



# Feedback and Organization Culture

a newsletter for people who care about self-esteem  
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Dear Readers,

Welcome to this special issue of WE, a response to many requests for ways to apply the concepts of **Self-Esteem: A Family Affair** in the corporate setting. It is written by Deane Gradous who says of herself, "Although I now do other things, I still consider myself a Self-Esteem Facilitator. I have written this article to share how I use the same principles, processes, and techniques in business education."

First Deane describes organization culture and motivators. Then she tells how to teach communication skills to enhance organization culture. Those of you who are familiar with the Five Balloon Worksheet and the Five Kinds of Strokes exercises from the **Self-Esteem: A Family Affair Leader Guide** will notice the ways Deane has adapted them. Those of you encountering these concepts for the first time should have no difficulty, because Deane's work is very complete.

I am most grateful to Deane Gradous for sharing this material with WE readers.

I invite and challenge each of you to read this material and think about it, first in reference to some organization you know, and then in reference to your family.

Sincerely,

## Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages at Work

*Deane Gradous*

Recently, I used the "Five-Balloon Worksheet" and the "Five Kinds of Strokes" exercise as the foundation for teaching a group of business managers about culture, motivation, and interpersonal communication. This was a tall order for what you know is a relatively short but thoroughly engaging exercise. The addition of a new circle to the worksheet increased its value to managers (and perhaps to families) and required that it be given a new title, "Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages at Work." The result of this innovative exercise was so successful with the men and women in the group that I would like to share it with you. I offer you the Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages Worksheet and the directions for the exercise as I usually facilitate it (see the "How to" section in this article). But first I want to introduce the concepts of organization culture and motivation.

### What Is Organization Culture And Is It Important?

Culture surrounds us and determines our behaviors to an unknown, but significant extent. Culture is the beliefs, assumptions, rules, values, and practices by which we work. Culture, like water to the fish that swim in it, is pervasive, and we are mostly unconscious of it. Some call it climate. We can feel differences in culture when we walk into a new organization. The kinds of pictures on the walls, the speed at which work is done, who talks to whom, how people are treated — all signal the culture of this organization. The clues are everywhere to the newcomer who pays attention to them. For the oldtimer, the same clues have become quite invisible. The oldtimer has been acculturated. All of us can, with some effort, try to discern the culture in our organization.

Is culture important to productivity in an organization? The managing partner of Arthur Andersen & Co. believed so. In the mid-eighties, I was asked to be a member of a consulting team that AA&Co. convened for the purpose of defining the firm's culture. Our charge was to discover the shared values that pervaded the huge accounting firm. We also were charged with determining the strengths and weaknesses that the shared values contributed to the firm's twin challenges

of providing services to its clients and developing its people. Our collection of literature on the subject of culture soon filled a rather large bookcase. Among the authors of this literature were anthropologists, story tellers, and social scientists. All thought they had nailed down the concept of culture, and all had a different view of it. Two good books on the topic are Deal and Kennedy's **Corporate Culture** and Schein's **Organization Culture and Leadership**.

Most authors on the topic of culture agreed that organization cultures are difficult to define and even more difficult to change. Culture was a rather abstract idea. A few authors, however, challenged our thinking about cultures in more concrete terms. They were of the opinion that large organizations are really made up of smaller subcultures and that individual managers and small working groups could influence the subcultures in which they worked . . . to come full circle, these subcultures could, in turn, influence the culture of the large organizations in which they exist. Alan Wilkins, author and professor of management at Brigham Young University, recently told a group of Minneapolis managers to get moving on developing a productive culture in their organizations. He said with some despair, "I see too many managers waiting for the people at the top to change the culture."

To complete the story of our 15-month investigation of culture at AA&Co.—we did find a large number of shared values. Among them were hard work, training, superior service, competent people, image, and ethical behavior. A strong culture pervaded AA&Co. We also found that the auditing arm and the consulting arm of the firm had developed somewhat different subcultures. How had that happened? Through daily interactions between people, based on their perceptions of the work that needed to be done.

## **The Concept Of Motivation**

The research findings on motivation are inconclusive. Researchers of Maslow's hierarchy of needs have shown that an individual's needs can change and that needs don't necessarily move upwards on the hierarchy step by step. As a matter of fact, a photographer of oppressed people in Germany showed us that at least some persons will choose to play music or write poetry while they starve to death. Herzberg, a researcher who is often cited in the context of motivational theory, never studied motivation at all. What he did study was job satisfaction. In the process, he leaped to the conclusion that job satisfaction equals work motivation. That he was wrong is well known to managers who must deal with satisfied but unmotivated workers. Other motivational theorists — Vroom, McClelland, and Adams — seem to have explained other parts of the motivational elephant, but all have fallen short of developing a comprehensive theory of motivation.

In spite of the lack of a universal motivational theory, successful managers have learned to deal with people as unique individuals who want and need what they alone want and need at work. As it turns out, it is impossible for a manager to put people together in a group and motivate all of them at once. Motivation is strictly an individual issue, as those of us who have raised more than one child have long since discovered.

Behaviorists in the tradition of Skinner and human performance technologists (an emerging profession) believe that most people want and need feedback. We want to know that we are important, that what we do is important, that we have done well, and that there are some things we could do better. Experts on motivation say that pay and promotion and other forms of reward rank high or low on the lists of things that motivate people at work, depending on individual preferences.

If we assume that the need for communication (feedback) about work performance is universal, the major person-to-person communications problem then becomes one of distinguishing between helpful and unhelpful messages. A widely read business newsletter advises managers

To motivate employees, don't tell them what they're doing wrong; tell them what they're doing right. Don't measure absenteeism; measure attendance. Don't measure errors; measure accuracy. Keep the focus where it belongs: on good results and good performance.

Sound advice on motivational practices can be found in any management textbook. Managers have received advice aplenty and still they use the same unmotivating messages. What managers need now is a way to experience in a safe learning environment how to feel, see, hear, and respond to what I call the six kinds of person-to-person messages. The goal is to develop managers' communication skills so they have "at their fingertips" and "in their bones" the motivational messages that work.

## **The Six-Messages Exercise**

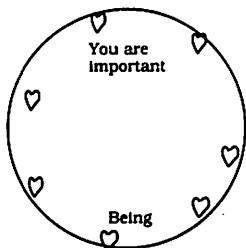
Business authors, over and over talk to managers about their responsibilities for coaching employees — carefully spelling out work expectations, helping people set specific goals, teaching people the skills they need to do their work, and counseling the worker on performance issues. The "Five-Balloon sheet" appeared to me to be missing the coaching balloon. I changed the balloons to circles and changed the language from strokes to messages. I also added a sixth circle to the page and called it "Coaching for Doing Better."

I will describe the six kinds of person-to-person messages at work in the following order: Messages for Being, Doing Well, Doing Better, Doing Poorly, Plastic, and Don't Be. Please note that all six kinds of messages can be delivered in words or tone of voice or actions. I will

end by describing a way to facilitate the Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages exercise.

## The Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages and Culture

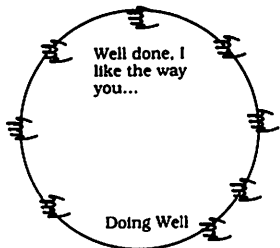
### The Person-to-Person Messages



**Messages for Being.** "I'm glad you work here," "Happy birthday," a cheerful "Good morning," and "Take your time to get better before you come back to work" convey the message that you are important and we are glad you

work here. The Being messages (and all the other messages) take on added importance when the manager delivers them. Being messages are unearned; that is, we don't have to do anything to get them. They are free. Workplaces ought to abound in such messages. When they are freely given in quantity to everyone, Being messages allow people to feel that they work in a place of abundance. There are sufficient positive messages to go around. No one need compete for the boss's attention.

Being messages contribute to feelings of warmth and comfort at work, but they are not sufficient by themselves to motivate people to perform work. The Doing Well messages are important for motivational purposes.

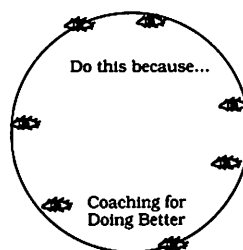


**Messages for Doing Well.** "Well done, I especially like the way you . . .," "Tell us at the staff meeting how you . . .," and "Congratulations on meeting your goals again" convey the message that skilled work performance will be re-

warded. Pats on the back must be earned; that is, we must do something to get them. Workplaces ought to abound in these messages. Doing Well messages should be given in such a way that people understand the specifics of the performance for which they are being recognized. Being specific about a successful accomplishment, "I liked the way you facilitated our last meeting so that we completed the entire agenda" requires more thought and effort than does an effortless "Good meeting."

Catch them doing things well and tell them you noticed. People are more likely to repeat successful practices when they know what those practices are. A useful principle to remember when giving positive feedback is "be specific." Another one is "be generous." Why be stingy when it comes to recognizing good work performances? Employee-of-the-month awards are stingy. Really. Did only one person deserve a reward? Give out lots of

recognition for lots of good practices. "We all are winners" makes it fun to work here.

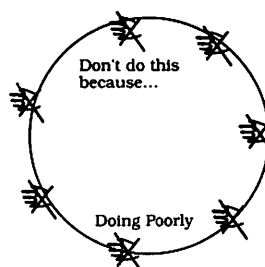


**Messages for Doing Better, Coaching.** "This time try . . ." "Before you start the procedure, read through all the steps," and "Talk to me about your plans for this week" convey the message that doing work correctly is important.

Doing Better messages may be earned or unearned.

Doing Better messages are earned in situations where an individual has stated or has demonstrated that he or she lacks the skills and knowledge to perform the work well. Interpersonally skilled managers generally will decide to limit the number of critical messages, or messages for Doing Poorly, that they deliver after a work performance is finished. Instead, they will choose to deliver appropriate Doing Better messages before the same or similar work is repeated. They will save their critical comments and deliver coaching help when it will be most appreciated and most likely used. For example, a manager may say to herself, "I must remind George about the proper steps to closing a sale before he meets with the group at Acme Products" or "I don't need to embarrass Jane in front of this group by telling her where she went wrong, but I will ask her to meet with me to walk through the formula for calculating the heat-gain rate before the next group comes through."

Doing Better messages are unearned if they are delivered before someone will do a job or task for the first time. Giving Doing Better messages is called coaching. Helping someone acquire the knowledge and skills he or she will need in order to perform a new task is a message for Doing Better. Helping people envision how to behave in a new work situation by "walking them through the action in their minds" is a message for Doing Better. Helping an individual set reasonable, achievable goals is also a message for Doing Better, especially when the manager reminds the individual goalsetter how well he or she has set and reached challenging goals in the past. Offering Doing Better messages to individuals, or coaching, is one of the most value-adding services a manager can provide. Providing appropriate Doing Better messages is an important method for operating on the future. Collecting and recording work measures, although essential for giving performance feedback and for reporting group accomplishments, is a means to check on the past. It is not so value adding as coaching.



**Messages for Doing Poorly.** "Don't come late to our meetings because . . .," "Stop spilling oil on the floor and leaving it there because . . .," and "Your record of on-time deliveries is slipping, do something about it or ask me for help" convey the message that

below-standard work will be noticed and something will be said about it. Messages for Doing Poorly must be earned; that is, the individual must do, or fail to do, something to get them.

It ought not to surprise any manager that a scarcity of messages for Being, Doing Well and Doing Better in the workplace, could result in an increase in the behaviors that attract messages for Doing Poorly. When they attract messages for Doing Poorly, people can say "At least the boss noticed I am here today."

Messages for Doing Poorly are used to point out the specific behaviors or practices that got in the way of successful work performance. Depending on the receiver, Doing Poorly messages may be given softly or firmly, but they must be given directly so they will not be misinterpreted. After giving a Doing Poorly message, it is important to check with the receiver to make sure that the message has been received.

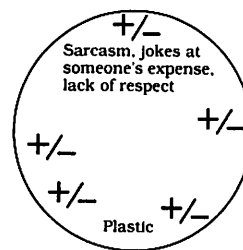
To maintain interpersonal trust, managers need to keep in mind the three criteria about when to deliver a Doing Poorly message or a Doing Better message. A Doing Better message should be given when a mistake made at work was acceptable because:

1. The mistake was made in pursuit of the mission and goals of the organization.
2. Something important about how to be successful next time was learned by making the mistake.
3. The mistake was made within the scope of the authority given to the individual.

A Doing Poorly message should be given when a mistake made at work was not acceptable; that is according to criteria that are the opposite of above. For instance, mistakes that are made to enrich oneself (embezzlement), to build one's ego at another's expense (failing to respect people), or to avoid the consequences of one's acts (lying) should be followed up with negative consequences for Doing Poorly.

Managers who develop their people, know that many opportunities for delivering messages for Doing Poorly also present opportunities for delivering messages for Doing Better. A useful principle to remember for giving feedback on performance is to limit critical feedback to essential matters, such as safety violations and those times when the consequences of the poor performance are severe or potentially severe. Most adults know when they have erred. They appreciate managers who limit criticizing behaviors and emphasize coaching behaviors.

When Doing Well and Doing Better messages are given routinely, the dreaded annual performance appraisal is transformed into a mutual celebration of goal achievement and the thoughtful setting of specific goals to be achieved in the future.

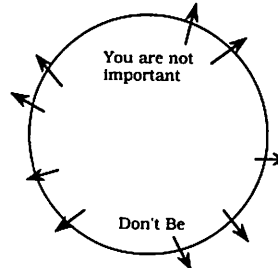


**Plastic Messages.** "You women always surprise me when you make more sales than the men," "Hey Smart-stuff! Come here," and "humorous" gifts with hidden negative implications convey the message that we do notice

you but you and your feelings are unimportant to us. Plastic messages may contain both earned and unearned elements, but they are never deserved and should not be given.

"You are really sensitive, for a man" or "You always do the best job of delivering bad news" or "You do these tough reports so well, I know you won't mind doing three more of them," are messages that seem to be a pat on the back for highly skilled behaviors. But a second look will show that they are subtly negative. The negative part is clearer in the following messages: "Let's have some fun by sending her a male stripper on her birthday; that'll show her what it means to work with us guys" or "I don't like working with blacks (or Latinos or men or . . .), but you're who they sent so . . ." Givers of Plastic messages generally try to soften the blow by saying "I was just kidding. What's the matter with you? Can't you take a joke?" which can be taken as a sign of their own mixed feelings toward teasing and other ways they have fun at someone's expense.

In a work setting that abounds in Plastic messages, people never know where they stand. It may be outside their awareness that when they attack others with Plastic messages, they make themselves vulnerable to counterattack. This fact is not always blatantly obvious to managers who have the power to give and take away economic rewards. Managers who give Plastics are vulnerable to work slowdowns and other forms of deceptive work practices.



**Don't Be Messages.** "My open-door policy doesn't hold for you," "Did I forget to give you your performance appraisal, again?" or "Sam needs the overtime more than you do" convey the message that individuals and their needs

are not important. Don't Be messages are not earned. Individuals do not deserve them. Such messages are the ultimate insults in the workplace. Don't Be messages should not be given, ever.

The work of organizations moves forward based on trust. Whenever Don't Be messages abound in a workplace, people are continually thinking about getting another job, about covering their backsides, or about getting even. Work in such workplaces is often done out of duty or fear and the quality of products or services suffers from lack of care or outright sabotage.

Unfortunately, the interpersonal trust that has taken managers many years to build can easily be bent or destroyed. The problem is that managers sometimes overlook important opportunities to deliver positive messages, a circumstance that can leave big holes in people's self-images as competent, valued individuals. Certainly, vowing to apologize whenever we have inadvertently diminished someone and making a sincere attempt to undo any damage we have done are in order. An implicit or explicit ground rule to live by in our workplaces might be stated as follows: "We will strive always to acknowledge, respect, and support one another."

In summary, three propositions can be made as follows:

- 1) The first three of the six kinds of person-to-person messages, Being, Doing Well, and Doing Better, if delivered with sensitivity, will yield positive results and ought to be given generously in our workplaces.
- 2) Messages for Doing Poorly should be thoughtfully delivered by managers after consideration of the full range of potential responses, both wanted and unwanted, on the part of the receiver.
- 3) The last two of the six kinds of messages, Plastic and Don't Be, will yield negative results — in the individual receiver over the short run, and in the organization over the long run. These messages ought not be given in our workplaces.

These propositions, if true, present to managers a new perspective for looking at and influencing changes in the subcultures in which they work. The Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages Sheet represents a tool for teaching managers how to evaluate subcultures in their workplaces and for examining carefully the roles of criticism and coaching in influencing work performance.

### **Organization Culture and the Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages**

In some workplaces, individual workers seem to thrive. They grow in their skills and knowledge and in their abilities to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. In these workplaces, quality and productivity problems are solved in a climate of goodwill and with a win/win philosophy. Messages for Being are given easily, freely, and often. Messages for Doing Well and for Doing Better are given with significantly greater frequency than Messages for Doing Poorly. And Plastic messages and Don't Be messages are rarely given. Such workplaces are positive cultures. People prefer to come to work. They strive to meet their commitments to themselves, to the people with whom they work, and to the goals of the organization. High levels of trust make communicating easy.

In other workplaces, the opposite appears to be true. People acquire ulcers and heart conditions and complain of other physical ills. Individuals are criticized more often than they are recognized for working well. Individuals attend training, at which they hear messages for Doing Better, but they do not then improve how they work. In such workplaces, quality and productivity problems elicit managerial hostility and blaming, and win/lose solutions are reached in an atmosphere of fierce and destructive competition. Messages for Being, Doing Well, and Doing Better are rarely given. Messages for Doing Poorly, Plastic Messages, and Don't Be messages are frequently given. Such workplaces are negative cultures. People prefer not to come to work to be punished. They avoid taking risks because they wish to avoid being blamed for failures. They avoid making commitments and fear the results of not meeting the unrealistic goals that are assigned to them. They hang together in self-protective cliques and talk in the language of exclusion — us versus them. Low levels of trust make communication difficult.

### **Changing Cultures**

By focusing on delivering the three positive kinds of person to person messages and on limiting the three negative kinds of messages, organization leaders, managers, and work team members can change the culture of their own work groups. They can begin to influence the culture of the larger organization in which they work and the society in which they live.

### **Changing Motivation**

By focusing on delivering the three positive kinds of person-to-person messages and on limiting the three negative kinds of messages, organization leaders, managers, and work team members can influence the motivation of the people with whom they work. They can begin to add greater value to their organizations.

## **How to Facilitate the "Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages" Exercise**

Prepare the participants by suggesting that they will be involved in a participative learning situation and that they have the right to pass and observe other participants as they work through the exercise.

Ask the participants to choose a partner to work with.

To each partnership, hand out

- two copies of the Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages sheet (the circles)
- two copies of the two Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages Examples handouts (Both positive and negative)
- two copies each of the Accept Positive and Reject/Accept Negative handouts.

- a handful of bingo chips or other non-edible markers
- a handful of jelly beans or raisins or other edible markers

On a flipchart or an overhead transparency of the Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages sheet, point to the circles and say you will describe six kinds of person-to-person messages that are commonly given and received at work. Ask them to follow along on their copies and to refer to their examples handouts as well.

**Giving the six messages.** Point to the circle for Being messages and refer to the examples handout. Give examples of typical Being messages. Repeat for each of the circles, pausing to check for understanding and for the need to repeat a description or provide more examples.

**Accepting or rejecting the six messages.** Point to the circle for Being messages and refer to the Accept Positive Messages and Reject/Accept Negative Messages handouts. Give examples of typical responses to the Being messages. Repeat for each of the circles, pausing to check for understanding and for the need to repeat a description or provide more examples.

Say that the partners will now have the opportunity to give and to receive all six kinds of messages. Invite the partners to choose one person to give the messages and one person to receive the messages.

**Step 1.** The person who gives the messages uses verbal or active means to deliver at least one each of all six kinds of messages. With each message the person also hands the receiver a jelly bean.

**Step 2.** The person who receives the message and the jelly bean considers how receiving the message felt, and puts the jelly bean down on the circle where he or she decided to receive the message.

**Step 3.** The person who delivered the message then, and only then, places a bingo chip on the circle in which he or she intended the message to be taken by the receiver. The deliverer and the receiver at this time note any differences in placement between where the message was intended and where the message was received.

**Step 4.** The person who received the message now chooses to accept or reject the message. Either eating the jelly bean or leaving it on the sheet indicates that the receiver decided to keep the message. Throwing away the jelly bean that accompanied the message indicates that the receiver decided to reject the message. The rejector may also choose to say some accepting or rejecting words like "Thank you" or "I don't accept that Doing Poorly or Plastic or Don't Be message."

Steps 1 through 4 are repeated until both partners have had the opportunity to practice delivering and receiving or rejecting all six types of messages.

The facilitator tracks the role-play until the time when each of the partners has non-edible markers on all six of the circles, which means that the participant has given all six kinds and his or her partner has had the opportunity to accept or reject all six kinds. At that point, the facilitator may choose to stop the play, derole\* the participants and discuss the following:

- What messages did you decide to accept?
- What messages did you decide to reject?
- How did you choose to accept or reject them?
- Did you note any differences between where a message was intended and where it was received?
- Did the receiver convert a message upward toward the positives? Downward toward the negatives? A Doing Well message upward into Being? A Being message downward into a Doing Well message?
- What implication does this exercise offer to the manager who intends to change the way he or she gives certain positive or negative messages?

The facilitator then says "Let's divide the sheet in half between the circle for Doing Better and the circle for Doing Poorly and look at the differences between organization cultures that represent the top half or the bottom half."

- Would you rather work in an organization where most messages are delivered from the positive half of the sheet or from the negative half of the sheet?
- How would it feel to work in an organization where most of the messages were positive? How do you believe you would respond?
- How would it feel to work in an organization where most of the messages were negative? How do you believe you would respond?
- Are most of the messages that managers, including you, deliver in your organization positive or are they negative?
- Do you want to change anything about the kinds of messages that you deliver to the people you manage and the people you work with?

Invite people to consider what they have learned and to develop an action plan for using their new learning to create more positive and productive cultures at work and at home. Hand out extra "Six-Message" worksheets to the participants and invite them to try this exercise at home with their families.

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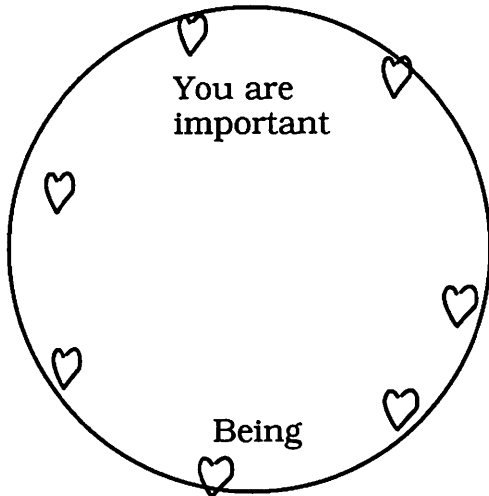
\*To derole, invite all individuals to see themselves and others as who they are, not the people they portrayed during the role-play.

<sup>1</sup>Clark, J.I. (1978). *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair*. New York: Harper & Row, p. 22.

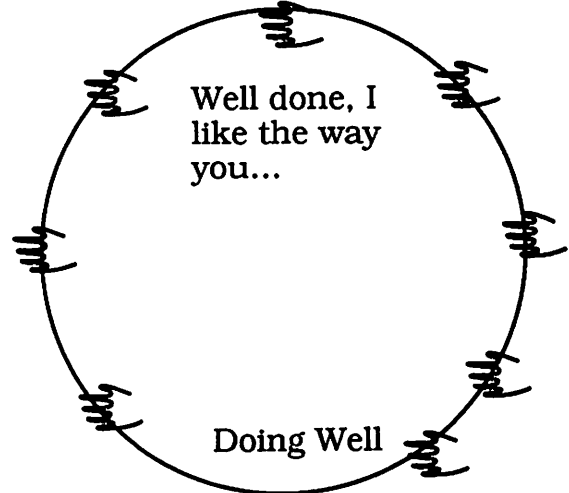
<sup>2</sup>Clark, J.I. (1981). *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair Leader Guide*. New York: Harper & Row, p. 94.

# Six kinds of person-to-person messages

Give lots of these any time



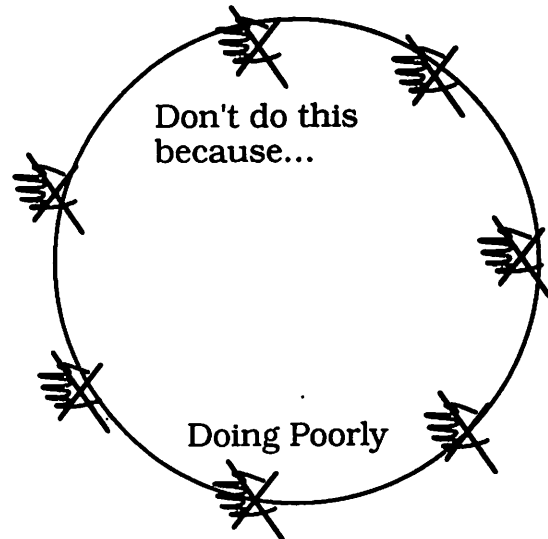
Give lots of these after valued performance



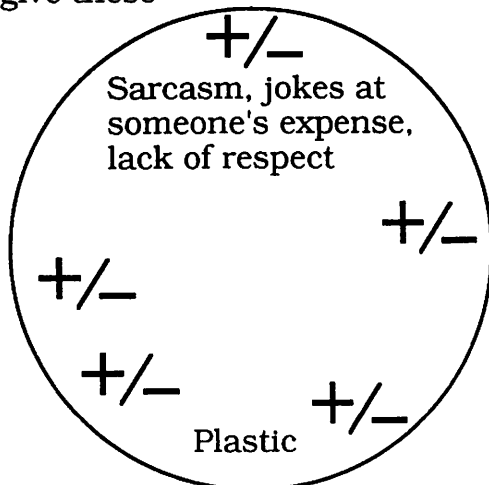
Give these as needed before performance



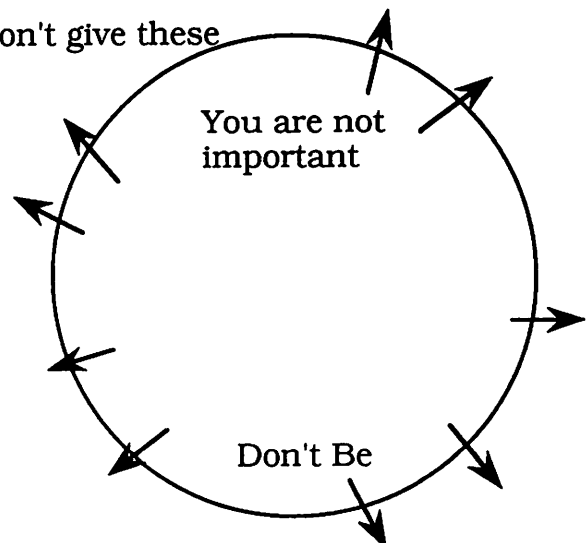
Give few of these after poor performance



Don't give these



Don't give these



# Accept Positive Messages

The following general rules for accepting positive messages are not meant to be rigidly applied:

- Hear the positive messages that are offered at work.
- Take the positive messages in.
- Say "Thank you."
- Acknowledge the specifics of the message so that the giver of the message knows that you heard it — all of it.
- Give positive messages freely, but you don't have to reciprocate any positive messages given to you.

## Messages for Being

- "Thank you."
- "I appreciate the . . ."
- "I feel good when you say that."
- "Thanks, I enjoy working with you, too."

## Messages for Doing Well

- "Thank you."
- "Yes, I did some good work on that . . ."
- "Thank you, I am becoming more skilled in . . ."
- "Thanks for noticing. I worked hard on that . . ."
- "When you notice what I have accomplished, the work seems worth it."

## Messages for Doing Better, Coaching

- "Thank you."
- "I appreciate the help."
- "Yes, I see the wisdom of doing it your way."
- "I'll try it, and I'll let you know the results."
- "Thanks for showing me what I wasn't able to see myself."
- "I didn't know you resented what I did in the meeting. I will make amends."



# Reject/Accept Negative Messages

The following general rules for rejecting/accepting negative messages are not meant to be rigidly applied:

- Hear the negative messages that are offered at work.
- Pay attention to the feelings behind the message and choose to respond to them or not respond to them.
- Pay attention to the kernels of truth that may be buried in negative messages and respond to them.
- You do not have to respond in kind, ever.
- Appreciate the dignity and worth of all persons.
- Caution, you may have misinterpreted the message.

## Messages for Doing Poorly

“I hear that you are angry because . . .”

“You want me to do it another way next time.”

“Will you be more specific about what you want?”

“Your criticism does not help me to know what to do instead.”

“How would you rather I do . . .?”

## Plastic Messages

Ignore both the useful part and the negative part and go on as if no message had been given.

Accept the useful part only. “Thank you for remembering my birthday.”

Reject the negative part only. “I think this gift would better have been given to somebody else.”

Accept the useful part **and** reject the negative part. “I do like this dress (or suit), and I think your comment about my hips was unkind.”

Hear the sarcasm as a positive and respond to that.

## Don't Be Messages

“I do not accept that.”

“*Always* seems like too strong a word for two missteps out of a hundred good ones.”

Pretend you didn't hear the Don't Be message, and change the subject.

Ignore the Don't Be message and do not reward the giver by a response. “Shall we go on with our business?”

# Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages Examples

## POSITIVE

### Messages for Being

*Messages for being are not earned; that is, the receiver does not have to do anything to get them. Give such messages freely, sincerely, and often.*

#### Words:

"We're lucky you work here."  
"You are unique."  
"I enjoy working with you."  
"Happy Birthday."  
"I'm glad you came to work today."  
"I'm glad you are part of the team."  
"Good morning."  
"You are important to us."

#### Actions:

Smile.  
Touch on the shoulder or arm (only if acceptable to the individual).  
Sharing important information.  
Initiating contact.  
Using the name the person prefers to be called.  
Spending time with the person.  
Handshake.

### Messages for Doing Well

*Messages for Doing Well are given after the valued work performance. To encourage performance, give messages for Doing Well after nearly every correct performance. To maintain performance, give messages for Doing Well on an intermittent schedule and whenever your giving such a message is important to you or to the performer.*

#### Words:

Pat the individual on the back: "I like the way you. . ."  
"Much better, keep on proofing your work."  
"What a fantastic innovation!"  
"Wow! you do that work quickly."  
"Nice job of planning the meeting."  
"You know how to get us going on the right track."  
"You strategize very skillfully."  
"Great follow through on the Smith job."  
They plan to give us their repeat business."  
"You managed that project very well."  
"I like the way you develop your people."  
"You're a good thinker."

"I'll bet you are pleased about how much you accomplished today."  
"Thanks for helping me think about the problem."

#### Actions:

Hand out a certificate of achievement.  
Bonus check.  
Smile.  
Pat on the back.  
Promotion.  
Reward.

### Messages for Doing Better, Coaching

*To separate messages for Doing Better from messages for Doing Poorly, deliver them before the work will be performed. Messages for Doing Better take the pattern "Do this because . . ."*

#### Words:

Provide the criteria you will use to evaluate the job:  
"Here is how I plan to judge your work."  
Say: "This time do it this way."  
Say: "Try doing it this way."  
Say: "Working with Don is difficult, here is how Jerry works with him. . ."  
Prompt the individual to action: "Do it now."

#### Actions:

Hand the individual the proper tool when he or she starts to pick up the wrong tool for the job.  
Provide a procedure manual.  
Post a picture of the correct assembly.  
Give a job aid.  
Show a film of the correct procedure.  
Model the behavior you want.  
Make it impossible to do the job wrong.  
Make it easier to do the job right.

# Six Kinds of Person-to-Person Messages Examples

## NEGATIVE

### Messages for Doing Poorly

*Messages for Doing Poorly are given after the work has been performed. To avoid being accusatory, follow this pattern "Don't do this because . . ." A pattern of giving many of these messages may signal the need for greater skill in giving messages for Doing Better, or it may signal a staffing problem.*

#### Words:

Say how you feel: "I resent your being late to the meeting. Do you want us to start later next time?"

Say why the performance was poor: "Leaving the copy machine on overnight runs up the utility bill."

Say what you want instead: "When you interfere with my work, I get mixed up. Let me do it my way."

Provide consequences: "That's the third \$600-circuit board you have broken this week. We can't let you stay in the job if this continues."

"Fourteen days absent! You are in danger of losing your job."

#### Actions:

No bonus check.

Productivity chart with individual's record marked.

Tally of errors made.

Hand the person a "broom to sweep up the mess."

Provide a verbal reprimand and a copy of the policy statement.

### Plastic Messages

*Avoid giving messages that could have negative implications.*

#### Words:

Use heavy sarcasm "How come you're so smart?"

"You always do everything so perfectly."

"You do that well for a female."

"No matter what anybody says, 'I like you.'"

"You certainly look good for your age."

"You look nice. That dress conceals your hips."

"You sure work fast for an old man."

Use sexist language: "Come here, honey."

Punish good work: "You are such a fast producer. Here are three more that John didn't finish."

#### Actions:

Play practical jokes on them.

Give a ridiculing birthday present.

Ask your secretary to choose, sign, and mail a get-well card.

Tell sexual jokes to harass the individual.

### Don't Be Messages

*Avoid giving messages that hurt. No one deserves to be treated as if he or she were unimportant.*

#### Words:

Say: "I never had trouble like this before you came to work here."

Say: "If I hadn't hired you, life would be easy."

Tell the individual to "Go stick your hand in the conveyor belt."

Say: "I hope you slip on that oil you spilled."

Encourage conflict by saying: "I'll bet Jane was disappointed when she saw you coming."

Say: "Go away; get lost!"

Inform the individual of his or her dispensability. "You could be replaced."

#### Actions:

Address the person by a name that the person does not prefer.

Acting and speaking as if the person were not there.

Forget to tell her what you have told everyone else.

Blame him for everything that goes wrong.

Mess with their equipment.

Laugh cruelly at their expense.

Deny a reward that has been earned.

## Opening Activity To Focus on Feedback

Say,

- This is a meeting about improving the communication in our organization/business. Feedback is one important aspect of communication, and we will be focusing on that today. To start this meeting, will each of you choose a partner and tell that person one way you think we could improve the way we give feedback in our organization?
- Introduce your partner and, if your partner is willing, tell the group one way he or she feels we could improve the way we give feedback in our organization.

## Closing Activity

At the end of the meeting:

- Briefly review the activities of the meeting.
- Ask each person to share with the person next to him one kind of feedback he will give more often in the future.
- Ask for resentments. Listen to resentments, do not defend or explain.
- Ask for appreciations.

FEEDBACK

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