

## **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

### **Techniques in Giving and Receiving Feedback**

**Giving feedback** can feel like walking a tricky tightrope. You're required to balance your honest responses, making sure your comments provide constructive criticism and don't offend the person. You can't be too critical or blunt or else the feedback won't be useful or meaningful to the person. How you provide feedback can be as important as what you're trying say.

#### **Here are some helpful tips to try if your coworker asks for your feedback:**

- Give feedback in person. The meaning of your feedback when sent by email can be misunderstood.
- Ask what type of feedback your coworker is seeking. The person might want input about something specific or might simply want a compliment.
- Approach providing feedback as a two-way conversation. Ask open-ended questions to help your coworker explore feelings and thoughts about the situation, issue, or interaction. Reflect what you hear to clarify what your coworker shared and to encourage further exploration.
- Start with positives. Find things you appreciate and mention those first.
- Offer your thoughts using suggestive phrases such as "how about..." or "something that might be helpful is..."
- Be specific, be kind, and share feedback that's constructive.

#### **Here are some things to avoid when giving feedback:**

- Avoid using restrictive language such as "you should", "don't", or "you're supposed to".
- Focus on things your coworker can work on or change. There's no point in giving negative feedback about something your coworker doesn't have control over.
- Don't be sarcastic. It undermines the feedback and your relationship with your coworker.
- Don't make assumptions. Find out more and share without judgment.

**Receiving feedback** can feel uncomfortable too, especially when it's coming from a supervisor. Having your work critiqued can help improve it, but it can be hard to hear. Similar to giving feedback, how someone shares feedback with you can be as important as what's being said.

#### **Here are some things to try when receiving feedback:**

- If you are asking for feedback, be specific about what you're seeking.
- Keep in mind that what you hear can help you learn, grow, and improve.
- Focus on understanding. Ask questions and restate what's been shared with you.
- If you find yourself becoming defensive, think about what has made you feel this way. It can be hard to separate emotion from the situation. Be honest and let the person know it's hard to hear the feedback. If you need to, ask to revisit the discussion at a later time.
- Show your appreciation for the person giving feedback, thanking the person for their valuable input.