Professional Interactions: Receiving Feedback Like a Pro
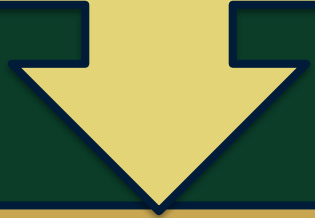
Chrissy Hauer, PT, DPT, CSCS

Learning Objectives

Define	Define key concepts related to giving and receiving feedback in professional and clinical settings.
Understand	Understand how feedback supports personal growth, clinical reasoning, and professional development.
Learn	Learn practical strategies for receiving feedback with openness, reflection, and curiosity.
Apply	Apply effective communication and self-awareness skills when responding to constructive feedback.
Integrate	Integrate feedback into ongoing learning and clinical practice to enhance performance.

Why Feedback Matters

Feedback is not criticism.
It's clinical data about performance.

Benefits of receiving feedback well[1,2]:
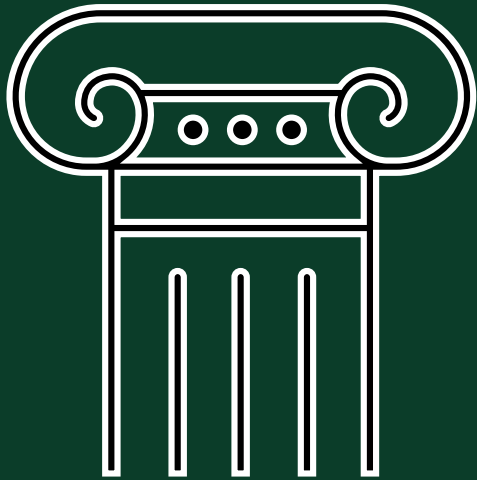
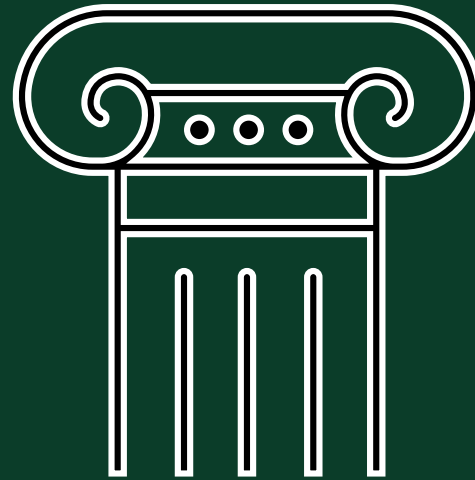| Fosters positive relationship | Increases self-esteem | Learning! |

What Does the Research Say?

- Research overwhelmingly focuses on feedback delivery.

- Humans are generally poor at self-assessment[3,4]
    - cognitive (information deficits and memory bias)
    - sociobiological (unrealistic optimism)
    - social factors (inadequate feedback from others)

- "There are three things extremely hard: steel, a diamond, and to know one's self," ~ Benjamin Franklin
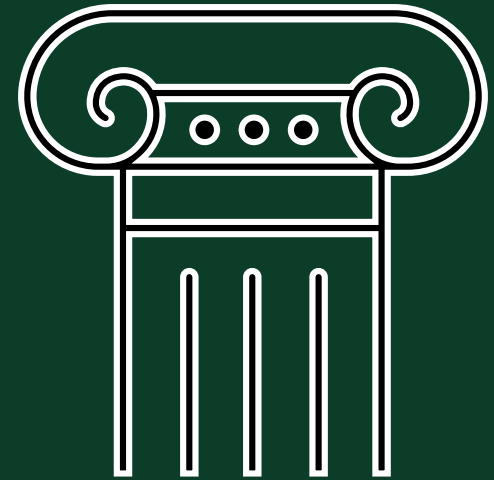
APTA Core Values

Collaboration

Excellence

Accountability

What Is Feedback?

Feedback is information you receive about yourself that is intended to help you grow, learn, or improve[2].

Defined it broadly as any information - formal or informal, spoken or implied.

Why Receiving Feedback Is Hard

Truth Triggers

Relationship Triggers

Identity Triggers

Recognize your trigger to reframe the experience

Why Receiving Feedback Is Hard

Truth Triggers – The content feels wrong or unfair.

Relationship Triggers – Who delivers it affects how it's received.

Identity Triggers – Threats to self-image or competence.

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Three types of feedback[2]:

Type	Purpose	Example
Appreciation	Acknowledge effort/value	You encouraged that patient well, great job!
Coaching	Improve performance	Next time, make sure you have all the items your need before starting treatment.
Evaluation	Measures against a standard	You are currently carrying 50% of the caseload.

Key takeaway – Receiving feedback well starts with recognizing which type you are being given so you can respond appropriately.

Feedback Spotting

- During lab, you hear two students' conversation:
  "Hey, I noticed you stayed late yesterday to help set up the gait training stations. That really made things smoother for everyone this morning. Thanks for doing that."

- After reviewing treatment plans, your instructor comments:
  "Your plan is solid, but think about how you could progress this patient's balance activities if they master today's tasks sooner than expected. How would you adapt on the spot?"

- During a midterm check-in, the CI says:
  "You're documenting all required elements, but I'm noticing your notes still take longer than expected. By this point, students usually complete them within 10 minutes. Let's look at one together and see where you might save time."
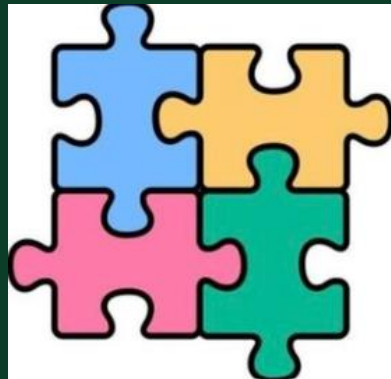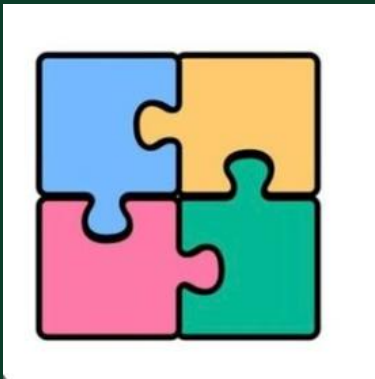
Evidence-Based Tools
for
Receiving Feedback

Evidence-Based Tools

Growth Mindset Language[5]

- A growth mind-set makes feedback productive.

- Students who view ability as *developed through effort and reflection* are more likely to seek, accept, and act on feedback to improve clinical skills.

10 Tips for Receiving Feedback Effectively[6]

1. Self-assess
2. Value feedback.
3. Connect with instructors
4. Ask for feedback
5. Accept praise confidently
6. Manage emotions
7. Create an action plan
8. Recognize generational differences
9. Clarify vague feedback
10. Be ready anytime

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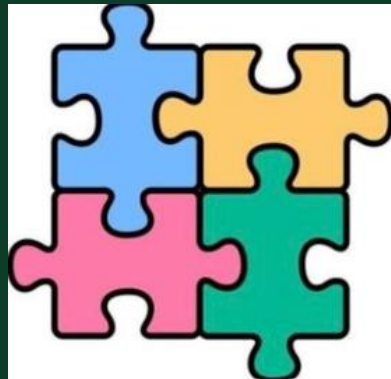
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Evidence-Based Tools

Self-Assessment + Goal-Setting[7]

Feedback as Collaboration:

Treat feedback as a *two-way conversation*, not a one-sided critique. Clarify comments, ask for demonstrations if needed, and engage in dialogue to fully understand areas for improvement.

Acting on Feedback:

Write down key points, reflect on what went well and what needs improvement, and adjust your goals accordingly. Reflection transforms feedback into actionable learning.

Evidence-Based Tools

- ACT Model (Accept, Clarify, Thank)[1]

- **A** — **Accept:** Demonstrate openness and willingness to listen. Avoid interrupting or becoming defensive. Use open-ended questions to invite dialogue and show that you value the other person's perspective.

- **C** — **Clarify**: Ask for specific examples to understand what behaviors or actions need improvement. Seek practical suggestions to guide change. Clarifying ensures the feedback is actionable rather than vague or emotional.

- **T** — **Thank:** Express gratitude for the feedback—even if it is difficult to hear. Acknowledging someone's effort to help fosters professionalism, respect, and continuous learning.

Take-Home Messages

- Feedback = Data, not judgment.

- Identify feedback type and trigger.

- Use the ACT model: Accept → Clarify → Thank.

- Adopt a Growth Mindset: "I'm improving with practice."

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