

NLP Master Practitioner Modeling Project

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I really want to tell him something...but I am scared...I know this feedback will help him... but what if he feels bad about it?

Well, that was what went on in my mind every time I had to give someone a critical feedback. I would stay awake till late at night, tossing and turning in my bed and wondering what to say, and how to say it in a way that the receiving person doesn't feel bad about it.

My presupposition perhaps was that the other person is not equipped to handle feedback.

It hit me like a great discovery when one of my NLP mates, Victoria pointed this out...that maybe, I was operating on that premise and perhaps that's what made the matters appear not so easy for me. When I first heard that, I had this big AHA moment! I thought, "Absolutely! How about me presupposing that everyone is well equipped to handle feedback?" While it did not dissolve all of my fear, it certainly moved my awareness to the fact that there are a lot of finer nuances in giving feedback and how I may be making it seem difficult for myself.

This led me to **my IT** of – *How to deliver critical feedback in a manner that makes the person feel valued and be in a resourceful state.*

The effect on me is being comfortable providing critical feedback and feeling positive and empowered after delivering it.

The desired effect on others - is them to understand that the feedback has been given with a positive outcome in mind that makes them feel valued and in a resourceful state to march ahead.

When I first set out to talk to my exemplars, I thought this was about me giving feedback to others. However, the first realization that dawned upon me when I was in conversation with my mentor and exemplar, Arul, was that 'Charity begins at home'. It was for me to learn how to give feedback to MYSELF first in a positive and empowering way. I noticed that my tolerance towards my own mistakes/errors was close to zero and I had a rather harsh expectation from myself. So, if I did happen to think I could've done something better, I would go all the way out in making myself feel uncomfortable about the error. How could I be kind to myself while I receive feedback from others and from myself? How can I deliver in a way that would make me feel empowered to make amends? And that's when this modeling project took a new turn.

The EXEMPLARS

First things first, my exemplars – Well, fortunately for me, I didn't have to look too far to find them. They were right around me. They are some of the very best in the world. I am lucky indeed to have come in close contact with such amazing exemplars who have the unique gift of connecting with people the way they do and be so humble about it. This modeling project is also to celebrate their excellence and a tribute to their humility.

To introduce them – Words may not suffice, yet I shall make an earnest attempt.

Arul Subramaniam – Director Technical, Brainobrain Kids Academy

What can I say about him! He radiates positivity miles beyond his radius. You don't even have to talk. Just stand next to him and you can feel the positive vibrations touch and uplift you. Such is his impact! A very humble, simple yet extremely impactful and versatile global leader. When he offers feedback, it certainly has the most positive effect on the receiver. The compassion with which he delivers feedback makes one want to change. "Without evidence, it becomes an opinion", says Arul - A firm believer in stating evidence while giving feedback and having a clear outcome for the receiver. For him, there is no 'I'ness in feedback. The purpose is only learning. He sums up saying, 'judge not, and you will not be judged.'

Andrea Zimmerman - Group Manager-HR, Target

Having a rough day? Want an instant lift in your spirits...60 seconds...just 60 seconds is all it takes – Meet Andrea Zimmerman – the expert at speed mentoring and uplifting people's spirits with her effervescent nature. She is one of the most positive, energetic and authentic leaders I have had the opportunity to work with. I have known her for a year now, and even in the not-so-good circumstances, I haven't seen a frown on her face. She has the remarkable ability to create a positive change in the most challenging of environments in minimal time. She helps people find their own solutions/paths in the most secure of environment. How she does it, in her own words is - "Meet people where they are".

Rakesh Mishra - Director-Marketing, Target

An absolute honor, privilege and pleasure to work with Rakesh Mishra - the man who makes impossible possible in the most loving and compassionate manner. While the man is generous with praise, he is phenomenal in delivering critical feedback. He does it in a way which directly touches the core of a person and change becomes inevitable. Resistance is often overcome with his genuine nature and one changes for the better with effortless ease under his mere presence and reaches a level of perfection when under his guidance. In his words, 'Give feedback in a way that appears to raw human emotions.'

Their core belief can best be summed up in the following Shakespeare's words – (none less to describe some of the world's best):

This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

In simpler words – the one thing that they all believe while giving feedback or even otherwise is – be true to self and to others. When one is authentic in what they do, it simplifies the actions and life thereof.

Their Models of Excellence

If someone can do it, anyone can do it - and for anyone to be able to do it, the one thing we would like to know is 'how' - or in other words the process. I've been fortunate to get undivided time and attention from my Exemplars for my modeling process and I am absolutely grateful to them for the same. I came across tons of valuable insights into the feedback process and I shall make an earnest attempt to describe their model of excellence in a way that may benefit the readers just as it has benefitted me.

Arul's Process

Before the feedback

Observe - gather evidence - make a decision that this is the time - stillness in the heart and mind - congruence with self - seek permission

The Process

- Feedback can be life enhancing when given respectfully.
- Stillness in mind and truth in my heart - my way of showing love to the person.
- Give evidence - without evidence it becomes an opinion.
- Listen to the first few sentences to understand their point and build rapport. Acknowledge it and then make the point.
- If a person gets emotional do not rush to rescue
- Communicate that you have an offering for them
- If a desired behavior has already been noticed in a different setting, he points it - usually, this creates a state change in the person and moves them in a positive direction - if you can do it there, you can do it here
- Observe for state change through verbal/non-verbal cues.
- Change tactic based on how they are responding
- There is no 'I'ness in the feedback - it is not whether I am liked. It is not about me. Purpose is learning.
- Presuppose that the feedback is heard and thank them for listening.
- Briefly visit the outcome that you have for the person while delivering feedback and connect it to their purpose.
- The more I give, the more I get
- If I know that something can be of value to someone, it is my responsibility to say it in a way that they get it.
- Judge not, and you will not be judged.

Beliefs of Excellence

- **The map is not the territory** - Giving feedback without evidence is like stating an opinion
- **We have within us all the resources we ever need** - If the desired behavior was already noted in a different scenario, I state it.
- **The meaning of the communication is the effect** - If I know that something can be of value to someone, it is my responsibility to say it in a way that they can get it.
- **There is no failure, only feedback** - purpose of feedback is learning.

- **Mind and body are part of the same system** - observe for state change through verbal/non-verbal cues and change approach accordingly

Filters

Towards state - States desired behaviors than focusing on the 'pink elephants'

Other - Focus in on the other. No 'I'ness in the feedback

Match - Listens attentively to build rapport and match

Small chunk - Gives evidence of specific behaviors

Choice - Provides choice to choose from their varied behaviors to suit their outcome

Dissociated - Staying objective, providing feedback with evidence; not rushing to rescue if the person gets emotional

Presupposition

That the feedback is heard and thank them for listening.

Structure

V(e)/A(e) - Observe behavior, gather evidence

Id - this is the moment

K(i) - Stillness, hold the outcome for the person

K(e) - Speak about observations and evidence

V(e)/A(e) - Observe state change through verbal/non-verbal cues & listen actively

Id - Briefly visit the outcome for the person

V(i) - Visual image of the end in mind

A(e) - communicate

K(i) - Gauge if the receiver gets it or not (happy if he/she understands the intended feedback)

Id - effect of the communication

Effect/Outcome

On Arul - sense of happiness, and love - That I could offer something of value to the person

On receiver - that feedback has been given with a positive intent and outcome in mind

My Key Learning

The ability to stay dissociated while giving feedback was a key learning. Carrying other people's monkeys on my back was something that I did at an unconscious level. This often prevented me from being able to deliver feedback in a neutral way. Through Arul, I understood that we can always help each other by not necessarily stepping into their situation. That it was not necessary to burn my hands to help someone else who has burnt. The fact that I could help better if I stayed afloat and objective was really helpful.

Arul's experience of the modeling exercise

"It has been a wonderful experience. The key realization is that - When I am giving feedback in this fashion, the filter that I operate is 'other' - so my focus is on the other person. Therefore naturally, I had a

lot of clarity on how the other person is responding, receiving etc. I had a lot of awareness on the receiver & less of it on how I did, what I did.

And every time, you asked about my state, my deepest truth etc. - I had to think & visit my deeper resources to answer those questions - I had newer realization on how I am, when i am doing this - particularly about my inner state. I have a lot of awareness around my inner state, at a much deeper level.

The most excellent thing about your modeling session is that - I am so delighted that you celebrated my excellence so truly. As a result, my excellence is now adding up to who I am & what am I an example of! I think ' this ability to give feedback in a particular way' was a skill & I am sensing now... that it is moving up the levels! I am so enriched & strengthened the way you honored my excellence! It seems that every bit of it is now in my conscious competence!"

Andrea's process:

Before the feedback

Understand what motivates the person and what does the person connect with. How can I give a feedback which they can resonate with - What do I value about the person - What is the root cause - look beyond and look holistic - Be convinced about the feedback

The Process

- Understand what motivates the person, what does the person connect with
- How can I give a feedback which the person can resonate with
- What do I value about the person
- Feedback is about the root cause - what are you trying to assess and address through the feedback
- Look beyond, look holistic
- Be transparent and open
- Honestly love the people - if people feel you really have the best interest for them - it gets a lot easier
- Build trust and rapport
- Lead other people and unpack what they have first - lead them to their own answers and then add on
- Understanding the awareness and accountability of the person who is receiving the feedback is very important
- Observe for state change through verbal/non-verbal cues
- Ask the right questions and avoid giving directives. Give data points instead
- Don't have to get to resolution every time. Know when do you need to let it be
- Take the emotion out of it - whose interest do I have in mind - have the best interest of others
- Change tactics based on how they respond
- Find a connection point with everyone

Beliefs of Excellence

- **We have within us all the resources we ever need** – staying away from giving directives to people. Focus on asking the right questions and facilitate people finding their own solutions
- **The meaning of communication is the effect** - think if I'm asking the right questions
- **Behind every behavior is an unconscious positive intention** - Everybody wants to make a good impact

on people around them. Nobody comes to work not wanting to do a good job.

- Each person is unique - Aware of what do I value about the person

Filters

Towards (desired state) - State expected behaviors in positives

Other - Best interest of others in mind

Match - Find a connection point with everyone

Small chunk - Give specific data points

Choice – Staying clear of giving directives. Facilitate them finding their own solutions.

Dissociated - Take the emotion out of it and stay objective have the best interest of others at all times

Presupposition

Everybody wants to make a good impact on people around them.

Structure

- Id - Be convinced of the feedback

- K(i) - a feeling inside, nervous

- A(e)/V(e) - Pay attention to body language, listening to all cues (verbal & non-verbal)

- K(e) - Ask right questions, facilitate learning

- A(e)/V(e) - Look for verbal/Non-verbal cues

- Id - Check if I am asking the right questions

- K(e) - Give data points

- Id - When do i need to let it be - evaluate situation based on response before determining next steps.

Change tactics

- K(e) - Speak about their situation, share experience and make them feel good about themselves. Push people to find their own answers in a supportive way.

- K(i) - a rush of relief when the person gets it. Felt glowing when I get the message across to the person.

Effect/Outcome

On Andrea - a glowing feeling that I am contributing and adding value. I make a difference

On others - People walk out with their head held high, feeling good about themselves. Helping them find their own answers

My Key Learning

The first sentence that comes to my mind is, "Meet people where they are". When I first heard this from Andrea, it struck a deep chord with me. It was very profound and deep I thought. Was I giving feedback because I expected a lot of someone or was there a genuine need for me to give them feedback keeping their outcome in mind? This, I thought was the key question to ask myself before I decide to provide a feedback. Why? – It helps me firstly in being more accepting of people. When I am accepting of people, I can deliver the feedback in a more compassionate yet objective way keeping their outcome in mind.

When I meet people where they are, there is a lot more objectivity and a win-win outcome in my style, statement and delivery of feedback.

Andrea's experience of the modeling exercise

Thanks again for having me be a part of this exercise, I really enjoyed it. I think the discussion was most beneficial for me because anytime we pause to take stock of how we approach something, bringing it forward to conscious, it is helpful. Articulating why we do the things we do is always a cause for pause and reflection – and that is a great thing.

Rakesh's process

Before the feedback

Who is the person - what makes the person - what is my relation and how do I want to approach it -
'Have a strong conviction - What should be my facial reaction, language etc. - Think about how I would react if I were in their position.

The Process

- Speak in a neutral state assuming positive intent
- Eliminate prejudice and be positive
- Talk about good things about the person to begin with
- 'Why' the feedback is being given needs to be put in a positive way
- Hold the outcome for them
- Be truthful, empathetic and honest about self and the other
- Cite examples of people or situations where the expected behaviors have been demonstrated so the person could observe and learn
- Ask thought provoking questions
- Critical feedback is never in isolation - it follows after a relationship of trust
- Gauge the level of maturity of the person and then decide the dosage of feedback to be given.
- State concrete examples - Situation, behavior, inference
- If a person gets defensive or emotional - be empathetic but direct. Do not rescue. Bring the perspective back to engage with the person again.
- Talk about how the behavior might prevent the person from succeeding
- Have a win-win outcome

Beliefs of Excellence

- **There is no failure/only feedback** - Through feedback, a person would have learnt something and benefitted. Make the person feel good
- **Behind every behavior is an unconscious positive intention** - there may have been a history to why the person is the way he is. Give a benefit of doubt and eliminate prejudice. Assume positive intent
- **Mind and body are part of the same system** - when my mind thinks of a person and the feedback, there are immediate bodily changes. Body changes based on what's going on inside the mind
- **Everyone makes the best choice available to them at the time they make it** - if a person is in a particular way, they must be coming from somewhere - take them at face value and do not judge
- **Map is not the territory** - This is my opinion - you may want to consider it

Filters

Desired state (towards state) - State expected behaviors than focusing on the not-so-desirable behavior.
People - Make the person feel good

Other & self - Win-Win situation for both of us

Choice - Leaves a choice for the receiver to agree with the feedback and give scope for the person to engage in a conversation

Visual (metaphors/visual examples of others who demonstrate desired behaviors)

Presupposition

There may be a reason behind why a person is the way he/she is. Assume positive intent.

Structure

- V(e)/A(e)
- Id - What should be my facial expression, language etc.
- K(i) - How would I react if I was in their position
- K(e) - Body would react in a certain way - expressions etc, based on the person and situation
- K(e) - Talk about the feedback, stating facts with evidence
- A(e)/V(e) - Observe the person's reactions, verbal and non-verbal behaviors
- Id - Process what's happening and re-assess strategy
- K(i) - A sense of disappointment if someone gets defensive and doesn't get it or a sense of accomplishment and happiness if a person understands

Effect/Outcome

On Rakesh - sense of happiness, do something good for someone else and not being selfish about it

On receiver - that there's someone who is genuine and there was something to learn and benefit from

My Key Learning

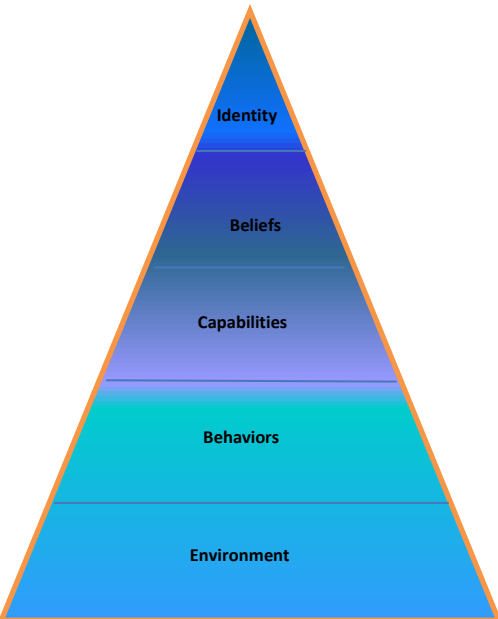
Critical feedback is never offered in isolation. It follows after a relationship of trust. It is important to have a purpose behind delivering a feedback and also equally important to have a relationship of trust. The feedback should appeal to raw human emotions and the receiver understands that here's someone who is genuine and is offering something for their benefit.

Rakesh's experience of the modeling exercise

"On our discussions, you have captured almost everything and there's nothing left. In fact you have summarized it so well that I wonder whether I really think or do that way.

Since the time, we have been discussing about feedback and how it relates to different people, I have been paying some extra attention to it and it's working well. I have renewed my belief of thinking about the other person whom the feedback is being given rather than me who's giving the feedback. As you grow in life or career the key to be effective in giving feedback is to keep the other person on focus all the time rather than thinking about yourself and your authority/position to share the feedback. "

LOGICAL LEVELS



<i>Arul Subramaniam</i>	<i>Andrea Zimmerman</i>	<i>Rakesh Mishra</i>
Enabler	Partner, friend, leader, coach	Authentic being/A friend
Respectful; the more I give, the more I get; people have all the resources	I am making a difference and adding value	Doing good to someone. It is an unselfish act
Ability to make instant rapport; create positive state change; dissociate; connect outcome to the person's higher purpose	Being compassionate, meeting people where they are, building connections, make people feel good about themselves	Empathy, Truthfulness, Being positive
Observing, giving feedback, setting example by listening and being patient, listen attentively, Matching	Observing, paying attention to body language, active listening, asking questions, giving data points, building trust and rapport	Building trust and rapport, Listening, Observing behaviors, giving feedback
The 'zone of influence'	A private place	Anywhere

A summary of the model as I gather-

1- Have an outcome for the person in mind

2- State the desired behavior in a towards state

Example - If I ask you to NOT think of a pink elephant right now - the chances are higher that you'd be thinking exactly of that pink elephant.

Instead, how about I ask you to think about a grey elephant!

3- Give specific examples of observed behaviors - provide evidence

4- Be non-judgmental in stating observed behaviors. Avoid labels

Example - When I was talking to you, you were disinterested.

The other way of stating the above would be:

When I was talking to you, I noticed you did not have an eye contact.

5 - Observe for state change through verbal/non-verbal cues and change approaches accordingly.

6- State situations where the desired behaviors have been demonstrated in a different scenario - this gives the person the confidence that they already have what it takes and will find it easy to demonstrate those existing behaviors in other aspects of their life as well.

7 - Connect the feedback to their higher purpose.

My experience of giving feedback this way

One of my most fulfilling and successful experience in the giving feedback the new way was with my Dad. He is an exemplar in his own right – but somewhere along the way, he had forgotten his own excellence. He had immense willpower and flexibility to make things work.

Post retirement though, he took the resting bit a tad too seriously. Lack of physical activity resulted in dullness and loss of memory. He went to doctors saying he was finding it difficult to move. The doctors only said, he has to start moving and exercising little by little everyday else the body only gets more rigid. For some reason, Dad attributed all of it to age. He was only 60! Too soon to be blaming age I thought.

One fine day, while he was sitting, I found him to be in an open frame of mind. My objective/outcome for him was to get him to go for regular walks so that he is healthy and happy (*Having an outcome for the person in mind*). I began by telling him how much I loved and admired him.

- I slowly began by stating his objective that he wants to live healthily for as long as he lives
- I said, if that's his objective then walking every day would help him stay fit (*stating the desired objective in a towards state*)
- I gave him the science behind how any form of activity increases the supply of oxygen to the brain thereby making it more active and likewise, the body
- I mentioned that ever since he came to my home, he had been sitting only on that one chair (*giving specific examples of observed behaviors in a non-judgmental way*)
- I was observing for a state change. He was listening. (*Observing for state changes*)
- I spoke about the past where he was the most flexible man I had ever known – someone who was most open to change – had around 15 transfers in life – had immense willpower to move on post two massive health set-backs. It was an exceptional ability that he possessed – to be strong-willed and flexible. (*Stating situations where the desired behaviors have been demonstrated earlier*)
- He had been that all his life and he can be that even now.
- By now, I had noticed a state change. There was a certain sense of happiness that I had noticed and an emotion that his children do remember and appreciate his excellence. There was a smile on his face and he had leaned forward nodding.
- I then connected it back to how this flexibility in mind and body and going for regular walks would help him in fulfilling his objective of being healthy and independent always. (*Connecting the feedback to his higher purpose or objective*)
- With that, he got ready in ten minutes and went for a half hour walk
- From then on, he has been regularly going for walks.

You can only imagine my delight. When I went for a walk with my Mother later, she was all praise for me and mentioned that I had said it in the best of ways and given him the right dosage – not more, not less and in a way that made him feel good too. I felt elated. Usually, I hear that it is more difficult to influence our family than anyone else. But *this* was an absolutely enriching experience. Due credit to my Dad too, for being so open to influence.

Most important learning for me was -

I felt quite comfortable through the process. I could stay objective with ease as I was not running any personal agenda. That helped me build the logic and science behind what I was saying and made it something more relatable to my Dad too. There was no "I"ness in it and it was a win-win.

Conclusion

Well, you've read about what I wanted for myself and others by means of learning this model of providing feedback in an effective way. The other question now, is 'HOW' I would know that I got it, and that I have imparted it.

For me, one way of knowing is when I feel comfortable from within while delivering critical feedback and also my ability to maintain a dissociated view throughout the process. In the past, I tended to carry the monkeys from other's backs (if you know what I mean) and that prevented me from being able to deliver in a neutral, assertive way. With my new found learning, I understand that empathy does not necessarily involve carrying other people's monkeys on my back. I can remain empathetic yet be firm and neutral while conveying a feedback so long as I keep in mind that I have the best interest for the receiver.

From other's perspective, the measure is when people leave with a smile on their face and their head held high, feeling empowered with the feedback that they have received. Also, verbal feedback from others would help me know that I've been able to do justice to what I set out to do.

How would I know that I have imparted the model to others?

Great question! I would talk about the model first and then get the people to use it. I would know that the model has been imparted successfully based on their feedback to me on how that process went. I would also be interested in knowing if they felt comfortable providing feedback and if they were able to impart it in the desired way.

This is just the beginning of a beautiful journey of modeling excellences around me. I have my next three topics ready and I look forward to sharing them with you. Thank you for being a part of my journey of modeling excellence. Sue – special thanks to you for introducing me to the most beautiful concepts of 'Exemplars', 'Spotting Excellence and Celebrating it', and 'Modeling'. Life has never been the same ever since. It is so much more enriched and so much more beautiful now. Thank you!