

What's It All About?

Feedback is information about what we do or say. It is important for building any relationship and getting jobs done because we need to tell people what is working or what isn't working. "*I don't think that's the right box. It won't fit through the door*" is feedback. So is "*I can't hear you when you talk so quietly.*" Feedback isn't about whether we are a smart or good person.

To improve, we sometimes need to know what we've done wrong or how we can get better, so it's important to take the feedback that people give us and use it to improve instead of getting mad because we think they are criticizing us.

Message to Parents

- ◇ At this age, your child is beginning to think rationally and weigh the pros and cons of a situation or decision with greater understanding. His brain hasn't developed this ability to its full capacity. That won't happen until he is in his early twenties, but it begins in adolescence. As a result, he can take information such as feedback and use it to change his behavior. For instance, he can begin to understand that he can influence what people think of him by how he acts.
- ◇ You may have heard the saying, *Experience is the best teacher*. Sometimes you need to let your child feel the feedback of experience. When you know your adolescent is making a mistake, don't rush in to fix it (unless it's a question of safety). Pick the important issues—constant feedback can become nagging and criticism.

Responsive to Feedback

Message to Student

A way to really grow is to know what we need to improve. Feedback can help us figure it out. Getting a “C” on a test is feedback that says, *You need to study more.* Applause after scoring a soccer goal is feedback that says *Keep up the good work.* When someone tells you you’ve done something wrong, do you feel attacked? When you get good feedback, you need to let your brain take over your emotions and say, *“That’s good to know. Thanks!”*

How Am I Doing?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- ◇ When you get an assignment back from the teacher and she said you made some mistakes, do you look over the mistakes so you don’t make them again, or do you feel mad and embarrassed and throw the paper away?
- ◇ Have you ever gotten feedback that helped you? What was good about it? What did you do about it?

Making Some Changes

How To Develop This Trait

Receiving Feedback:

- ◇ Take a deep breath if you start to get nervous. Smile and look the person in the eye.
- ◇ Nod your head. That doesn’t mean you agree with them; it means you are listening.
- ◇ Pay attention to the information, not how you feel about it.
- ◇ Ask for more information if you’re not sure what the person is saying.
- ◇ If you disagree, say, *“I’d like to tell you what I think.”* Then, explain calmly.
- ◇ If someone is dumping on you, don’t interrupt; that starts an argument. Just listen and say, *“Thank you for telling me.”*

Tips for Parents

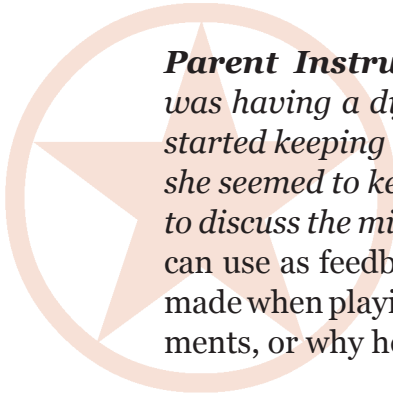
Being Role Models

- ◇ Practice giving feedback as a family. Make it a learning time. Gather everyone together and say, *“We can all learn from each other. Each person think of one thing he can tell the person sitting next to him that will help that person do something better; for instance, throwing a softball, washing dishes, answering the phone, being on time, keeping promises”*—anything that is helpful and not hurtful.
- ◇ You have many opportunities to give feedback to your child:
 - Following up after you have assigned him a job
 - Going over a homework assignment
 - Sharing what his teacher said after a conference at school
 - How his attitude affects the whole family
 - Pointing out how he can improve his basketball or hoop shot

Talking It Over


- ◇ Practice with your child positive ways to respond to feedback; for example: *“Thank you.” “Can you give me more details?” “That’s helpful feedback.” “How do you think I could do it better?”*
- ◇ Share with your child some ways in which feedback has been helpful to you in the past.
- ◇ Discuss with your child how comfortable—or uncomfortable—you each are asking for and getting feedback.
- ◇ Discuss with your child the following sayings:
 - *“Would you rather learn from a mistake or keep making it over and over?”*
 - *“Feedback is the breakfast of champions.”*—Ken Blanchard

Strengthen Your Understanding

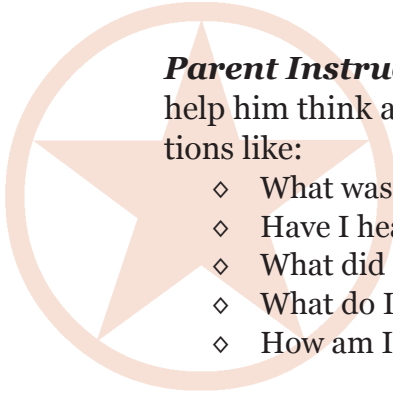


Parent Instructions: Relate the following story to your child: *Allison was having a difficult time with her math. At her teacher's suggestion, she started keeping a record of her mistakes. Each week, she wrote down errors she seemed to keep making over and over. After three weeks, she was ready to discuss the mistakes with her teacher.* Discuss what information your child can use as feedback to improve some area of his life. For example, mistakes made when playing his favorite sport, grammar errors made on written assignments, or why he seems to feel angry when someone tells him to do chores.

Parent Instructions: Read *Ghost in the Tokaido Inn* by Dorothy Hoobler and Thomas Hoobler with your child. Discuss the kinds of feedback the Seikei got from different people and how he reacted to it.

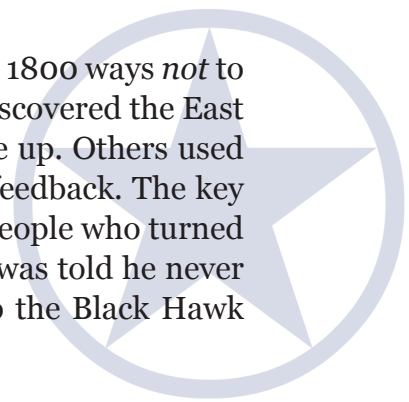


Parent Instructions: Encourage your child to make up a form that will help him think about how to use the feedback he gets. It might include questions like:

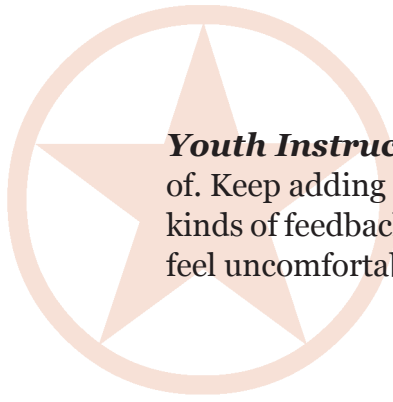
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- ◇ What was the feedback?
 - ◇ Have I heard anything like that before?
 - ◇ What did I do well?
 - ◇ What do I need to improve?
 - ◇ How am I going to improve?

Strengthen Your Understanding

Parent Instructions: It is said that Thomas Edison knew 1800 ways *not* to make a light bulb. Christopher Columbus thought he had discovered the East Indies. History is full of people who had failure. Some gave up. Others used failure as a lesson and kept improving. It's the same with feedback. The key is what we do with it. Discuss with your child examples of people who turned failure into success. Other examples are Walt Disney, who was told he never had any good ideas, and Abraham Lincoln, who went into the Black Hawk War as a captain and came out as a private.



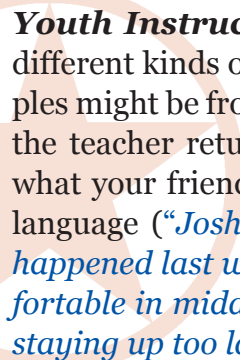
Youth Instructions: Make a list of all the kinds of feedback you can think of. Keep adding to it during the month. Talk with your parent(s) about which kinds of feedback you each find most helpful, as well as which kinds make you feel uncomfortable.




Parent Instructions: With your child, think of examples of feedback and criticism for each of the situations below. What's the difference between the two? How would you feel if someone gave you the feedback? How would you feel about the criticism?

- ◇ You're late getting to school because you forgot to put your permission slip in your backpack and had to run home to get it.
- ◇ Jane called Shawn "stupid," which really upset him.
- ◇ Your brother ate your favorite piece of chicken, although it's not his favorite.


Strengthen Your Understanding



Youth Instructions: Keep a journal for the month, writing down all the different kinds of feedback you have gotten and what it means to you. Examples might be from a sports coach (“*I need to practice my jump shot*”), papers the teacher returns (“*I am creative, but I need to work on my spelling*”), what your friends say (“*they enjoy spending time with me*”), people’s body language (“*Josh keeps away from me because he’s embarrassed by what happened last week,*” or “*Dave smiles a lot. I think he’s starting to feel comfortable in middle school*”), how difficult it is to get up in the morning (“*I’m staying up too late*”). There is an endless source of feedback all around us.



Youth Instructions: Although the words “good job” aren’t really feedback because they don’t tell us what we did well, we like hearing them. With your parent(s), make a list of as many different ways of saying “good job!” as you can think of. Create a poster with them and hang it up for the family to see.



Parent Instructions: Feedback can come in many forms. After reading *The Landry News* by Andres Clements, talk with your child about the different kinds of feedback in the story and how people reacted to them.

Strengthen Your Understanding

Youth Instructions: Check out the book reviews by kids on www.amazon.com. Select “books” where it says “search” and type in the title *Ghost in the Tokaido Inn* next to it. When you scroll down on the page that comes up, you’ll see three reviews written by kids. This is a kind of feedback that helps people decide if they want to read a book. After reading *Ghost in the Tokaido Inn* yourselves, decide if you each agree with the reviews.

Parent Instructions: Have your child write reviews of all the books he reads this month. Search the title of the book on www.amazon.com like you did in the activity above. As you scroll down the page, you’ll come to a section called “Customer Reviews.” Click the words “Write an Online Review.” On the next page that comes up, click “Use Our Kids’ Review Forum” and then follow the directions for putting the review on the web site. Also on that page are “Review Guidelines.” Ask your child to read and explain them to you (putting them in his own words will help him understand them). He and his friends will enjoy seeing his review online!

Service Opportunities

- ◇ Young children love to learn from older kids. Do you know any boys or girls who could use your help? Perhaps they need extra encouragement in their school work or just someone to listen to them read. Ask your parents or teachers to help arrange for you to spend some time each week with a younger child. Practice what you will say to encourage them and how you would give them feedback to improve when they need it.
- ◇ We can't improve if we don't know what's wrong. That's why businesses ask for feedback from their customers. What have you seen in your community that needs to be improved? Is there litter in the public park? Are animals running loose in the streets and yards? Have you noticed a dangerous intersection that needs a stop light? Write a letter to the person or organization that can do something about it. If you don't hear from them, write another or get some friends to send letters, too.

Scenarios

What Would I Do in This Situation?

Your teacher has assigned a 4-person team to work on a project that will be 50% of your grade for the next quarter. One of the team members has missed both times you have met after school, even though he promised to be there. What feedback would you give your team member and how would you say it?

Your teacher just returned a writing assignment that you worked really hard on. She told you that your story was very creative, but your sentences weren't well-written. How do you feel about that? What will you do as a result of the feedback?

Connect! Connect!

Media/Video

- ◇ *The Greatest Game Ever Played*: Find all the different kinds of feedback in this super movie, including the ways that a 10-year old caddy helps Francis become a champion.
- ◇ *October Sky*: This is the true story of Homer Hickam, a coal miner's son who was inspired by the first *Sputnik* launch to take up rocketry against his father's wishes. After seeing the movie, ask your child to point out what was feedback to Homer and what was criticism.
- ◇ *Groundhog Day*: This is a fun family movie in which the main character is a bossy snob who lives the same day over and over again until he finally accepts the feedback he's given and changes his ways. Talk with your child about why some people just don't respond to normal feedback.

Books, Web Sites, and Other Resources

- ◇ **Book of the Month:** *The Landry News* by Andrew Clements: Cara Landry is the quiet new kid in school, until she publishes her own newspaper, called "The Landry News," in which she writes about fellow teachers and students. The people who read the news are shocked to learn how others perceive them, and seek to improve themselves for the better.
- ◇ *Absolutely Normal Chaos* by Sharon Creech: Mary Lou Finney grudgingly begins writing a journal as an assignment for school. Would anything interesting ever happen to her? Begin your own journal. It is a way of giving yourself feedback.
- ◇ www.prufrock.com: By clicking "Journals and Magazines," you'll find "Creative Kids." Go to the home page and check out "Write On." Not only do they publish stories, poems, and book reviews, they also publish your opinion on things that interest or upset you.
- ◇ www.stonesoup.com: *Stone Soup* is another magazine that publishes the work of 8–13 year-olds. You can see their book reviews by clicking "Writing," then go to "Book Reviews." Check out the stories and artwork, too.

Positive Message

“

Criticism is something we can avoid easily by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing.

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—Aristotle