



Feedback: During my years as a management consultant for KPMG I was fortunate to attend a great variety of world-class training and development courses. One of the most memorable courses I attended was on how to give and receive feedback. I learnt that giving and receiving feedback is a present, a reciprocating gift that nourishes both the giver and receiver. It is not about critically judging the other, or a veiled form of ego one-upmanship, it is about authentically wishing to help the other by providing useful insights into what has gone well and not-so-well from our empathic perspective, therefore allowing the receiver to identify areas of learning and development.

When giving feedback in this way, we sit in pairs across from each other, maintaining relaxed and friendly eye contact throughout. We start off with a positive 'what went well' feedback comment to help create an open, sharing and friendly environment. We can all feel apprehensive and defensive about receiving feedback no matter how constructive it is to our development, and so creating an empathic atmosphere is important. Then we alternate between giving a positive comment and constructive feedback on what did not go so well or could be improved upon. We need to frame our words carefully and constructively, empathizing with how it feels to receive such feedback, positioning it as a gift, a useful insight to help the other. Giving examples or referring to specific situations or conversations rather than generalities helps the receiver better perceive the problem and sense into what could have worked better. It is best if the receiver simply listens and takes notes to allow the giver to go through all comments without interruption, yet the receiver can ask for clarification or further expansion, as opposed to starting to justify why what was done was done – this is not about justifying ones actions, as important as that may seem to our ego, this is about taking on-board someone else's perspective and insight which is being shared in the spirit of helping us learn. Three 'positives' and two 'learning areas' per feedback session is enough for us to digest and work with. Then the partners can rotate with the receiver now becoming the person giving the feedback and the other person listening, clarifying and taking notes; alternatively it may not be suitable or necessary to rotate.

The more we build-in regular cycles of feedback within our teams, the more we are able to sense-and-respond, adapt and learn without the need for over-arching decision-making. We can start to embed informal spontaneous feedback as part of our normal daily undertaking of business. The gift of feedback deepens the authenticity and wisdom of both the giver and receiver and also the wider team's relational dynamics. The 'giving' is also a 'receiving'; a sacred reciprocity where we give simply to nourish the other and nourish the matrix of relations we operate in, as a result it nourishes ourselves as it enriches our communal context. Our personal gnosis (through soulful giving) enriches the organizational gnosis (team dynamics and organizational learning) which in turn enriches our personal gnosis (the context we find ourselves in is more giving, reciprocating, authentic and soulful, allowing us to further open up through vulnerability and deeper learning).