

# "Tips for Coaching for Negative Feedback"

## A. Before the discussion, prepare what you will say (talking points)

*Points to keep in mind and discuss:*

- End results to achieve.
- How these can be achieved.
- How to measure these achievements.
- What is the impact if the end results are not accomplished.

*Discussion should be:*

- Information specific.
- Issue focused.
- Based on observations.

*Include your expectations and department standards NOT:*

- Individual focused (or personal).
- Broad, vague, and general.
- Judgmental.

## B. Determine the appropriate time and place

- Should be in private.
- Should be at a time when the individual may be less stressed.
- Problems should be addressed as soon as you become aware of them.
- Let the individual know the purpose of the meeting (generally).

## C. During the Discussion:

- Describe specific behaviors/problems rather than providing general feedback (people understand better what they are doing right or wrong if specific examples are used).
- Careful delivery of negative feedback is crucial – both in wording and in tone of voice. It is important to focus on the behavior or problem itself, not the personality quality that may have led to the behavior. (i.e., "You have missed important deadlines." instead of, "You are being irresponsible.")
- Encourage feedback and listen. Readjust direction of discussion as necessary based on feedback.
- Try to begin and end on a positive note with some plan for improvement.
  - Beginning: "You show great skill in x, y and z, however, there are some concerns I would like to discuss with you for improvement in abc area."
  - Ending: "Thanks for all your hard work and efforts in x, y and z. I look forward to working with you and mentoring you in abc area."

#### **D. Develop an action plan as necessary**

- Sketch out an action plan for discussion and complete with input from the individual (include statement of problems/issues, examples, expectations and action plan as needed).
- Ask if the individual needs help and in what areas.
- Aim for positive outcomes.
- Determine if there are obstacles facing the individual that you are unaware of.
- Discuss together what actions can be put into place to accomplish desired outcomes.
- Let person be involved in formulating the future plan.

#### **E. Follow-through**

- Hold one-on-one meetings on a regular basis.
- Be available to listen and provide guidance.
- Measure results and provide feedback.

#### **F. Document**

- Document agreed upon action steps and give to individual so that both of you have the same understanding of desired outcomes and deadlines.
- Document progress or lack of progress (with specific examples).

#### **G. Coach consistently (ongoing and to all)**

- Everyone should be held accountable in the same manner (even though not for the same things).
- Coaching/meeting frequency should be done on a consistent basis throughout the year.
- Open and honest communication.
- Providing positive as well as negative feedback is important.
- Follow up on what was discussed and create a paper trail.

#### **H. Worst Case Scenario**

- If the individual needs to vent, let him or her do so, within reason. Don't challenge him or her while the individual is angry. Generally, a calm, non-threatening demeanor can defuse a situation.
- Don't agree with the individual simply because he or she is angry.
- When the individual calms down, continue the discussion and stay on point. If the individual continues to be emotionally upset, you may wish to conclude the discussion and inform him or her that you will need to continue this discussion later.
- If there is any indication that the situation may become violent, stop the meeting, leave and call for assistance.