



# Giving and Receiving Feedback

(45 minutes)



Training and Mentoring Skills Series  
Staff Skill Building Library  
Raising Voices



This module is part of a *Staff Skill Building Library* developed by Raising Voices. The *Library* consists of competency based training modules designed to strengthen skills of staff implementing or supporting community-based violence against women (VAW) prevention programs. The *Library* is designed for organizations using *SASA! An Activist Kit for Preventing Violence against Women and HIV* but can be used by anyone working to mobilize their community to prevent VAW. If you are not using *SASA!*, simply replace the word *SASA!* wherever you see it in the text with the name of your methodology.

This module is part of the *Training and Mentoring Skills* series in the *Staff Skill Building Library*.

All materials in the *Library* can be downloaded at [www.raisingvoices.org/staffskills.php](http://www.raisingvoices.org/staffskills.php) or requested at [info@raisingvoices.org](mailto:info@raisingvoices.org). The *SASA! Activist Kit* can be downloaded at [www.raisingvoices.org](http://www.raisingvoices.org).



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# Giving and Receiving Feedback (45 minutes)



## Objective

- Practice techniques in giving and receiving appropriate feedback.

## Competencies

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate “sandwiching” when providing feedback.
- Provide feedback that is specific and diplomatic.

## Preparations

- There are no specific preparations necessary for this module, except for reading and understanding the facilitator’s guide.



## Steps

1. Conduct a quick brainstorm with participants to answer the question: What is feedback? (e.g. direct, constructive communication about someone's performance that can include both positive aspects as well as things to improve).
2. Explain: *Giving and receiving feedback is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced, and a culture that needs to be built within a group of people—in order for mentoring and activism to thrive.*
3. Ask: *In what circumstances would it be important to give people feedback?*
4. Write responses on flip chart. Include:
  - When we are mentoring other staff or community activists (CA's).
  - When others have something to teach us—because every one of us has something to learn from others to improve our skills.
  - When CA's develop leadership and want to mentor newer CA's, etc.
5. Summarize: *It is important to give and receive feedback throughout our work, so we are all constantly improving our skills and able to communicate to mentor others to improve their skills.*
6. Ask: *What are some challenges to giving and receiving direct feedback on our work?*
7. Write responses on flip chart. Include:
  - Not typical with most people's norms because it seems impolite or rude to point out weaknesses.
  - We are used to deferring to people we feel have more authority than us.
  - Defensiveness of receiver of feedback.
  - Generic or shallow feedback ("it was good—I liked it").
  - Feedback focused on external factors (e.g. rain, food, etc), not content (e.g. topic, issue at hand).
  - Etc.



## 8. Explain:

- *We will come back to those challenges at the end of this session, and see if we can figure out how to deal with them.*
- *One of the first steps to dealing with these challenges is acknowledging them with people.*
- *We can even talk with the CAs, explaining that we realize we are doing something different than the way things are usually done—and acknowledging these challenges openly, but helping them discuss and agree that it is worth it to try to create a dynamic that supports direct feedback.*
- *When we are supervisors or have some power position, we can reflect and work to create an environment where people feel free to give us feedback and where we support direct feedback.*

9. Explain the concept of a sandwich, as needed.<sup>1</sup>

## 10. Explain:

- *A way to set up that direct feedback dynamic is to use a technique called “sandwiching”.*
- *To minimize defensiveness and minimize people’s guilt or uneasiness about saying something negative, we can use sandwiching.*
- *In a sandwich, there are two pieces of bread but something has to go inside—you can’t have one without the other.*
- *Similarly, in a feedback sandwich, you give a positive piece of feedback, all the things that person could improve (the meat of the sandwich) and another positive thing about what the person did.*
- *For example, if someone is sitting in an activity, there are going to be both positive aspects and things to improve.*
- *You may say:*
  - *I noticed in this activity, you really got everyone involved to participate—that was great, and not easy to do!*
  - *I also noticed that maybe at some point you could work on summarizing the activity, because in your conclusion you announced it was the end—but there are some other pieces to a summary to close the activity that we can practice together.*
  - *Another great thing I noticed was that the community really seems to respect you and trust that you are knowledgeable about these subjects. This is a really great thing that will help in everything you do!*

<sup>1</sup>If the concept of a “sandwich” is not well known by the particular group, feel free to use other common things which are seen as pairs (e.g. like bread and butter—and then explain that, for this technique it is best to imagine you have 2 pieces of bread with the butter in the middle).





11. Ask: *Why might it be good to give feedback in that way?*

12. Solicit responses, for example:

- We can learn from both our strengths and weaknesses.
- In everything we do, there is always room for improvement. Saying something positive first allows people to be less defensive.
- Saying 1 or more things to improve then give them some specific areas to focus on for next time and provide learning.
- Saying another positive at the end lets them know that you appreciate their work and skills.

13. Ask each person to turn to their neighbor, and give feedback on something they have seen them do in this training (a role play, brainstorming, debate, or any other training participation). They should remember to be specific about what they thought was positive, something they thought could be improved, and another thing they thought was positive. They will have 3 minutes each.

14. Go around and listen to the participants as they practice.

15. After 3 minutes, remind the participants to switch partners.

16. After another 3 minutes, call “*stop!*”

17. Ask: *What was it like to give this feedback to your partner? What was it like to hear feedback from your partner?*



18. Acknowledge any awkwardness and defensiveness, explaining that this is a new skill and the culture of giving and receiving feedback takes time to build.
19. Ask: *What are some examples of feedback you used/ heard? Can you repeat some examples of "sandwiching" you used/ heard?*
20. Invite a few participants to share, and be sure specific strengths and areas to improve were mentioned in a "sandwich".
21. Optional: Illustrate with one participant, giving them a feedback sandwich about their feedback.
22. Bring the flip chart where you wrote the challenges to giving and receiving feedback to participant's attention again.
23. Ask: *Have we figured out some ways to deal with these challenges?*
24. Spend a few minutes going through the list and discussing possible responses to challenges not discussed, and alternate ideas for those already discussed. For example, if participants need to think through how sandwiching might help the feedback-receiver's defensiveness, or think through other ways to minimize defensiveness and create a culture of direct feedback, help the group discuss and brainstorm that.
25. Summarize: *We have discussed that creating a dynamic where people can give each other feedback can be hard to create—but is necessary if we are going to keep increasing the quality of our activism, and mentoring the CAs to improve on their skills.*
26. Ask: *As we end, how was this session?*
27. Invite a few participants to practice sandwiching—watch out for specifics, and both positive and negative feedback.
28. Thank everyone for participating.

**Validation Option: Activity in Training**

This activity allows for group validation of the competencies:

- Demonstrate "sandwiching" when providing feedback.
- Provide feedback that is specific and diplomatic.

During the response to the question: "How was this session?", are participants able to provide specific feedback, including at least 1 positive thing, 1 thing to improve, and another positive thing? If so, then they as a group have demonstrated the competencies. If not, further training is recommended.





# Validation Options

Validation is another way to say “assessment” or “pre/post-test”. It is used to determine whether the participants in a training learned what the facilitator intended for them to learn. Instructions for how to use each validation method can be found in *Training Validation Methods: A how-to guide for assessing participant learning* downloadable at [www.raisingvoices.org/staffskills.php](http://www.raisingvoices.org/staffskills.php)

Select validation methods for each competency using the table below:

1. Choose whether the competency (specific skill) needs to be validated at a group or individual level.
2. Looking at the validation methods listed in that category (group or individual), select only **one** of the validation methods marked with and ‘X’ for each competency.
3. Plan a time in the training agenda to use the validation method you’ve chosen to test each competency.

Competency (Specific skill)	Suggested Validation Methods									
	Group Validation <i>Use if it is sufficient for the group, as a whole, to demonstrate the competency</i>					Individual Validation <i>Use if essential for each participant to demonstrate the competency her/himself</i>				
	Activity in Training*	Game Show	Card Game	Answers Bingo	Pick and Play	Activity in Training*	Exit Interview/ Role Play	Game Show (All Play)	Written Quiz	
Demonstrate “sandwiching” when providing feedback**	X	X	X	X	X		X			
Provide feedback that is specific and diplomatic (Note: Uses same question as above competency)	X	X	X	X	X		X			

\*Activity in Training includes many possibilities, depending on the module, including brainstorming, group practices, debates, agree/disagree/not sure exercise, and others. The *Teach Back* series can also be considered as an Activity in Training.

\*\*See Validation Questions for this competency, to be used in Game Show, Card Game, Answers Bingo or Pick and Play methods, on next page.



# Validation Questions

How would you give feedback about this training, using the “sandwich” technique?



Facilitator’s Note: Find out what the participants really learned! This card can be cut out and used with Game Show, Card Game, Answers Bingo or Pick and Play validation methods.

Full descriptions of how to use each of these validation methods are available in the *Staff Skill Building Library*. Download at: [www.raisingvoices.org/staffskills.php](http://www.raisingvoices.org/staffskills.php) and go to *Training Validation Methods: A how-to guide for assessing participant learning*.



Game Show



Pick and Play

