



Pratiques Network

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TRAINING ON DELIVERING HELPFUL FEEDBACK

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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Summary	<p>One of the main ways of training social workers is through continuous follow-up, visits to families done with supervisors and feedback after the visits.</p> <p>After having watched several feedback sessions done by supervisors, the Program Manager of FDP in Mumbai India noticed that most of the feedbacks were very judgmental, limited to "what is good and what is not" and therefore not helpful for the social workers who felt evaluated rather than supported, and often did not understand the critics that were addressed to them. More often than not, there was also no feedback at all.</p> <p>As a result, a training was created to help supervisors provide constructive feedback to social workers. This training can be extended to all supervisors who have to provide feedback.</p> <p>This training with supervisors was conducted in India in 2016 and in Madagascar in 2017 and was considered very useful by the participants.</p>

Target participants of this training:

- Any supervisor, especially the supervisors of social workers following families enrolled in Family Development Program.

Objectives

- Emphasizing the importance of debriefing for Social Workers, in order to ensure that supervisors will constantly provide feedback to the supervisees
- Providing techniques and skills to make the feedback and debriefing more effective and helpful
- Through the use of these techniques, enhancing better interpersonal relationship to improve the quality of outcome focusing on project goals

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1. Introduction: feedback, observation and judgment

4 hours

1.1 Why provide feedback?

- Through brainstorming, ask the participants the following questions and note the answer on a white board
 - ▶ Do we need to give feedback? Why?
 - ▶ When do we give feedback?
 - ▶ What makes feedback constructive? What makes it destructive?

If needed, complete the answers of the participants after the debriefing:

Do we need to give feedback? Why?

- **It helps supervisees improve** as supervisors enable supervisees to analyze and gain perspective on certain aspects they could change.
- **It helps supervisors improve** as supervisees are also able to point out the issues they are facing and how the supervisors can better help them overcome difficulties.
- **It prevents both supervisees and supervisors from being stuck and discouraged**, particularly when supervisors and supervisees disagree on some specific points.

When do we give feedback?

- **After each home visit:** if you accompany a social worker during his regular job in order to better understand what her/his job is and the issues s/he faces, it is necessary to provide feedback just after the visit. Otherwise, you may have been a stressful presence rather than a supportive one.
- **At each modification of a job assignment and contract** to explain to the supervisee why his/her contract is prolonged, changed or interrupted.
- **At least once a year** to discuss with the supervisee about his/her overall feeling of his/her work.

What makes feedback constructive? What makes it destructive?

- **Feedback is constructive if it is done:**
 - ▶ To help a person vent her emotions and feelings
 - ▶ To guide / mentor / support / enhance / motivate the person getting the feedback
 - ▶ With commitment / concern for the others (supervisee, project, families)
 - ▶ With sense of responsibility: the one providing the feedback is the one responsible for the overall program
- **Feedback is destructive if it is done:**
 - ▶ To defend / excuse the behavior of the supervisor
 - ▶ To demoralize / condemn / judge
 - ▶ To make the supervisor seem superior / powerful

1.2 How to make sure to be understood?

- Start the activity with a game:
 - ▶ Ask each participant to write 5 words related to FDP on a piece of paper and put them in a hat.
 - ▶ Make 2 teams. The game lasts 2 rounds. During each round, every player takes turns to make his team guess as many words as he can in one minute. Once a word is guessed, the team wins 1 point and the word is put out of the hat for the rest of the round. Each round lasts until all the words are over.
 - ▶ In the first round, the players are allowed to make full sentences to make their teammates guess the word.
 - ▶ In the second round, the players use the same papers but cannot pronounce more than one word.
 - ▶ Alternatively, you can prepare the words yourself, if you want your team to explore their meaning, in particular those related to stereotypes or prejudices. For example, if the word is “good”, the player can make it guessed by saying “bad”. The other members will be led to answer “slum”, “poor people”, “drunkard”, etc., showing typical associations.
- Then, ask everybody:
 - ▶ What did you understand from the game? What was the point of this game?
 - ▶ Can you relate it to your field work? What did you notice in the field? What words were used? Did we clarify any terms? Do you think all the staff can understand those words as you do now? How else could we communicate about those notions?
 - ▶ What does “alcoholic” or “drunkard” mean for a SW? What is domestic violence? What is a “lazy” family? What is a “good” visit? Etc.
 - ▶ How do we formulate our questions and our feedback? What words can best convey our perception?

If needed, complete the answers of the participants after the debriefing:

- Sometimes we use words we are not capable of defining.
- Words have different meanings depending on the person.
- We do not all have the same values – what is good, what is bad, etc.
- Defining words and having a common vocabulary helps communication.
- Not spending time in defining reference vocabulary would lead to misunderstanding and judgment.
- How people respond is also a result of how we ask questions and of how we communicate.

Therefore, we need to adapt to each other’s understanding, communicate in different ways from one occasion to the next spend time in explaining or rephrasing, and **always define terms to ensure a common understanding**. Once you identify the right term, keep using the same word each time.

Often we include judgment, personal perceptions and opinions in our statements without realizing that it may have a very different meaning for our interlocutor. **Using qualitative adjectives, labels and interpretation leaves room for misunderstanding, stereotyping and discord.**

1.3 Difference between an observation, an inference and a judgement

“To observe without evaluating is the highest form of intelligence” - Krishna Murthi

- An observation is an objective description of the reality.
 - ▶ Example: he drinks 5 glasses of whisky everyday
- An inference is an educated guess, a hypothesis based on the observations, it can therefore be confirmed or infirmed by further observations.
 - ▶ Example: he is addicted to alcohol
- A judgement is an inference made with words suggesting that you approve or disapprove, that you consider it good or bad, right or wrong, etc.
 - ▶ Example: he is a drunkard
- Example: role play the following scene in front of the participants:

SW: How are you? How was your week?

Sunita: Fine...

SW: Are you busy?

Sunita: ...No... sit... (*Pausing a lot, sitting without looking at the SW*)

Leave silence

SW: (*speaking quickly*) So, did you go to the ration office last week?

Sunita: No... I didn't go, I was very busy and I didn't get time.

SW: But you said you would go... Why didn't you go?

Sunita: I had to take care of the kids and there were water problems and I don't know where it is...; I just know it is very far and I'm lazy.

SW: But we talked about it last week and about what you needed to do. I gave you the information on where it was and I even said that I would go with you. Do you want to get a RC? It's important, no? For the food, the kerosene everything! It is just behind the hospital. I'm going there with another family on Monday. You'll come with us, ok? Take my number and we'll set up a meeting – it's very easy.

Sunita: Ok, ok...

- Then ask each participant to make 5 observations and 5 inferences about the family. Give time to the participants to write down their comments.
- Let the participants read out their observations. If they are observations, make your left hand puppet dance. If they are judgments or inferences, make a howling noise whilst you shake your right hand.
- Proceed again by asking participants to make 5 observations and 5 inferences about the SW.

- Examples
 - ▶ Sunita is looking down → observation
 - ▶ The SW is talking quickly and more than the family → observation
 - ▶ Sunita is nervous → inference
 - ▶ The SW is nervous too → inference
 - ▶ Sunita is strange, lazy, ... → judgment
 - ▶ The SW is too directive → judgement
- Note to be added at the end of the exercise:

- ▶ Using expressions such as “too much”, “not as good as”, “just enough”, “only”, “just”, etc. is always a judgement and not an observation. **QUALITATIVE NOTIONS → JUDGMENT**
- ▶ Reporting an emotion that the family did not express clearly (angry, sad, frustrated) is always an inference and not an observation. **EMOTIONS → INFERENCE**
- ▶ Hyperbolic language (always, never, best, worst) are not accurate and can be source of disagreement
- Regarding the observations of the SW
 - ▶ Observations are specific and can be used as a base for discussion. If two persons don't agree on observations, it is either because they do not report actual observations or because they did not pay attention to the same things during their visit to the family. Therefore, they need to explain first what they paid attention to.
 - ▶ After having reviewed the observations, ask the participants about the inference they may have drawn. People can easily disagree on inferences so it is important that both parties explain how and why they made those inferences. Since Inferences are only hypothesis, nobody can know for sure if the inference is right or wrong, except the family itself.
 - ▶ Here again, remember that when there are discrepancies between several analyses, it doesn't necessarily mean one is right and the other wrong: it means that there is a need to get more information about the family, its situation, its past, etc. An external opinion may also be required (distance, hindsight). In any case, the differing opinions have to be discussed between the SW and understood by them.

For more examples, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f99Xvp3yFPg> about the Non-Violent Communication (or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bljRxdN-kL8> in French).

1.4 Role play

- Tell the participants that they will now have to give constructive feedback to the SW, as if they had attended to the visit done by the SW. You will be the on the play the SW.
- Ask one participant to give feedback and the other to watch. If you have time, you can ask other participants to give feedback too.
 - ▶ As the SW, act as if you really consider that you did your best during the visit: you ask Sunita if it was okay to be visited, you ask her why she did not go to get her RC, she said she was lazy, but she was the one saying she wanted to have her RC, so this is her identified objective, and you help her to achieve it. In your opinion, if she does not do anything in the next visits, it means she is not motivated and it would be better to stop the visits in this case.
 - ▶ If the participant asks you “how do you feel” and makes observations (“did you notice that Sunita was not looking at you? How can you explain this?”), you can say that you are a bit frustrated she did not go the ration office and that maybe she was afraid of your reaction.
- If the participants did not manage to give constructive feedback to the SW, you can ask one of the participant to play the SW and you can show the others participants how to give constructive feedback.

If needed, you can give the following list of questions to the participants as typical questions that can be used to give constructive feedback after home-based visits:

- Types of opening questions:
 - ▶ How did you feel about the visits today and why?
 - ▶ What did you enjoy or dislike in particular about today? Why?
 - ▶ Is there anything that frustrated you and why?
- Types of questions to reassure SW:
 - ▶ How do you feel about working with this family?
 - ▶ What help (if any) would you want?
- Types of questions to end feedback:
 - ▶ What do you take with you from our feedback?
 - ▶ What are your strengths and what could we improve?
 - ▶ Do you remember our last feedback, you have made a big improvement in ... How does it make you feel to have improved? What changed since then?
 - ▶ What do you think and feel now compared to the beginning of the feedback?
- Ask for feedback about the way the discussion was conducted
 - ▶ What did you enjoy about this feedback session?
 - ▶ What could I have done better?
 - ▶ Did anything upset you and why? How could I have said it otherwise?

1.5 Conclusion

- Ask the participants: what did you feel during this workshop? What did this training remind you of?
- Ask the participants to recap what they have learnt and what they will start, stop or continue doing due to this workshop. Review that the next week.

2. Constructive feedback

4 hours

2.1 Role Play

- Divide the participants in groups of 4 to 5 people.
 - ▶ One group plays a first scene where a coordinator comes to field, sees that the reports have not been done by the SWs and blasts the team, not giving them any time to explain the situation.
 - ▶ Another group plays another scene where a supervisor comes back from a home visit and does not give feedback, arguing that she/he doesn't have any more time for this because the SW arrived late ("you should have been on time if you wanted to have feedback").
 - ▶ In both scenes, the character of the supervisor is labelling the SW ("you are always ..."), talking badly to them, judging them, etc. He also asks close-ended questions only, e.g. "did you do the report?".
- As previously, at the end of the role play, ask each participant to make 5 observations and 5 inferences about the supervisor character.

- Let the participants read out their observations. If they are observations, make your left hand puppet dance. If they are judgments or inferences, make a howling noise whilst you shake your right hand.
- AT the end of the exercise, debrief with the participants by asking them:
 - ▶ How did you feel during the role play?
 - ▶ Why did you feel like this?
 - ▶ Why can people react with such violent feelings?

2.2 Open-ended questions: game

- The participants stand in a circle and one person has a word stuck onto his/her back. The latter can only be answered “yes” or “no” to the questions s/he asks to the participants in order to guess what this word is. In this investigation, s/he is not allowed more than 20 questions. The word selected can only be the name of a local dish.

During the **debriefing**, ask:

- How did the investigator feel during the exercise?
- How did the other participants feel themselves?

If needed, complete the answers of the participants after the debriefing:

- Explain what are close-ended and open-ended questions (This is needed as our SW usually take a long time to understand):
 - ▶ Close-ended questions will get a yes or no answer, or a limited and very specific answer (usually consisting of few words)
 - ▶ Open-ended questions may encourage longer and more thought-out answers
- With close-ended questions, you may get specific answers but it will take you more time to understand well a situation if it is complex. Most of all, you may lead the interviewee to neglect or hide the actual facts. Indeed, the close-ended questions can increase the pressure on the interviewee and usually push them to answer exactly what they believe you would like to hear. This may give a dominant position to the interviewer, which will hamper the building of a trusting relationship between the SW and the family, or between the supervisor and the SW.
- To ensure constructive feedback, always start with letting the concerned person explain, share the facts and feelings by asking open-ended questions, even if you already have a strong presumption of the truth.
- Once you understood the situation, you can use close-ended questions to get more clarity on specific aspects.
- Using both types of questions is necessary to conduct feedback but it is always safer to start with open-ended questions.

2.3 Reenacting the role-plays.

- Ask the participants to list out the important steps of a feedback and to explain why these ensure constructive discussion.

- Then, give an extract of “Steps of feedback” (see Annex) to each participant so that they can check if that fits with their list. Alternatively, you can make 3 groups: one group will give feedback without the guidelines, a second group will do it with the guidelines and a third analyses the difference. Then the 3 groups can review the guidelines altogether.
- Ask the observers to reenact the role-play, so that the feedback can be constructive.
- If participants feel comfortable enough, you can secretly ask the participant playing the part of the social worker to make it more difficult for the supervisor (crying during feedback, becoming angry, lying, etc.).
- It is better to change roles if you reenact it several times so that the participants can play both supervisor’s and SW’s parts.

2.4 Conclusion

- As previously, at the end of the role play, Ask the participants:
 - ▶ How did you feel during the role plays?
 - ▶ Why did you feel like this?
 - ▶ Why can people react with such violent feelings?
- Discuss what techniques were used, what the SW and the person giving feedback agreed or disagreed on and why, etc.
- Ask each participant to make 5 observations and 5 inferences about their behavior and responses during the role play.
- Let the participants read out their observations. If they are observations, make your left hand puppet dance. If they are judgments or inferences, make a howling noise whilst you shake your right hand.
- Ask the participants to recap what they have learnt and what they will start, stop or continue with this workshop. Review that the next week.

3. Annex

3.1 Steps of feedback

1. Review and note down the observations and questions following the visit (done by observer)

- Be clear about the questions you want to clarify, the information you need and the feedback you would like to give.

2. Set the time, rules and place of the feedback

- Inform participants and ask their permission and participation to begin the feedback.
- During feedback, if the person starts crying or shows careless attitude, say that 'if you are angry/ hurt, let's keep it aside for now and we will discuss about it later'. BUT do not omit or avoid giving feedback. Do not let the seriousness lessen.

3. Ask the SW to discuss the visit

Review the SW's observations, feelings, incidences, and actions.

- Active listening
- Open ended questions
- Concern for the SW and positive tone
- Encouraging body language

4. Clarify questions about what the SW said

Make sure you have understood what the SW has said.

- Ask specific questions
- Rephrase what the SW has said
- Ask if the SW agrees with your rephrasing

5. State your observations and facts

"I heard, I saw, I felt, I smelt, etc..."

- Use "I" because you are talking about what your observations but
- Avoid "I think" = opinion!
- Avoid adjectives, labels and beliefs

6. Stimulate SW's analytical skills

Provide room for the SW to express themselves about your observations and ask them how they interpret these observations.

- Ask them "what do you feel about it?", "what do you think this means" etc...

- Ask why as many times as necessary – understand the reasons behind family and SW's reactions. Go to the root causes.

7. State your opinion, perspective, etc.

Refer to the observations to elaborate how you came to your inferences.

8. Discuss view points

- No judgments – right, wrong, etc.
- No prejudices and beliefs
- Understand the other person's perspective

9. Evaluate the activity

Start with the things that worked well, elaborate the positive aspects of the activity.

Follow up with the things that need to be changed for the next visit

- Avoid label and explain through the use of SIR (Strengths or areas of improvements, Incidence, Relevance)
- Use encouraging words – "yet", "need to work", "room for improvement", "could",

This should come to a consensus/agreement.

The most important part of the feedback is to understand why:

- Why something was done
- Why something needs to change: discuss the impact of actions to work

This will enable the receiver of the feedback to understand their action and therefore be aware of their mechanisms.

10. Formulate an action plan

Don't forget to discuss how confident the SW feels and whether she needs support.

11. Ask the person who has to take action to summarize what needs to be done

12. Thank the feedback receiver