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.)