

Guidelines for Giving and Receiving Teaching Feedback

"We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience."

~John Dewey

Overview

Teaching MBSR involves, among many skills, guiding meditation practices as well as teaching informational presentations. During *Oasis* Institute Professional Education trainings, one is given the opportunity to teach and receive feedback from both peers and CFM senior trainers. Engaging with this process of learning is essential and valuable when participants follow guidelines that support sensitivity, honesty and collaboration. Both giving and receiving feedback are pathways of learning and growing as teachers as one reflects on one's experience of leading. It is an avenue to cultivate qualities of generosity, openness, clarity, flexibility, and mindfulness in speech and action.

Below are guidelines for:

- Giving and receiving feedback
- Examples of specific areas to attend to
- Logistics on the structure, process and timing of a teaching/feedback session

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Guidelines for Giving Feedback

1. The intention for giving feedback is to support the refinement and development of your colleague's teaching presence and skill.
2. Feedback is always about the delivery of the presentation and how it was received, not about the person.
3. The feedback needs to include areas that show skill and mastery (supportive feedback) and areas that can be refined and improved (constructive feedback).
4. Offering feedback involves being alert to the conditioned experiences of judging and being judged. From years of schooling and academic training, most—if not all—of us have patterns, fears and competitive tendencies regarding passing and failing, getting an A or a D, comparing oneself to others, etc. You might begin by imagining yourself in this person's place. How would you like to receive feedback? How might you offer this?
5. Specific feedback is more helpful than vague or general comments.
6. Truthfulness and courage are needed to truly support another's growth.
7. Consider your feedback as an offering with a wholesome intention for the benefit of another and yourself.

Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

1. Remember your intention to learn and grow and take risks. This is an essential part of growing as an MBSR teacher, and is, in many cases, quite rare.
2. Receive your partner's feedback as an offering with the intention to support both of you as growing teachers.
3. Be alert to any tendency to defend and explain your leading. It is enough to receive it as a way to learn.

4. Remain present with potential feelings you may have, receiving both supportive and constructive reflections. Notice your desire to do well, be liked, get compliments, etc.
5. Contemplate all you have received. Take a few notes to review later, when you are by yourself and can incorporate this learning.
6. Offer yourself compassion and acknowledgement for “sitting in this fire,” and for choosing to allow refinements to be part of your process.

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC AREAS TO ATTEND TO

What was the intention? Are the intentions clearly demonstrated through the guidance? Does the presenter’s intention match the delivery?

Pacing. With meditation guidance: Is there space in the guidance?
With a presentation: Is there a flow to the information that keeps the group engaged?

Choice of words. How does the language convey the intention? Is the language accessible? Do the words close or open the space for practice and learning?

Tone. Does the voice “carry” the experience of the words? Is there strain or force?
Is the voice natural? Is it hypnotic or precious? Is it “teacher-y”?

Volume. Does the voice carry far enough so listeners don’t have to strain?

Direct Experience. Does the guidance bring listeners to right here and right now?
As the receiver, what is your direct bodily experience while being led?

Presence. Does the presenter embody the practice or presentation she/he’s presenting? How do you recognize this?

Content. Is the content delivered in alignment with the MBSR curriculum?

Examples of Constructive and Supportive Feedback:

Supportive: What worked? What opened and deepened your experience?

Example: “I became more aware of my body and physical sensations as you guided me through _____ part of the meditation,” *or* “The warmth of your voice and pacing conveyed ease, and welcomed me to experience that ease as well.”

Constructive: What could have enhanced this guidance?

Example: “As the guidance went along fewer words would have supported my deepening experience,” *or* “I felt confused when you moved to _____ part of the guidance, and would have welcomed a clearer transition.”

LOGISTICS ON THE STRUCTURE, PROCESS, AND TIMING OF A TEACHING/FEEDBACK SESSION

Process:

Dyads: Two participants. One leads and the other receives.

- First the teacher/leader offers her/his feedback reflection
- Then the receiver offers feedback on the leading
- Brief dialogue together
- Take brief notes with any questions, reflections
- Switch: Second person leads, repeating the feedback process

(Note: The one teaching always gives feedback first, then the receiver gives feedback.)

Guidelines for timing:

Timing: Leading time: __ minutes

Feedback time: __ minutes each person, then __ minutes together.

Shift to next person.

Team succinctly records learnings and questions

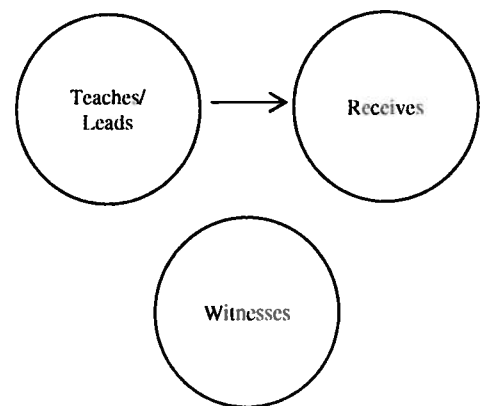
One complete cycle: __ minutes per person; total time for whole process _____

Process:

Triads: Three participants: A, B, and C. Each participant will have an opportunity to teach, to receive, and to witness. Witness role is to also time and take notes.

The one teaching always gives feedback first, then the receiver gives feedback, then the witness. All three should use the specific guidelines below for timing and process:

- First person (A) teaches/leads; B receives; C witnesses
- Teacher/leader offers her/his feedback reflection
- Receiver (B) offers feedback on leading
- Witness (C) offers feedback (also times and takes notes)
- Brief dialogue together, collect any notes or questions
- Second person (B) teaches/leads; C receives; A witnesses
- Continue with feedback process above
- Final person (C) teaches/leads; A receives; B witnesses



Guidelines for timing:

Timing: Leading time: __ minutes

Feedback time: __ minutes each, beginning with whoever is teaching, then receiver then witness. __ minutes open discussion with all three participants.

One complete cycle: __ minutes; total time for all three: _____