

FEEDBACK WITH FEELINGS AND NEEDS

RestorativeTeachingTools.com

OBJECTIVE

Practice new ways of preparing to give and receive feedback that center considering feelings and needs of self and others.

MATERIALS

2-3 scenarios (see two example scenarios provided)
Copies of feelings and needs lists (see “Resources” below)
Copies of iceberg graphic

INSTRUCTIONS

You may want to set the tone with a Connection Circle. Suggested questions to get participants started thinking about feedback:

- How do you prefer to receive feedback at work (or from peers / in your community)?
- When someone is giving you feedback, what would be helpful for them to know or do so that you can receive the feedback?

Begin by explaining the visual of the iceberg model (see example attached). What we can see (what is above water) is a person’s behavior. What we don’t see is what is hiding beneath the surface. At the waterline (where we can sometimes see them and sometimes cannot), are the feelings that a person might be experiencing. Beneath those feelings are the unmet needs of the individual that are ultimately driving the behavior. When we learn to see challenging or problematic behavior through the lens of understanding the need that behavior is seeking to address, we become more empathetic and effective restorative practitioners. In the context of feedback, we can use this approach both for self-reflection, asking ourselves what hidden needs might be driving our behavior, and empathy building, engaging with curiosity to take some guesses at the needs at the root of others’ behavior.

Demonstrate this approach by applying it to Example Scenario A (below), or a scenario that you’ve created. Read through the example scenario and respond to the questions that follow. Ask the group for their observations and questions.

Divide the group into pairs. Instruct each pair to choose one scenario. Each pair will work together to fill out the table by making educated guesses to identify the possible feelings and needs of each character. They will then respond to the prompts following the scenario. Encourage them to “rehearse for reality” by having one person ask the questions you come up with, and the other person gives a sincere response.

Note: It is important to remember that until you have developed a safe and respectful way to communicate directly with someone about their behavior, you are simply making educated guesses about the feelings and needs at the root of that behavior. Aim to remain curious. The purpose of this hypothetical reflection is to move away from making quick, reactive assumptions or judgments about someone’s behavior, and instead to broaden our thinking to become more empathetic and curious about what is driving that behavior.

DEBRIEF

As a large group, ask each set of pairs which scenario they worked on (if you offered multiple options). Choose the scenario that the most groups worked on, and use that one to debrief. If you can present the image of the side-by-side icebergs, either on paper or digitally, fill in feelings and needs as you hear back from multiple groups. If possible, ask participants to move the feelings and needs according to which ones they think are closer to the surface, and which are harder to detect.

Ask pairs to share back their responses to each of the questions that accompanied that scenario.

Then, reflect on skill acquisition:

- What was easy or difficult about trying to identify needs? Feelings?
- How ready are you to use this approach to feedback conversations in your own life? What might get in your way?
- What support do you need in order to be more intentional when the next feedback opportunity arises?

LESSON

Thinking about needs underlying behavior can de-personalize feedback, and assist the person giving or receiving the feedback in becoming more curious and less defensive. You may even discover you and another person have similar or identical unmet needs. Identifying these needs can build a sense of connection and agency to work together to find solutions and make new relational agreements.

Action Step:

Ask participants to think of a conversation coming up where they may be giving or receiving feedback. Have them write a note to themselves now about how they will use this exercise to prepare.

Resources:

Needs List cnvc.org

Feelings List cnvc.org

Examples:

Scenario A:

Cassandra is an Administrative Assistant and Roxanne is her supervisor. Roxanne is the Director of Operations. Since remote work began as a result of COVID, it seems to Roxanne that some of Cassandra’s responsibilities are slipping through the cracks. From Roxanne’s perspective, she’s tried a number of different approaches to communicate with Cassandra about these tasks. She tried to empower Cassandra by asking her to develop a system to keep Roxanne updated on the status of certain tasks. But Roxanne is not receiving the kind of updates she is seeking, and when she goes to check on the completion of tasks, she finds things that have been left undone, without explanation. Roxanne is becoming frustrated. She does not want to micro-manage, but she keeps seeing evidence that Cassandra is not following through. Roxanne asks Cassandra for a feedback conversation.

Behind the scenes:

Working from home is difficult for Cassandra. She has a full house with a partner working from home, a teenager doing school from home, and an elder family member. The home environment feels crowded and distracting, and everyone is stressed about COVID exposure for their elder. Cassandra was only 4 months into her job when COVID hit so there are many things she is still learning. She is struggling to keep documents organized at home, and misses having a desk, a second monitor, and file cabinet with a filing system in place. When Roxanne asks her for a feedback conversation, Cassandra is scared she’s about to get fired.

- 1) Take some guesses about both Roxanne and Cassandra’s feelings and needs that are motivating their behavior.

	Feelings	Unmet Needs
Roxanne	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ exasperated○ perplexed○ annoyed○ worried○ helpless	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ predictability○ continuity○ order, structure○ cooperation○ consideration
Cassandra	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ overwhelmed○ embarrassed○ nervous○ afraid○ frustrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ support○ stability○ learning○ order, structure○ consideration

- 2) If you were Roxanne, what open-ended questions could you ask Cassandra to surface the feelings she’s been having?

- Cassandra, I've noticed that a few things haven't been getting completed on time since we went to remote work. What's it like for you to work from home? How is it affecting you?
 - Cassandra, I realize you only had a few months in the office before we shifted to remote work. How are you feeling about your training and workload?
- 3) If you were Roxanne and now you've heard Cassandra name some of her feelings, what open-ended questions could you ask Cassandra in order to understand the unmet needs that may be at the root of her behavior?
- Cassandra, when you're feeling overwhelmed, what do you need to feel more balanced?
 - Cassandra, I heard you say you're feeling embarrassed and nervous about making mistakes. How can we communicate about your work in a way that feels supportive?
- 4) If you were Cassandra, what are some things you could bring to the conversation (to be spoken or just to be mindful of) while keeping Roxanne's feelings and needs in mind?
- Roxanne seems exasperated. I wonder if there are some needs and expectations she has that aren't clear to me yet.
 - Roxanne has been in her role for 7 years and has a highly organized, structured style. I wonder what systems or timelines she has in place that I need to know about.

Scenario B

Tanya and Charlie are peers and both hold leadership roles. Their organization just completed a strategic planning process and now they are responsible for overseeing the development of an implementation plan. They are facilitating follow-up interviews with employees, stakeholders, and other community members to gather input, which they must synthesize and incorporate into proposed implementation steps. Tanya is noticing that Charlie is really excited about the opportunity this process presents to innovate and propose new programming. That is true, but they are also tasked with maintaining their current mission and vision, and not getting too side-tracked with ideas that are outside their mission's scope. From Tanya's perspective, Charlie's facilitation is all over the place. He is following unrealistic ideas down rabbit holes. Tanya appreciates that Charlie values innovation and creativity, but she's worried that he's creating confusion and setting unrealistic expectations with interviewees. It seems like he's building a confusing maze of idealistic possibilities instead of keeping ideas focused to create an achievable plan. Tanya asks Charlie if he would meet for coffee and have a feedback conversation about how the project is going.

Behind the Scenes:

Charlie is ready for change. He sees the opportunity to impose direction on this implementation plan as his chance to spice things up at the organization. He thinks their mission is okay, but at times it is holding them back. Charlie wants the organization to expand its reach and impact, and for that to happen, they have to think big. He wants to put all the options on the table so the leadership team can really understand what's possible.

Tanya believes she is responsible for holding the organization together for years. She sees this implementation plan as an important way to begin delegating those responsibilities to others in order to maintain the steady, successful functioning of the organization. Tanya is hopeful that with this plan in place, she will still be able to bring her best to the organization, but won't be carrying such a heavy load.

- 1) Take some guesses about both Charlie and Tanya's feelings and needs that are motivating their behavior.

	Feelings	Unmet Needs
Charlie		
Tanya		

- 2) If you were Tanya, what open-ended questions could you ask Charlie to surface the feelings he has around this project?
- 3) If you were Tanya and now you've heard Charlie name some of his feelings, what open-ended questions could you ask Charlie in order to understand the unmet needs that may be motivating him?
- 4) If you were Charlie and you're feeling caught off guard by Tanya's request for a feedback conversation, what are some things you could bring to the conversation (to be spoken or just to keep in mind) based on considering Tanya's feelings and needs?

Behavior

overwhelmed

nervous

Feelings

afraid

frustrated

embarrassed

support

learning

consideration

Needs

stability

Order/structure

Cassandra

Behavior

exasperated

annoyed

Feelings

perplexed

worried

helpless

consideration

Order/structure

cooperation

Needs

predictability

continuity

Roxanne

Behavior

Feelings

Needs



Name

Behavior

Feelings

Needs



Name