

# Receiving Feedback with Success!

## Three Tips from the Office of the Ombuds

### The Importance of Receiving Feedback

Receiving constructive feedback can be a challenge. We humans want to feel accepted for who we are, and constructive feedback can make us feel quite the opposite. While being nervous about hearing feedback is understandable, we also need to hear this feedback in order to grow professionally.

Below are three simple tips on receiving feedback from Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone, the authors of *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback*. If you want to learn more, we can also offer a training for your department.

**Tip 1** When asking for feedback, be specific about the area you want to discuss. If you ask very generally about how you are doing, your supervisor may not think you are serious about your improvement. The question is too broad. Rather, you can ask, “How am I doing at task management?” for example, or any other particular area of job performance. Focusing on specific areas will allow you to get far more data on your performance and show your supervisor that you are serious about improving. Of course, focus on asking for feedback where you see room for growth, and less on the areas where you already excel.

**Tip 2** It is natural for us to seek out feedback from our biggest supporters and fans. These people, however, may not be able to be objective about where we have the most room for improvement. Seeking feedback from those in our work environment who are not our biggest supporters can reveal valuable insights. Additionally, by seeking feedback from outside your supportive fan club, you may also be going a long way towards improving those more challenging relationships by showing respect for their judgment.

**Tip 3** When you have received feedback that you feel is unfair or off base, take a step back and reflect on it: What feedback do you agree with, and what feedback do you disagree with. Take a sheet of paper and divide it in half. On the left side write all the feedback you disagree with. On the right side put all the feedback you agree with. After this exercise, you will probably realize that at least some of the feedback that you received has value, and you can work on those facets of your performance. As for the left side feedback you disagree with, perhaps think on those items. It’s possible that there may be truth there you didn’t see at first or could seek some more clarity about, either from the giver or from someone else.