

GIVING CRITICISM

First of all it is important to consider why you are criticising the other person. Is it:

- To get something off your chest
- To have a go at them to make you feel temporarily better
- To be constructive, working towards a change of behaviour or attitude that will benefit you both?

Naturally, the most successful outcomes arise from the third reason. The key things to remember are:

Relax; think positively; be assertive; remember the needs and feelings of the other person.

The following stages of giving negative feedback should be considered, step by step, and then adapted to the circumstances as appropriate.

1. **Decide at the outset what you want to achieve** from the meeting/phone call.
2. **Choose the time and place carefully.** Usually it is preferable to give the feedback immediately or soon after the event (especially if you needed time to reflect or cool down). Choose a quiet place and ensure you have enough undisturbed time. If giving feedback over the phone ask the other person if they have time to talk
3. **Do you want to soften the blow or does the criticism demand straight talking?** If the former you can use language like 'I appreciate you have a lot on your mind at present, however.....'
4. **Use 'I' statements.** Remember that it is you who wants some sort of change from the other person, not the other way round. 'You need to show respect' is a blaming message and labels the other person in a negative way. 'I would like you to respect me in front of colleagues' is a rational message and more likely to get a positive result.
5. **Be clear what the other person has done that bothers you.**
6. **Don't be afraid to express your emotions** if this helps re-enforce your message – e.g. 'I was furious when
7. **Use silences.** After delivering your initial statement or criticism, let the other person respond. Don't be tempted to fill the silence with another statement or, worst of all try to respond for them!
8. **Be persistent.** Explain what you want them to do differently and if necessary, point out the consequences of them not agreeing to your request.
9. **Always try to end on a positive note.** Once you are sure you have been heard and understood, summarise what has been agreed in a positive way.

Dennis Preston

