

Effective Performance Development/Feedback Conversations

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the Brain-based Psychological S.A.F.E.T.Y™ domains from the Academy for Brain-based Leadership and their relevance in feedback conversations.
- Identify and practice fundamental coaching skills to help maximize development and performance.
- Apply a 4-step feedback conversation model.

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?¹

Psychological safety is the shared belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. The **S.A.F.E.T.Y™** model from the [Academy of Brain Based Leadership](#) (see below) outlines key components for creating a psychologically safe environment.

Security: our need for predictability, consistency, commitment, certainty.

Autonomy: our need for control over our own environment and the freedom of personal choice.

Fairness: our need to engage in and experience trustworthy and principled exchanges, both to us and others.

Esteem: our need to be regarded highly, influenced by the way we see ourselves, compare ourselves to others, and how we perceive others see us.

Trust: our social need to belong to and protect our community.

You: unique personal factors such as personality, bias, influences, and context.

Responding to an **Activated Amygdala** can be challenging. Here are a few ways you can stay grounded when the other person reacts strongly.



Defensiveness → Remain calm, composed, and curious.

Justification → Resist taking the response personally.

Deflection → Pause and allow space for the other person to express and process their emotions.

Blaming others → Offer empathy and understanding, e.g., *"This must be difficult to hear."*

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



Asking powerful questions help build **self-awareness, gain insights, discover solutions, establish goals, overcome challenges**, and increase **resourcefulness and creativity**. **Powerful questions** are:

- **Open-ended:** Elicits the formulation of insights, ideas, and solutions.
- **Succinct:** Brief and clear.
- **Simple:** Uncomplicated and direct.
- **Curious:** Genuinely wanting to learn something about the person's experience.



When engaging in feedback conversations, it is important to avoid:

- Vague language, i.e., generalized statements, lack of specific or actionable feedback
- Attacking the person's character, e.g., "you are too strict" or "your teaching is not interesting"
- Dominating the conversation so that the other person is unable to share their experience
- Setting goals without mutual understanding and commitment
- Lack of follow-up and accountability



PROVIDING FEEDBACK: FUNDAMENTAL COACHING SKILLS & THE COIN MODEL

Feedback conversations often feel uncomfortable for both the person giving the feedback and the person receiving it. Developing coaching skills to use alongside a feedback model can help these conversations become more productive, collaborative, and psychologically safe. Coaches partner with people in a collaborative and introspective process, fostering a supportive environment where people can realize their potential and growth.

Fundamental Coaching Skills

- Listening
- Open-ended questions
- Establishing goals
- Clarify action steps & accountability

Putting it All Together

Merging **Fundamental Coaching Skills**, the **Coin Model** (connection/context, observation, impact, next steps), and **S.A.F.E.T.Y™** domains, creates an easy to follow feedback framework that provide the tools needed to establish trust, respect, and motivation.

FOUR STEP FEEDBACK FRAMEWORK



Connection | trust & esteem

- ☐ Be brief (1-2 sentences)
- ☐ Be authentic: personalize your connection statement
- ☐ Use positive language and non-verbal communication

Example: "Thank you for the time and energy you devote to our medical learners. You've been teaching for __ years and it is an incredible contribution."

Context | security

- ☐ Provide clarity on the purpose, agenda, and expected outcome of the feedback conversation

Example: "What prompted our conversation today is that an alert was generated based on student feedback of your teaching performance."



Observation | fairness & esteem

- ☐ Provide specific and factual examples
- ☐ Allow time for the teacher to process the feedback and experience their feelings
- ☐ Offer empathy: reflect back what you hear the other person say, even if you do not agree

Example: "A student shared that they experienced unnecessary stress when they were given harsh feedback in front of their peers." (After the teacher has responded): "When you hear the student feedback, how do you feel? What part of the feedback is most surprising or unexpected?"



Impact | fairness

- ☐ Help elicit insights on the teacher's behaviour through open-ended questions

Example: "You've mentioned that your intention when teaching students is to _____, how does your approach align with your intention?"



Next Steps: Clarifying Expectations | security & fairness

- ☐ Check for understanding, e.g., did the feedback match the teacher's expectations?
- ☐ Commit and agree to specific goals, action steps, and accountability structures
- ☐ Identify barriers to change and offer additional resources and support

Example: "What accountability structure would motivate you?" or "What was the most valuable part of our conversation?"

References

1. The SAFETY™ Model & Assessment [Internet]. ABL. 2025 [cited 2026 Aug 24]. Available from: <https://brainleadership.com/solution/safetymodel/>
2. Home - Coach Callie [Internet]. Coach Callie. 2019 [cited 2026 Aug 24]. Available from: <https://www.coachcallie.com/>

