

Aims:

To understand the importance of regular feedback during a training session

To provide participants with a selection of feedback techniques

Resources required:

Training room and small group spaces; flipchart, OHP and pens

- 3.1 'What feedback does' OHP transparency and handout copies
- 3.2 'The golden rules of feedback' OHP transparency and handout copies
- 3.3 'Choosing a feedback exercise' OHP transparency and handout copies
- 3.4 'Feedback techniques' handout copies
- 4.1 'The 5W-H Checklist of Feedback Mechanisms' instruction sheet and checklist

'Learning log' sheets

1 Background notes

Feedback is an important part of any course. You, as the tutor of this course will benefit by obtaining feedback about the course as it progresses, and the participants should also be helped to see the value of feedback opportunities in any training course they might run. This section aims to meet both these requirements by providing a selection of simple feedback exercises (handout 3.4) which can be used at any time, some tutoring material about feedback (3.1, 3.2, 3.3) and a participants' exercise to increase their understanding of feedback (4.1).

The term 'feedback' refers to any opportunity during a training course when the process of the course is temporarily stopped to enable the participants to express their views on the course content and methods. In effect, the delivery of the course content is halted whilst everyone has an opportunity to take stock of their participation in the course and comment on it accordingly. By making these comments openly during the feedback exercise, participants can become aware of how others are feeling and action can be taken to change less satisfactory elements of the course. Feedback is particularly useful for the course trainer in providing an on-the-spot reaction to the course whilst it is in progress; it is also often supportive to other participants because feedback allows them to share their reactions and anxieties rather than carrying them alone.

The **purpose of feedback** is summarised in OHP 3.1 and

explained below.

- stops the actual process of the course

Requesting feedback during a course is an interruption to the natural process of delivering the course content. The course content is suspended whilst this interim assessment of how participants are reacting to it is made.

- (re) engages participants

By stopping the course and asking for feedback, those participants who have become disengaged during the previous session will automatically be re-involved. This happens because of the change in pace and format introduced by requesting feedback, and because they are being asked to contribute.

- encourages participants to take stock of their involvement so far

Feedback invites participants to examine their involvement in the course so far, and comment upon it. To do this, they need to reflect on their learning from the course.

- enables the trainer to assess the reactions of participants

By gathering and noting comments made during a feedback session, the trainer is monitoring the involvement of participants. She can then take action to change parts of the course, repeat parts not fully understood, or pay additional attention to some members of the course.

- provides the trainer with an interim evaluation

An evaluation guide part way through a course is extremely valuable. Evaluations collected at the end are informative but always too late to influence the delivery of that course. Mid-course feedback provides a less comprehensive evaluation, but a sufficient basis for identifying any necessary immediate alterations to the course.

- creates an opportunity for introducing change into the course

The feedback process of stopping the course and gathering reactions creates the opportunity for making changes and corrections - about content, pace, format, timing, or whatever - in the course. It is a kind of breathing space in which course roles can be temporarily suspended. As a result, participants will feel a greater sense of engagement with the course when the process restarts.

Feedback can be sought in various ways during a course. A selection of common methods is provided in the handout (3.4). The simplest way is for the trainer to announce that she wants to break the course temporarily and ask people how they're feeling about it. Other more

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structured methods invite each participant to contribute to the feedback. Some methods are verbal, others deliberately invite participants to use non-verbal methods such as drawing or writing.

The trainer must decide whether, in asking for feedback, she is going to participate in the exercise herself. This will depend on the purpose of obtaining feedback at that time, and on the nature of relationships between trainer and participants. Where the trainer merely wants to assess learning so far, or to wake people up, her feedback comments are less important. However, if the trainer senses that the course is not going too well, and wants to use feedback as a way of exposing any difficulties in the course, it would be useful for her to give her own feedback contribution e.g. "It seems to me that there is a tension in the training room, and I'm not sure what this is about, but I would like to find out and deal with it". Such contributions, when raised by the trainer, are often the spur for other participants to express the difficulties they are experiencing.

There are some **golden rules in feedback**, summarised in OHP 3.2 and explained here:

- Comments should be honest

Clearly, if people are not honest during a feedback session, their comments can have only limited value. This does not mean that participants must express everything they feel, but that what they do say should be truthful.

- Participants should speak personally

Contributions made during feedback should be expressed personally and not on behalf of someone else; in this way, participants are encouraged to take responsibility for their own reactions and comments. In practice, this means that feedback statements should begin "I think..." or "I feel..." rather than "Well, my friend and I..." or even "There are some in this room who...".

- Every participant's contribution is equal

During feedback no one person's comments are any more (or less) important than anyone else's. Each person should have an opportunity to contribute if he wishes. In some of the exercises, there is a deliberate structure to give everyone a space for personal feedback.

- No immediate response is required
 - don't answer points as soon as they are made
 - don't introduce new material immediately
 - don't judge what is being said

The purpose of feedback is to gather comments, not to argue them - though this may be appropriate later when everyone has had a chance to give their feedback. Consequently, feedback should be received without interruption (except perhaps for minor points of clarification). Feedback should not be judged or evaluated since this denies the validity of what people are saying in

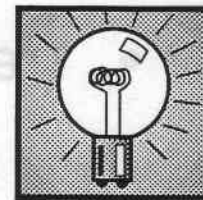
their feedback.

- feedback is summative, not expansive

The purpose of feedback is to gain reactions to what has been undertaken so far, and as such it will summarise feelings and comments. Feedback is not the appropriate place in the course to introduce new material. If participants introduce new material, this should be clearly signalled as a resumption of the course content.

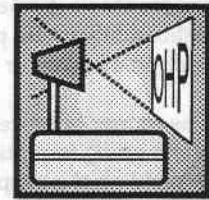
Reference was made earlier to the various ways of eliciting feedback. One of the most important distinctions is between **verbal and non-verbal exercises**. The relative advantages and disadvantages of each, and an indication of their appropriate use, is given in 3.3, which can form a useful chart for discussion.

2 Suggestions for using these materials



- 1 Introduce the session and its aims.
- 2 Introductory lecture on the nature, purpose and use of feedback mechanisms, using tutor's notes (2) and OHP transparencies (3.1, 3.2, 3.3).
- 3 Distribute copies of the feedback techniques handout (3.4).
- 4 If required, practice some of these feedback techniques within the group.
- 5 Distribute instruction sheet and checklist for '5W-H Checklist of Feedback Techniques' exercise (4.1).
- 6 Distribute 'Learning logs'.
- 7 Plenary session to discuss the work undertaken, review any outstanding points, and collect evaluative information.
- 8 Close the session by reviewing its aims.

Feedback should be an integral part of every training course. We recommend that several of the actual exercises listed in 3.4 be used during any 'Developing Training Skills' course, and that their use is not solely restricted to the context of this section. In this way, the course itself becomes a demonstration of good practice.

3.1 OHP Transparency/Handout**What feedback does**

- stops the actual process of the course
- (re) engages participants
- encourages participants to take stock of their involvement so far
- enables the trainer to assess the reactions of participants
- provides the trainer with an interim evaluation
- creates an opportunity for introducing change into the course