CUSOM Guide to Providing Peer Feedback

Providing feedback to peers can be a difficult thing to do. We all have doubts in our minds when we approach someone in this manner – (Who am I to be giving this feedback? I'm not their boss; I'll let someone else take care of it; what if I am wrong and what I think is happening isn't the case?) While it is easy to use any one of those thoughts as an excuse to not provide feedback, as professionals we have a duty and responsibility to speak up. Feedback needs to be rooted in genuine concern for the other person and our profession. People are often unaware what they are doing. For example, think about a time you had food stuck in your teeth. You were oblivious to the fact that it was there, and it is far more embarrassing to go through the entire day and interact with people than to just have someone point it out. Feedback should be looked at in the same way. It isn't a conflict, it is helping someone avoid an embarrassing and unfavorable situation. Below are a few tips to help make it easier to approach someone and provide feedback.

6 characteristics needed to provide EFFECTIVE feedback:
1. **Specific**: should reference a specific action or event
2. **Constructive**: an opportunity to improve, not pointing out a weakness
3. **Proactive**: provide before the issue becomes a bigger problem
4. **Timely**: provide as close as possible after the action or event
5. **Relevant**: it needs to be something that the person has the ability to fix
6. **Reciprocal**: if you are receptive to feedback your peers are far more likely to accept feedback from you

While the above characteristics are good to know so that your feedback can be effective, how do you actually do it? Asking for someone's permission to provide feedback is a good way to start. If they are not in a state to accept feedback at that time, coming back at an appropriate time is beneficial. Craft an honest, measured opening. Getting started is often the hardest part of a challenging conversation. It might be tempting to soften your message or ease your way into things, but this can confuse or upset people. Use examples and context to support your message. Below are some examples of how to initiate the conversation:

- "Hey, do you have a minute to talk? If you don't now, when would you?"
- "Can we step aside for a minute? I just want to clarify something."
- "I have some feedback to give you, when is a good time?"
- "I have a question about earlier, is now ok?"
- "This may be a hard conversation but I want to give you some honest feedback"

Now that you have the conversation started, approach them with a neutral tone and body language. Let's use the following example of someone showing up to a small group late as an opportunity to give feedback.

- Make them aware of the situation:
  "We had small groups starting at 10 this morning."

- Inform them of your observation (Using only facts, be objective, clear and avoid emotion phrases like "I feel"): "I noticed that you came in 30 minutes late."

At this point, they may inform you that their car broke down and they have already been in contact with block directors to address the issue. If that is the case, by initiating peer-to-peer feedback you have shown them that you care. But let's say that they tell you they have trouble waking up in the morning and woke up late today.

- Make the impact of their actions apparent (ex: "When I see [X behavior], it portrays [Y impression]."):
  "By coming late, it can be construed as disrespectful to the facilitator and our colleagues"

- Demonstrate why you care about their actions and are providing feedback.
  "I know you are caring person and dedicated student, which is why I don't want you to be perceived in a negative light for running late."

- <u>Ask if they would like your suggestions and/or help:</u>
  "I could call you in the evening before a required session to make sure you set your alarm."

- <u>Then illicit their opinion to make them invested and agree on a plan:</u>
  "What do you think? Does that sound like it could work?"

Being a professional is not easy and providing feedback is one of the harder aspects of being professional. With time and practice, it will become easier and you will become better at giving feedback. This is a great time in your career to put these steps into practice and develop these skills!

<u>Here are a few more tips for providing feedback:</u>

DON'T:
- Give feedback in public, if possible.
- List of all the things they have done "wrong."
- Make generalizations.
- State your interpretations of their actions
- Talk down to the person receiving feedback
- Become defensive or argumentative
- Rehearse your response - it will make you more confrontational.
- Lose sight of the goal to uphold professionalism.

DO:
- Give feedback in private.
- Give feedback on one issue at a time.
- Focus on the behaviors they displayed and are able to improve.
- Remain objective; discuss the impact on the team, organization, profession.
- Involve them in the feedback process.
- Consider including something that was positive in addition to raising a concern.

Of course, everyone and every situation is different. Most of the time there has been a misunderstanding and the person will be able to clear it up when you ask them to talk. Other times the person may not be willing to speak with you or become defensive. At that point, consider these additional options for support or follow-up:

Timely Feedback/Resolution Identifiable

Student representatives (Course, Honor Council, Professionalism, Class)
Supervising faculty (Classroom, Clinical)
COMPASS Guide
Student Professionalism Committee Chair
Deans for Student Life, Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
<u>AMC Office of Equity</u>
<u>AMC Ombuds Office</u>
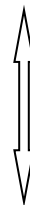
Delayed Feedback/Resolution Confidential

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