

Giving Feedback

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One fundamental aspect to the preceptor-student relationship is giving regular feedback. Students are generally accustomed to and interested in receiving feedback regarding their performance. Students require both positive and constructive feedback. Preceptors should provide frequent, specific feedback on students' knowledge, skills, and abilities and identify their strengths and weaknesses so students will know what they can do to improve. Feedback is intended to strengthen the student's clinical practice. Giving excessive, insufficient or negative feedback can result in conflict between you and the student, and can have a negative effect on learning. Remind the student that giving feedback in both strong and weak areas is part of the teaching role. Effective preceptors are honest and direct with students about their performance, notice when they performed well, and provide specific suggestions for improvement. Good, effective and safe student performance must be validated and encouraged.

Helpful tips for giving feedback:

1. **Daily** feedback in a private location generally helps the student to feel secure.
2. Give feedback in a **private** place. Adhere to the adage, "praise in public, correct in private." If it is necessary to correct a preceptee in front of other staff to protect a patient, do it in a tactful way.
3. Ask students to **evaluate themselves** after tasks are performed by asking, "How did you feel you did?" and "What could you do differently next time?" This initiates performance evaluation in a non-threatening manner.
4. Feedback should be **objective** in nature. Use "I" statements, such as, "I noticed that..." Avoid judgmental statements, such as "You should have known better..."
5. To know what specific **performance** items need to be evaluated, review the indicators in the evaluation tool.
6. Private **weekly** evaluations work well to track student progress towards course and personal objectives. This is the time to say, "You are doing well." Point out what the student has learned and how much knowledge and skill proficiency has been acquired, and what problems need to be addressed.
7. Phrase feedback in a **positive** fashion, such as "This is what I want you work on."
8. Encourage students by pointing out their strengths **often** and in an **honest** manner. Celebrate successes. Seeing your obvious pleasure in their success is a wonderful reward for a student.



Preceptors should also welcome ongoing feedback regarding the preceptorship process. Asking "How am I doing?" opens communication up so the student can share their needs and experiences. It is also a good opportunity for the preceptor to model appropriate behaviour when receiving constructive criticism.

Sources: Baltimore, 2004; Clay et al., 1999; Trevitt, Grealish & Reaby, 2001; Myrick & Yonge, 2005; Gates & Cutts, 1995; Hohler, 2003.