

## How to Give Feedback (SBIR Model)

The Center for Creative Leadership initially developed the SBI model. We've added the "R."

**Situation** — Succinctly state the situation.

"Avery, do you remember in the staff meeting yesterday when Dr. Smith was talking about her project?"

1. *Succinctness*. Be direct and to the point.
2. *Objectivity*, with no interpretation.
  - o Everyone present, including the person you are speaking to, should agree on the facts of the situation. Notice the person's behavior is left out of the situation. Behavior is a second item. Keep it separated from the statement of the situation. Help them remember the situation first.
3. *Pause*. Wait to continue until you know they have processed what you are bringing up.

**Behavior** — Succinctly state the behavior you observed.

"I noticed two things. You interrupted her before she was done, and you carried the conversation for five minutes."

1. *Objectivity*. Anyone who observed what happened should agree with your description of behavior.
  - o Guide them away from *why* they did what they did. Those are justifications. At this point, you are only working to clearly state what the observable behavior was, not whether it was justified.
  - o Don't get into your *interpretation* of the behavior or the *motives* or *intentions* you believe were behind the behavior. This adds subjectivity, making it easier for the other person to refute.
  - o Don't say what you think *other* people observed. That adds *subjectivity*. This is about your perspective.

**Impact** — Succinctly state the impact the person's behavior had on you.

"I'll be honest, Avery, when you did that, I winced. I felt badly for Dr. Smith, and I was unhappy about the impact that had on the feeling of the meeting."

1. *Visceral*. You are replaying for them your instinctual, visceral response to their behavior in that situation. This is powerful. For more information, see [The Feedback Fallacy](#) in *Harvard Business Review*, March–April 2019.
2. *Succinctness*. Let your message land and sink in.
  - o The other person will likely feel uncomfortable. Let them. Your job is to be *directly challenging* and *personally caring at the same time*. That typically isn't comfortable even though you are caring.
3. *Solidity*. Do not waffle.
  - o The other person can think that you shouldn't feel that way. But you did. Replay your instinctual, visceral response. It isn't your job to convince them that your response was justified. It happened.
4. *Focus on you*. Avoid interpretation about the impact you think this had on *other* people.
  - o If you are sharing the impact the behavior you had on you, that is not an interpretation and, therefore, not open to challenge. The most impactful thing you can share with someone is the personal impact their behavior had on you. The moment you bring in other people, you've added *subjectivity*.

**Request** — Succinctly state your request. And then ask if they have a request of you.

"My request is that you pause before interrupting, and if you must interrupt that you state directly what you need to say without an 'edge' to it. Then allow the other person to continue. Do you understand this request?"

1. The nature of your request will differ based on the situation and the person's relationship with you.

- In some cases, whether the other person does anything with your request is totally up to them. You've done your part in making the request. There's no need to convince them, and it is up to them regarding whether to heed the request.
  - In other cases, you may rightfully expect the person to make the change. However, don't expect that one instance of SBIR is going to do the trick. You may need to use SBIR a number of times.
2. After you've made the request, ask the person if they have a request of you.
- There are four responses you can give. Yes. No. Yes, with this modification. I don't know — I'll get back with you tomorrow on that after I have a chance to think about it.

**The key to all of this is for your heart to be at peace, not at war, towards the other person while you are being clear and direct.** The “heart at peace, not at war” metaphor is from the highly recommended and very popular book, *The Anatomy of Peace*.

**The inner place from which you operate changes everything.** The exact words said with a heart at peace will have a profoundly different impact as compared to those same words said with your heart at war. Your state matters more than the words.

**Said another way, your objective is to be directly challenging (breathtakingly honest and candid) while also being personally caring (compassionate towards and caring about the other person).** The entire thing hinges upon you summoning the *courage* to be directly challenging (and not waffling, withholding, spinning, justifying, placating, etc.) and the *compassion* required to maintain the connection with the other person such that they “feel felt.”

**To be clear, this does not mean you will not be feeling emotions, anxiety, awkwardness, etc.** You likely will. If this were comfortable, you'd already be doing it. You aren't. And if this were comfortable for them, it would be easy. But they probably won't be, and therefore it is not. Your mindset must be “I will do this in spite of how uncomfortable it may be for me” and not, “I will start doing this when I'm comfortable doing it.” And your mindset must be “While this may make them feel uncomfortable, this will also support them in their growth” and not “If I make them uncomfortable, I am a bad person.”

**In essence, this involves one of two switches in the way we orient towards the way we relate to others.** The switch depends on whether you lean towards being nice but not fully honest, or fully honest but unkind. In the case of the former, it is a switch from “nice” (I want you to like me) to “kind” (I have your best interests at heart), and therefore you tell them your instinctual/visceral response to their behavior even though they may not like you for doing so. Or in the case of the latter, it is the switch from “blunt” to “kind” where you state your full truth as you always have, but the bluntness is removed because your heart is open towards and caring about the other person, as a person.

**Scary, right?** It sure is. To be so direct and yet kind is rare. Few people do it well, especially when they are triggered. But everyone can learn to do it. It takes practice, again and again. And when you mess it up, apologize and give it another go.

**The trick here is three-fold—**

1. *Do it before you feel ready.* Because you will never feel ready. Step over your fear and do it.
2. *Learn to have your emotions without being carried away by them.* Don't wait to be emotionless.
3. Always have an exit strategy. “You know, I'd hoped this would be helpful, and it seems it isn't. Let's stop now and come back to it tomorrow. What do you think?”

**Imagine a better world.** How much better would work/life be if you did this? Get a feeling for that. It's hard, yes. But imagine how this would help the people around you and how much better you'd feel. Tap into that. And do it.