

**How to Speak Up and How to Take Feedback**

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**THE NEED**

Very few skills could be more important in a work setting than learning how to speak up and how to take feedback—yet research suggests that most people are not particularly good at either one. We also know these skills go hand-in-hand. In other words, people are reluctant to speak up because they don’t think it will be received as constructive input, and people are reluctant to take feedback because they don’t think people speak to them constructively. As a result, there is a lot less openness in the workplace than we might think. Every week we read about cover-ups in Hollywood, the Olympics, the airlines, the auto industry, healthcare, government, law enforcement, schools—and this is just the tip of the iceberg.

**When people are unable to interact freely at**

**work, organizations:**

* miss opportunities,
* make serious mistakes,
* sacrifice quality,
* compromise safety,
* destroy morale,
* thwart innovation,
* lose transparency,
* invite liability, and
* inhibit productivity.

This course helps participants find the means to speak up, the capacity to take feedback, and the tools to create openness on their teams.

**I. Learning to Speak Up**

In this section, we discuss the benefits of “opening up” as an individual and as a team, along with the barriers that prevent it. Participants have a chance to identify their own obstacles by means of an assessment, and together they consider what might make it easier or harder to speak up.

One of the main obstacles for all of us is fear…

* that we will say the wrong thing.
* that it’s not our place to speak up.
* that we’ll be taken the wrong way.
* that it won’t really matter.
* that it may actually get us in trouble.

Experts claim that past experiences can create deep-seated anxieties

about voicing our opinions; as a result, many people hold their tongue

when they have something to say—and it can do a lot of damage.

This section closes with tips on how to speak up effectively, beginning

with the need to “reverse our thinking.” Instead of wondering if we

might hurt someone by speaking up, we need to consider if we might

help someone instead. We need to learn how to say things in a way that makes people feel safe, and how to be constructive and solution-oriented.

Participants are asked to identify things they might like to say if they

knew they would be heard, and have a chance to practice speaking up

with a “speak-up partner.”

**II. Learning to Take Feedback**

In this section, we discuss the benefits of “getting input” as an individual

and as a team, along with the barriers that prevent it. Participants have

a chance to identify their own obstacles by means of an assessment, and

together they consider what might make it easier or harder to take feedback.

One of the main obstacles for all of us is fear…

* that we will be judged.
* that people won’t like us.
* that the feedback isn’t fair.
* that the feedback isn’t accurate.
* that we might have to change in some way.

Experts claim that past experiences can create deep-seated anxieties

about taking feedback; as a result, many people refuse to listen when

people give them input—and it can be a great loss.

This section closes with tips on how to take feedback effectively, beginning with the need to “reverse our thinking.” Instead of seeing feedback as a threat, we need to view it as another perspective that could help us see what we’re missing. We need to be more approachable and less defensive so people will share their input with us—and we need to avoid deflecting what we hear. Participants are asked to identify sources of feedback that might help them get perspective if they could be more open to it, and then they have a chance to practice taking feedback with a “feedback partner.”

**CONCLUSION**

By means of interactive discussion, video clips, and business examples, the

class begins to learn how to speak up and take feedback—but the session

ends with each person taking responsibility for their part in creating

openness. An action-planning activity allows them to choose a next step

for saying something that they feel needs to be said (no matter how big or

small), and for taking feedback from someone who can help them improve.