', 'put down' and generally invalidated as a person. Some of the basic characteristics of bad feedback are:

- It is directed globally at the person, not the situation
- It is unhelpful, that is, it does not suggest what alternatives there are.
- It comes from the needs of the critic rather than the needs of the person receiving it.
- It is dehumanizing: a destructive comment from which it is difficult for a person to come back from.

**Useful feedback**, on the other hand:

- Affirms the worth of the person and gives support.
- Offers reactions to the event.
- The person providing the feedback shows that he or she values the person who is receiving it.
- The person providing the feedback is sensitive to the other persons needs and goals.
- Praise should be given that is authentic and personal.
- Any critical matters though should be raised in an overall supportive context in which both parties can trust one another.

Helpful feedback makes a conscious distinction between the person—who is always valued—and particular acts or specific work—which may be subject to critical comment. This distinction emphasizes that the person is not identical to what he or she does, and their work or actions are not the same as the person, though this should not be taken as justification for a person abrogating responsibility for his or her behavior. No matter how distasteful a person's acts might be, feedback will only be effectively communicated if the person's common humanity is respected.



## **Offering Feedback**

In the discussion below the term 'work' or 'contribution' is used to describe the matter on which feedback is given. This 'work' may be of any type: an interaction, a class contribution, a design, some behavior, a project in any form.

There are many characteristics of worthwhile feedback but the most important is *the way in which it is given*. The tone, the style, and the content should be consistent and provide the constant message: "I appreciate you and what you have done and whatever else I say should be taken in this context".

If you wish to give helpful feedback, you should:

### **Be realistic**

- Direct your comments towards matters on which the person can act. Don't make suggestions that are entirely outside the scope of what the person can do. Constructive comments can be helpful so long as they respect the other people individual way of doing things.

### **Be specific**

- Generalizations are particularly unhelpful. Base your comments on concrete observable behavior or materials. Always check your general impressions or inferences against the particular action or behavior. Focusing on behavior implies that it is something related to a specific situation that might be changed. The person should be given sufficient information to pinpoint the areas to which you are referring and have a clear idea of what is being said about those specific areas. Provide examples.

### **Be sensitive to the goals of the person**

- Just because the other person's contributions have not met your goals doesn't necessarily imply that something is wrong. This is not to say that you can't make comments from your own perspective but that you should be clear when you offer views in terms of your own goals and you should say that is what you are doing. Link your comments to their intentions; listen carefully to what they have to say.

### **Be consciously non-judgmental**

- Offer your personal view, do not act as an authority even if you may be one elsewhere. Give your personal reactions and feelings rather than value-laden statements. One way of doing this is to use comments of the type 'I feel ... when you ...'.

### **Don't compare**

- Treat each person's work as their own, not part of some supposed competition with others. Be cautious about giving feedback in a context in which the comments that you give one person will be compared with those of another. Such comparisons undermine intrinsic motivation.

### **Be Direct**

- Say what you mean. Don't wrap it up in circumlocution, fancy words or abstract language.



## **Be positive**

- Say what you appreciate. Don't just focus on what you react negatively towards. Try to find something that is genuinely felt, rather than being positive because you feel it is required.

## **Be aware**

- Note your own emotional state before you give feedback. If you are anxious or defensive you may well distort otherwise helpful comments. Feedback is never a time for you to relieve yourself at the expense of the other person. Move to a focus on the person to whom you are relating and their needs, not yourself before responding in any way. Don't overload them just because you have a lot to give.

## **Receiving Feedback**

There is no point in asking others to give you feedback unless you are prepared to be open to it and to consider comments which differ from your own perceptions.

As receiver:

### **Be attentive**

- Concentrate fully on what is being said. Focus on what the person wants you to know, not on what you would like to hear.

### **Be aware**

- Notice your own reactions, both intellectual and emotional. Particularly notice any reactions of rejection or censorship on your part. If the viewpoint from which the other is speaking is at variance with your own do not dismiss it: it can be important to realize the misapprehensions of others. Some people find it useful to partially dissociate or distance themselves in this situation and act as if they were witnessing feedback being given to someone else.

### **Be silent**

- Refrain from making a response. Don't even begin to frame a response in your own mind until you have listened carefully to what has been said and have considered the implications. Don't use the excuse of correcting factual errors to avoid hearing and resonating with the substance of what has been said. Don't be distracted by the need to explain: if you continue to feel that you need to give an explanation do it later after the feedback session once you are sure you have attended to all that has been said.