

# OMBUDS OFFICE

Harvard Medical School  
Harvard Dental School  
Harvard T.H Chan School of Public Health



## Delivering Effective Feedback

### Prevention:

- **Set your expectations** at the start. Make sure they're clear, consistent, and articulated often.
- **Provide feedback frequently**, both the positive and the negative. Create a culture of open communication.
- **Frame feedback as an opportunity for growth and success.** We all have the capacity to learn from our mistakes.
- **Encourage a conversation** when giving feedback. Don't lecture. Don't forget to listen; you may learn something.

### Preparation:

- Be clear about your goals (what do you hope to accomplish?)
- Be clear about your message—what and how
- Provide concrete information/examples to support your message
- Anticipate and plan for potential problems (ex: difficult personality, impact of message)

### Implementation:

**Consider when** to have the conversation; set aside enough/uninterruptible time

**where** to have conversation – benefits of private space, neutral site(?)

**who** to have present – anyone else for your/their support?

**how**—verbal vs. written (either or both)

- Delivery—articulate your goals for the meeting
  - lead with the positive
  - invite self-reflection (they may do some of your work for you)
  - use “I” language vs. blaming “you” language
  - encourage open dialogue and really listen
  - be professional—*always*
- Organization of message: **Facts:** what you observed, what happened
  - Feelings:** what is the impact on others
  - Future:** what changes are needed

### Follow up:

Document your feedback if it's needed for personnel files, etc.

Send a summary of your meeting, including detailed next steps, to avoid future misunderstandings

When you decide to let someone go, *be humane*

- 3 months is the recommended lead time for postdocs (HMS) (except for egregious situations)
- be clear about your reasons for the termination
- be clear about what you will/won't do to help with a future career (letters; calls, etc.)



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