Two-Minute Tips

This Week's Topic: Giving Supportive Feedback to Participants

Giving supportive feedback to young people is an important part of encouraging learning and growth. The purpose is to provide effective supports that help young people improve at the task at hand. Supportive feedback is strength-based and specific. It encourages reflection, problem-solving, and growth. There are many ways you can use constructive feedback throughout your program. You can use it to reinforce positive behavior, inspire and motivate, correct behavior, challenge negative or unhelpful thinking, coach or assist learning and development, provide important information, and encourage creativity and new ideas.[1] You can use it in many contexts, including homework, sports, or making friends. When supportive feedback is done well, it helps promote a stronger sense of belonging in your program and signals to participants that their efforts are noticed.[2] When young people receive constructive, specific, and supportive feedback from safe and caring adults they become more motivated to give their full effort, step-up, and succeed at activities.[3]

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to give positive, effective, and supportive feedback to participants.

Be Specific and Constructive
Take a positive and supportive mindset when offering feedback. Make sure to be constructive and clear about your suggestions for improvement. Instead of saying, "You need to be nicer", which is an evaluative statement and unclear, focus on the behavior and be specific. Try saying, "Remember, one of our program rules is that we show kindness. Sharing our toys during outside time is one way we can show kindness to our friends."

Make a "Sandwich"[2]
Using a "Sandwich" is a truthful, specific compliment on either side of supportive feedback. It can be easier to hear a suggestion if we're also hearing about what we're doing well. For example, you could say, "All the clear details in your story show me you've been working hard to make your story come alive. Next, try to focus on using your neatest handwriting. Clear handwriting combined with your funny characters will make your story so much fun to read."

Give Feedback Privately
Older participants are especially sensitive to embarrassment. Try to offer feedback one-on-one or in small groups of one or two friends, instead of in front of the whole group. This makes participants feel like feedback is meant to help them improve, rather than punish or humiliate them.

Mix it Up
You can give supportive feedback to participants in a variety of ways. Some ways to start off feedback:[4]
- I noticed that you…
- I wonder what would happen if you…
- How could you…
- What if…
- Another way to do this is…

Tips in Action!

Watch staff at Village Theatre give participants encouraging and supportive feedback on their acting performance.

Want more two-minute tips?
Check out:
https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expanded-learning-opportunities/

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!

[1] Retrieved from: https://www.liveyourtruestory.com/4-rules-of-supportive-feedback-communication/

[2] Retrieved from: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/karen-naumann/5-reasons-why-feedback-is_b_8728332.html

[3] Retrieved from: https://www.usyouthsoccer.org/responsible_coaches_provide_responsible_feedback/

[4] Retrieved from: http://www.makinglearningvisibleresources.org/uploads/3/4/1/9/3419723/helpingstudentsgiveandreceivefeedback.pdf

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