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Ci2i Tool Box

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

The Ci2i Tool Box is intended to provide simple, straightforward communication tools for couples to assist with improving skills in:

- **BUILDING TRUST**
- **LISTENING WELL**
- **CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK**
- **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

Very few of us have become experts at any of these skills. We didn't learn them in school because the model is to be "talked at" far more than to "dialogue with." Active and effective listening can prevent many communication mistakes and problems and lead to greater understanding of one another. Constructive Feedback skills allow us to have difficult conversations in positive ways. Conflict management skills help us diffuse a "hot" issue before it gets too far out of hand. These skills work as effectively at work or at home. People often have the exact same communication problems in both places, even though they may show up and play out in different ways.

We urge you to use our free tools to help yourself, to help your partner, and to provide a pathway to richer, more loving conversations about your important relationships

Ci2i: 6 STEPS to CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Review this method with your partner and agree to use this tool when you have something to say in recognition of good things, and in helping to clean up difficulties between you before they get out of hand. Walk through a non-threatening example together to get used to the model and the language and DO NOT SKIP ANY STEPS, AND PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO STEP 2.

1. Prepare

- Consider time and place
- Consider emotional issues
- Mentally prepare

2. Convey Positive Intent

- Point to a common goal
- Your motivation **MUST** be for improvement not blame
- Briefly state what you would like to discuss and why

3. Describe what you have observed

- Model advocacy
- Be specific and to the point
- Focus on the behavior or action, not the person or his/her qualities

4. State impact of behavior or action

- Model advocacy – objectively stating impact without blame or judgment
- Link behavior to impact on self, business and others
- State one or two consequences if no change occurs

5. Ask other person to respond

- Model inquiry
- Ask open-ended questions
- Listen without becoming defensive
- Keep the focus on the topic and the other person but be open to receive feedback if it is relevant
- Summarize

6. Focus discussion on solutions not blame

- Model inquiry (asking, listening) and advocacy (stating your point of view clearly)
- When appropriate, ask for the change you hope for
- Be willing to help support the change if relevant
- Be open to other solutions -- brainstorm
- Select solutions
- Identify next steps, follow-up, time line

CHALLENGES

1. When **giving feedback** you may find it hard to:
 - Leave room for problems solving vs. telling the person what to do
 - State your feedback in a way that conveys respect and support
 - Get to the point without “dancing” around the topic
 - Respond to what the person receiving feedback says without defensiveness
 - Give feedback to someone over whom you have no authority
 - Provide clear examples that relate directly to the concern
2. When **receiving feedback** you may find it hard to:
 - Listen objectively without interrupting
 - Avoid taking feedback so personally that you become defensive
 - Avoid justifying your behaviors or actions
 - Respond constructively if you feel under attack
 - Hear the truth within the feedback and take appropriate action
 - Welcome suggestions
 - Be humble

Feedback interactions can and should be valuable learning experiences for both people involved. Once you have become comfortable with giving and receiving feedback, you will find it to be a highly effective skill in **preventing conflicts and correcting problems** before they get out of hand. This skill also helps build strong and lasting relationships that are honest, work well, and the process helps everyone learn from each other.

Make it a point to ask for and appreciate honest feedback from your partner, friends, and family. When this skill is part of how you do your life, it opens up lines of communication, reduces fear, and helps build trusting, healthy relationships. You will find that it can measurably improve your relationship and clean up tension points with your partner, making you a much stronger couple.