

L-I-V-E

Through Any Challenging Feedback

If someone gives you challenging feedback, your first response may be fight or flight, defend or withdraw, especially if his or her remark is sarcastic or hostile. Instead, use the LIVE formula and turn the feedback (no matter how poorly given) into a productive outcome.

L – LEAN in and LISTEN

- Give them a chance to express their frustration: “Tell me more about that.” (As they talk, ground yourself in positive self-talk about your being safe, skilled and supported.)
- If expressed as an absolute or an ultimatum ask, “Always?” or “*Must* have?”
- Throw back and neutralize hostile remarks: “So _____ is really important to you.”

I – INVESTIGATE, SHOW YOUR INTENTION TO UNDERSTAND

Understand the concern

- “What happened?”
- “When did this happen?”
- “What led up to this?” (vs. “Why did this happen?” which can sound blaming)
- “What in your experience led to this perspective?”

Qualify the concern (talk about one concern at a time)

- “Is this the only thing that keeps you from getting what you want?”
- “Is this the thing that concerns you the most? Let’s deal with this upset first.”

Paraphrase the concern – Show your Intention to understand

- “What I hear you saying is...”
- “When you say ___ do you mean ___ or _____?”
- “Let me know if I am on track. You’re saying...”

State throughout your on-going Intention

- “I really want (positive) _____ for you, for us, for this situation.”
- “I’d really like to handle this issue to both our satisfaction, Then, I know that at a later date we can successfully handle the other issues as well.”
- “Forgive me for not seeing (or not understanding) _____.” (Involves them more than “I’m sorry”)

V – VISION

- “What is most important to you here?”
- “What would make you feel this situation has been handled?”
- “What would be a satisfying outcome for you?”
- “Before we started this conversation, you felt _____. What does it look like when that feeling is gone?”

E – EXPECTATIONS

- “If you were in charge of making sure that happened, what would you do?”
- “Here is what I’m willing to do...”
- “Would you be willing to...?” (No – “Then what would you be willing to do?”)
- “I need to know you won’t hold this against me, that you hear my intent to work on this blind spot and to create an inclusive environment. Do we have that understanding?” (No – “What else do I/we need to do to rebuild trust?”)
- “So we’ve agreed that our next steps are...”
- “Will that work for you?”
- “Let’s get back on (date) and check in to see that we’re proceeding according to our plan.”

Remember to:

- Show appreciation – it’s better to know what someone thinks than have people talking behind your back.
- Don’t take it personally, but do take the feedback responsibly. They are telling you lots about themselves (what they want, don’t like, things that previously happened to them) and *perhaps* something you may need to look at. Be responsible to make appropriate changes, but their comments are *never* about your importance or worth as a person. One event or mistake does not define you.
- Paraphrase throughout for clear understanding. Actively demonstrate your intention to understand them through reflective listening.
- After they’ve vented, if they’re showing ignorance of the topic: “Has anyone taken the time to fully explain all the benefits (the reasons, the steps) of _____ to you?” (vs. “What do you really know about this?”) “Would this be a good time to explain or could we make an appointment to do that later?”
- Consider the feedback as growth. You may have to direct them to a more respectful communication with you – later. After they’ve had their say and feel fully heard, let them know how they can best approach you in the future.
- Clarify and confirm expectations and agree on next steps.
- Keep all agreements and/or re-negotiate them in a timely, forthright manner.

Based on the work of the Kaleidoscope Group, Peronne-Ambrose Associates and O’Halloran Communications