

Effective Parent's Toolkit

Feedback: Using Compassion & Truth for Effective Parenting Results

Core Material – Reading (Feedback)



One of the most valuable contributions you will make to your children is to give them effective Feedback. When applied appropriately, feedback can open up whole new Opportunities for children.

Effective feedback creates a kind of awareness that makes a difference in how one sees things. It provides insight, opens thought and expands vision. To give good feedback requires generosity on

behalf of the parent. Feedback is always neutral and objective. It does not contain Judgment or opinion. When giving feedback, the greatest challenge one can have, is to really make a contribution that benefits the child. It involves giving up any judgments, opinions and even beliefs, about something or someone.

A common mistake parents often make is to offer opinions rather than feedback. Opinions sometimes fall under the “false label” of feedback. When this happens, the child is disempowered and the parent-child relationship may suffer negative effects.

Key points of effective feedback

1. Always ask for permission before giving feedback. “May I give you some feedback?” A child will be more receptive to listen when they grant you permission. You too will be more alert in how you express yourself objectively.
2. Share truthfully your own experience as an example from which to learn from.

3. Fully own the power of your words. Be responsible for what and how you provide feedback. For instance, to declare how you feel about something, you may say: "When you said that, I felt sad because..."

4. Become aware of your opinions and judgments and then let them go. Your viewpoint will not always make the biggest difference to your child because their point of view may be different than yours.

5. Feedback is neither positive nor negative. It is simply feedback. By stating what is or what is not from your perspective, may just help your child get an insight that they may need.

Giving great feedback takes practice and this is how you will learn it most effectively: with lots of practice. But another way is to also get feedback from your very own feedback. It will require compassion to do so. Patient, sympathetic consciousness for the needs of yourself and others is what compassion is all about. It is also a willingness to be humble and honest with yourself and others, along with the desire to learn and want to solve an issue.

DISCUSSION with Your Coach

Pick three of the following topics to open a discussion with me using the Comments box below :

1. How do you feel about receiving feedback?
2. What kind of feedback has made a difference for you?
3. What kind of feedback has left you disempowered?
4. What is the difference between feedback and criticism?
5. What is the purpose of feedback in a parenting situation?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

1. Choose three people who know you well and ask them for feedback on something in your life right now. (Choose something of low importance. This will help you stay objective. It could be the last dinner party you had or the state of your garden.)
2. Evaluate the feedback you were given. How did you respond? Was some feedback better than others? What made it so? What did you learn from this exercise?

Please send your responses to me via the comment section below.

Topic 2: Role-plays

Role-play is a very effective technique in providing feedback to your children. It will provide a different perspective and allow them to not only practice receiving feedback, but also learn how to give it.

There are two ways in which to use role-play techniques:

1. Role-play takes place when the child plays themselves.
2. Reverse role-play takes place when you play the child and they play the other person in the situation.

Role-play

This is a great technique when a child is unsure on how to have a conversation with someone; or has some fear around what to say and how to proceed. In this case, role-play becomes essentially a practice for conversation. This is done so the child can find some powerful and clear way to communicate to resolve the situation. As a parent, you can provide them with effective feedback on how to make it even more powerful.

Another way you can also use role-play is when there is an opportunity for the child to face their worst fear. For instance, when a child fears someone's reaction about something. By doing some role-play, the child may come to realize that their worst fear may not be so bad! This helps the child greatly because they learn to manage the problem rather than run away from it.

REVERSE ROLE-PLAY

This is also a wonderful tool to use in your parenting sessions. It's the same situation as role-play but instead, the parent plays the role of the child, and the child plays the role of the person they want to have a conversation with to clarify an issue.

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Consider the following question and then post your thoughts on the discussion board under the topic Effective Feedback.

1. When and how might you use role-play with your children?

Feedback vs. Active Listening

As a parent we are providing the child with information that we have noticed, discerned, or are picking up from what they are saying. Feedback is nonjudgmental. It is not based on opinion nor beliefs but rather on the moment of observation.

The following is an example of good effective feedback:

Parent: "I have noticed that you are not keeping up with your homework. Furthermore, I am told that you are turning the work you do complete in late, and are not taking steps to do better. It is my observation that you have something on your mind, or are being distracted by something." Very simply, the parent states what they notice or have been told and then listens to the child's response to follow up even further.

Active listening is a skill which helps parents listen to the child's fears, concerns, wishes, desires and possibilities. This kind of listening is different from daily, regular listening. In this case, the parent is listening for many things that are going on at the same time.

By carefully listening to the child, a parent is able to mirror back what is really being said. The child may say something, but really mean something else. This is what the ear of the parent is tuning in for, to listen to the child's real fears, concerns, desires and wants. Therefore, listening requires the willingness to understand what is being said along with feeling the emotion that is being expressed by the child. When this takes place, listening is complete and real.

For example:

Parent: "I don't hear a lot of enthusiasm in your voice. Is there something I'm missing?"

Parent: "You sound really excited about that, tell me more."

Feedback is about simply telling the child what has been observed. Active listening is a process of checking in with the child on what is being heard correctly or not. It is also about making sure, that as a parent, we are on the same level of understanding as the child is about a given situation. Active listening allows us to get the information we need in order to provide clear, effective, insightful feedback.

As a parent, when you ask for constant feedback from the child, this allows you to grow as a parent and serve as a role-model for your child to experience the power of feedback and active listening.

Here are more examples of how a parent approaches their child to receive feedback:

Parent says:

1. "It was great that you came to me with this concern, did talking it out help you?"
2. "When you are upset like you were today, was it alright that we sat in your room to talk it out, or do you think we could find a better way for the next time?"
3. "Now you have a plan to get this work done, is there anything else you need from me to put your plan into action?"

The differences between feedback and criticism

When providing effective feedback to children it is important to remember that there is a difference between being critical and communicating effectively to empower the child through feedback.

The following is a list of some of the differences between criticism and feedback:

<i>Criticism</i>	<i>Feedback</i>
Personal	Not personal
Fault-finding	Opportunity finding
Opinion based	Fact based
Unsolicited	Often welcomed
Subjective	Objective
Focused on the past	Focused on the future
Destructive	Constructive
Emotional	Not emotional, neutral

Summary

Feedback is a statement offered by a parent to provide insight to the child. It is how a parent observes things. There is no judgment about it, it is said, just as it is.

What we see as parents comes from our perspective. Which comes from "the outside" of someone's life. It gives us an advantage because we can often see what our children are not able to see. This is so, because they are often too close to the subject matter.

To give feedback is to simply mirror it back to the child the way we see it. For example, a parent may say to a child, "I hear you are really angry about that, do you want to talk more about it?" There is no judgment here about the emotion being conveyed by the child. It is simply being noticed for the child to evaluate the feeling and move forward.

If a child shares a situation, the parent can offer to provide feedback by saying: "Would you like a different perspective?" Or perhaps say: "Can I share with you what I am getting from that?" Again, feedback is simply about sharing an observation without judgment or opinion.

An opinion sounds more like this: "Well let me tell you what I think about that!" Be aware that when we share feedback with a child, we may be totally off in our remark. If it happens, this is

fine. Sometimes when we are off, we can help get the child back on the right track. They may say something like: "Well, I don't really see it that way. Instead, I think it is more like this..." This helps them get back on the right track. Also, be sure not to hold back for fear of being wrong. Sometimes, we need to share what we notice, so the child can think about it, and then take action.

In another instance, you may experience a child ignoring your feedback. This is fine. As a parent, it is still important to share it with them. Often times, we are planting seeds that may sprout later. It takes courage to give feedback, and be willing to patiently wait and see how your observation can have a positive effect on the child's thinking and life.

Remember, children really want feedback from parents. They expect feedback to move them into action, so give it freely and generously. Of course, the timing is important. So be sure to listen and know when to ask for permission.

Children need parents to point out things that they may be missing out on, maybe overlooking something, or because no one else is willing to point it out to them. Feedback is about sharing what we notice with a neutral and objective voice of observation. In other words, as a parent, simply communicate back to the child what you are really hearing and noticing. Your child will be grateful for the insight and the "push" you offer.

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

1. What are three situations you might encounter as a parent in which role-play could be useful? Post your answer on the discussion board under the topic Effective Feedback.

Summary and Review Questions

Action Steps – Putting it All into Action
