

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Feedback is an incredibly important tool for us to grow as mediators and facilitators. Sometimes we hesitate to give feedback because we don't want to hurt someone's feelings, or because we aren't sure how to phrase it. One of the best methods for giving feedback that I have found is the Plusses (+) and Deltas (Δ) method. Three important parts of this method are how we give difficult feedback, how we take turns to give feedback, and consistency in doing feedback every time.

The Language we Use - How we give difficult feedback

Plusses (+) mean the things that made a positive difference in a meeting.

Deltas (Δ) are opportunities for change. In math the capital Delta symbol (a triangle), means "the change". Identifying a delta may mean that you need additional support from your co-keeper/mediator, or it may mean that you need to try a different strategy.

Rather than view feedback as positives and negatives, this method looks for things that added value to the session (plusses), and places where there was an opportunity for a change (deltas). This also means that when you give someone else a delta (Δ), you need to consider what change you think would be helpful.

Another important part of giving any feedback is to *identify specific examples*. It's helpful to jot down a note or two during the session so that you can say "I really loved it when you said _____. I think that really helped Mildred open up." or "You did a great job of identifying the feelings that they were expressing, like _____ and _____."

EXAMPLE of a Delta:

Delta: *"There were a few times where I was worried that Jane was being left out. I didn't feel comfortable butting in, but would it be helpful if I jumped in next time let you know that I thought we should check in with someone? Or do you have any other ideas?."*

~ Instead of ~

Negative Feedback: *"You forgot to check in with Dina."*

The first offers a couple possible solutions, the second only points out the problem without offering any ideas for change.

Taking Structured Turns

Sometimes we struggle with how to give feedback in a way that gives everyone a chance to speak and be heard. The method outlined in the box to the right allows us to stop and focus on one person at a time, so that we can really focus on their growth before moving on to the next person. An important piece about this method is that **the person receiving feedback is always the first to speak on their own plusses or deltas.**

*Often, when you are identifying your own deltas, you may not know what to do differently, but you know that you want to change. This is a good time to ask your co-facilitator for help in coming up with ideas. Your co-facilitator would wait until it is their turn before giving you their ideas.

One benefit of this method is that BOTH plusses and deltas are expected and have a specific time and place to speak them.

This is just one way to provide feedback. As long as you are giving both plusses and deltas and supporting each other in a way that feels honest and safe for both you and your co-keeper/mediator, there is not wrong way to do feedback.

Always doing Feedback - Consistency

This part applies to any method of feedback: If you make it a point to give and receive feedback after EVERY session, then it gets easier and you become a better facilitator/mediator.

Make it a rule that you will identify at least one Plus and one Delta for both of you every time.

One thing that is particular to this method is that you should ALWAYS try to identify at least one plus and one delta for every session, for yourself and for your co-facilitator. Some folks have a hard time giving themselves plusses, some people have a hard time giving others deltas. With practice we get better at identifying and incorporating feedback. We also get better at analyzing our own behavior.



If you run out of time to do feedback, set a time to call each other later. Make sure to give yourselves at least 15-30 minutes.

EXAMPLE: We have two mediators/facilitators Jane and Bill. Jane says that she'll go first, meaning that she will be the first to receive feedback.

1. Plusses + JANE

Jane gives herself plusses. No deltas, only plusses!
Bill gives Jane her plusses. No deltas!

2. Deltas Δ JANE

Jane gives herself deltas. *
Bill gives Jane her deltas and any ideas he has about supporting her in the deltas she gave herself.

~ Then you switch places ~

3. Plusses + BILL

Bill gives himself plusses. No deltas yet!!
Jane gives Bill his plusses. No deltas!

4. Deltas Δ BILL

Bill gives himself deltas.
Jane gives Bill his deltas and any ideas she has about supporting him in the deltas he gave himself.
