

The Art and Science of Giving Feedback Well

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What brought you here today?

And what do you teach?

Some objectives for today

- To explore the giving of feedback to students from the perspective of social science
- To consider practical applications of this social science (the "art")
- To consider feedback we have been given in terms of this science and art

Generally, how good are your students at receiving feedback?

Very
poor

Excellent

What criteria did you use to
determine this?

The Science: Attribution Theory

- Attribution theory is concerned with the way we attribute cause

Some Options

From the receiver's point of view

CONTROL		
NO CONTROL		
	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL

Some Options

From the receiver's point of view

CONTROL		
NO CONTROL		Giver's disposition
	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL

Some Options

From the receiver's point of view

CONTROL		Giver's general impression of me
NO CONTROL		
	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL

Some Options

From the receiver's point of view

CONTROL		
NO CONTROL	My natural ability	
	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL

Some Options

From the receiver's point of view

CONTROL	My work	
NO CONTROL		
	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL

Some Options

From the receiver's point of view

CONTROL	My work	Giver's general impression of me
NO CONTROL	My natural ability	Giver's disposition
	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL

Questions? Comments?

The Art:

Feedback that encourages constructive attributions

■ Tone

- Feedback given in anger is more likely to be attributed to the mood of the giver
- unless it is a very rare display of anger

■ Variety

- Feedback that is always negative (or always positive) is also more likely to be attributed to something about the giver.
 - “She never says anything good about anyone.”
 - “He just pats everyone on the back.”
- The most effective feedback co-varies with the receiver’s behaviour

■ Behavioural and specific focus

Asking Questions Effectively

- “Funnel” your questions
 - Start with the general and move to the specific
 - What are your thoughts right now about x?
- Explore attributions
 - “How would you explain x?”
 - Listen for which 2 x 2 cells are indicated.
- Move to the “work area”
 - What does x tell you to work on?
 - How might you go about doing that work?
- Move to more specific questions using an “appreciative inquiry” approach, if the current emotions allow
 - “What is one specific thing, however large or small, that you are happy with regarding x?”
 - Build on that with: “Are there ways you can build on that to get even better?”

Questions? Comments?

The Science:

Emotional arousal narrows attentional focus

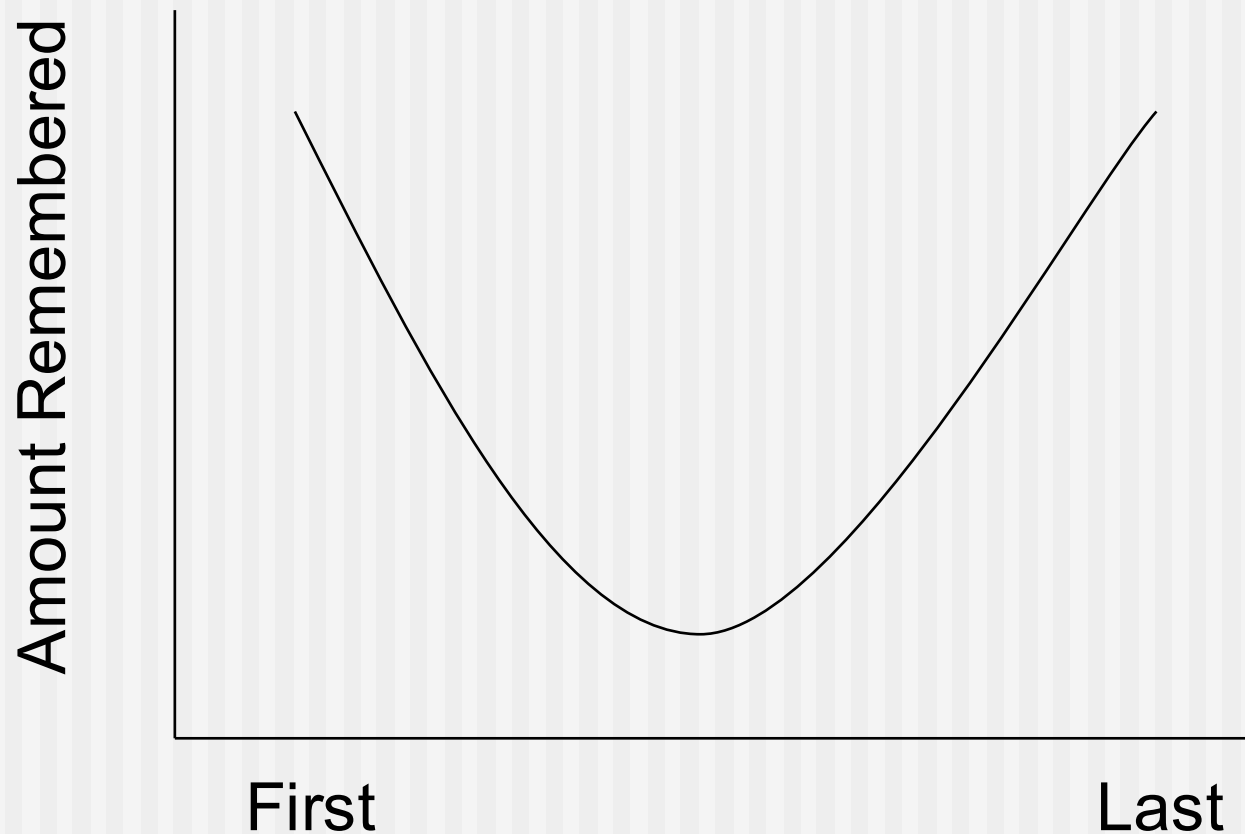
- Examples
 - Eyewitness testimony
 - Patients receiving bad news
- Feedback given during emotional moments competes with “emotion-focused coping”

The Art: Taking emotion into account

- Timing
 - The balance between immediacy and receptivity

The Science Remembering feedback

- Cognition and “serial position effects”



The Art:

First and last words

- First words
 - Get attention without creating defensiveness
- Last words
 - focus on a course of action
 - encourage CONTROL-INTERNAL attributions
 - Confirm understanding

The Science:

Learning theory and building on prior knowledge

- New information is much more likely to be learned (i.e. internalized and remembered) if it can be meaningfully linked to previously learned material

The Art:

Dialogue rather than monologue

- Consider asking the receiver's view first
- Include the receiver in any problem-solving process
- Ask if the current situation reminds the receiver of any other situation

The Other Perspective:

How to receive feedback well

- Listen
- Get clarity
- Focus on the topic of the feedback
- Move toward implementation of solutions
- Be thankful

Thinking about mentoring in terms of giving and receiving feedback

- Think of someone who has been good mentor to you
 - How did that person respond to your work?
 - What made him or her good at it?

Yes, but ...
