



# March 2016

## Coaching Tips of the Month for Staff

### Providing Constructive Feedback

In the intermediate trainings, we focused on further developing our skills and comfort with 1) being slower and more cautious to give advice, 2) using reflections to encourage further exploration of issues, without directing participants toward the answer, and 3) using powerful questions to allow the participant to think about solutions and to problem solve. These skills take commitment and intentional practice because they are the least natural and are not often used in daily conversation.

Now, we introduce tips around another coaching technique that may be more natural, but that few of us do consistently well: Give feedback. Feedback is important, because it provides information that leads to growth. However, if people can **self-discover** this information, it is more powerful. (Just like how your boss or spouse thinks an idea is better if they come up with it. 😊)

**Example participant:** Mohammed's goal is employment, and he is working on interview skills. You have built rapport. You know that in Mohammed's culture, people don't generally smile during conversations. To you, he looks very serious and angry during interview prep.

#### **STEPS FOR FEEDBACK**

1. Consider/try non-directive coaching techniques first.
2. Ask permission to give feedback.
3. Stick to the facts, opening with: "I noticed..." "I've seen..."
4. Describe without attributing motive. Attributing motive statements look like this, "I knew you were angry about..." Instead, ask questions regarding motive, "I wondered how you felt about that."
5. Listen to the response without interruption.
6. Explain the impact.
7. Help provide next steps.
8. End with a positive statement.

#### **EXAMPLE**

- "Mohammed, these two pictures illustrate some cultural differences between the United States and Somalia. What do you notice?" (use of scaffolding)

*If that isn't doing the trick – try feedback:*

- "Nice job on the mock interview. Can I give you some feedback?"
- "I've noticed that when you speak, you don't often smile..."
- "... I'm curious if that has anything to do with how you feel during the interview?"
- (Listen to his response)
- "In the United States, if you don't smile people assume you are unhappy and may think you will be unfriendly with customers."
- "Let's try one question where you smile at me while you respond."
- "You just did exactly what American managers want to see. Much better. Your skills really come through too. Great job."

#### **Additional Resources:**

- Although it is written for the business world, this shows the MINDSET is also important when giving feedback. Check out three additional points: <https://hbr.org/2015/08/how-to-give-tough-feedback-that-helps-people-grow>
- From GovLeaders.com on common feedback mistakes: Notice that these mistakes reflect that the person providing feedback is not exhibiting a coaching mindset at that time. <http://www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/publications/tencommon.pdf>