
50 Activities for Achieving Change

**Barry Fletcher
with Ann Bell, John Buttery and
Mike Whittaker**

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Preface

In February 1989, I met Malcolm Stern of Gower Publishing in an English hotel to discuss the possibility of writing *something* but had nothing specific in mind. During the conversation, I made a chance remark about change... "Aren't things changing at a dramatic pace?" In less than two decades I had experienced a complete revolution in the way in which we understand and perceive the way individuals and organizations learn. A shift from the word "training" (something which is *done* to people) to the word "learning" (something which people *do*).

I strongly believe in the capacity of all people to learn: there is something in everyone which, if cultivated, will unlock this learning potential. So what prevents this? First, people's previous treatment, conditioning, culture and environment—perhaps a feeling of discomfort at not being able to do something, of being labeled as incompetent or the learner, complete with "L" plates. Second, an attitude of mind, characterized by "sticking with what they know or what they feel OK with." What a telling phrase, loaded with compromise, suppressing or denying something else, something they could be very good at in fact, but not having the opportunity or courage to try it out. And why not? Often because of what others will think, perceive, say or do; the fear of ridicule or being judged or being seen to "rock the boat." Third, a belief that people generally are not used to others encouraging them to try new things. This begs the question, "How are people ever to find out about their potential—the latent skills that just lie dormant inside them?"

So, from the chance remark about change came an offer to contribute to Gower's Activities series. Having learned of my own interdependence I set out to find others who wished to get involved: Ann Bell, John Buttery and Mike Whittaker came forward to assist me. This produced a team of four with shared beliefs in people; in equal opportunity; in the potential of all people to learn, grow and develop; and of the role which the skilled trainer can play in the development of others. Our common objectives were a shared desire to record some of this, reflect on our experiences, and to extract the key messages for the consideration of others who have chosen to be part of this vital enabling role.

The route we have traveled in writing this publication has not been without its difficulties. We have had to learn to work effectively with our differences, including values, attitudes, motivations, pace and style of work. Following the philosophy of this publication our differences have provided us with rich opportunities for learning and development: in fact, some of the activities were born directly from the processes we encountered in doing the work.

Fifty Activities for Achieving Change

Having completed the task we wish to remind the reader that there are numerous stakeholders in the learning process, each with different expectations. For example:

- The individual learner may wish for enhanced or new skills, new insights and increased confidence in applying these to and away from the work situation.
- Trainers or facilitators may be striving to establish links between their interventions and the new behaviors of people taking part in their programs.
- Managers may be looking for stronger relationships with their staff arising from the guidance and support they have provided. They will almost certainly be looking toward improved performance from their staff and the unlocking of potential for future career moves.
- Organizations will expect employees to be more effective in the way they work, sometimes expressed in terms of targets reached, savings achieved and outputs attained.

All these stakeholders, and others, have every right to expect some return on their learning investment.

The authors also have certain expectations as to the suitability and effectiveness of these 50 activities. Feedback from users will be highly valued and a little time spent on this will help us with our continued learning and capacity for change.

My warmest thanks are offered here to Ann Bell, John Buttery and Mike Whittaker for their comradeship and unstinting support. Appreciation is extended to Malcolm Stern of Gower for his patience and trust. Finally, I offer sincere thanks to Joan Fletcher for her continued support throughout this project despite the numerous revisions and retypes she has endured.

Barry Fletcher

Introduction

"If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got!"

(Michael Gentle, Ilford, January, 1991)

This publication has been produced as a resource for those people engaged in helping others to learn and develop. Originally intended for trainers, the writers now see a much wider audience which also includes managers, supervisors, team leaders, facilitators and others. In fact, the list of people who have significant influence and potential to aid the learning and development of others is limitless.

The 50 activities have been designed around a central theme of change: moving from the individual, through the team and organization into the environment. The word "change" has various connotations and the reader will recognize the use of many words implying the same meaning; for example, grow, reduce, increase, heighten, improve, unlock. A starting point is that most change comes from within individuals. People can be equipped with skills and knowledge but before they apply these new qualities, and thereby change, they have to feel the will and possess the positive attitudes to do so. As a user of these activities you will have a prime part to play in creating a supportive climate from which changes can flow.

The activities have been written to be used on their own: they can thus address identified needs either singly or in combination. The wise user will wish to make sure that however used they form an integral part of an overall process of learning or development. Participants will need to see the relevance of the activities to their needs and aspirations and will also wish to see how the learning can be applied to their future.

The index on page 15 is designed to help the user, at a glance, to see connections between activities and also the various themes in the publication. It also provides a quick overview of all the activity titles together with an indication where the use of videotaping techniques could enhance the feedback available to participants.

Finally, this is a book about change, so feel free to change and adapt it as required. It is not meant to be read from cover to cover like a conventional book: instead, select from it what appeals to you. Above all, keep an open mind when using the activities, be willing to learn from them and also be prepared to change!

Background to Change

There is much mythology about change! Many of us have been brought up to distrust it, to treat it with caution, to try and avoid it. Of course some change can be painful—but so can life! Other people seem to welcome change: indeed they actively seek it out and recognize the opportunities it brings.

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A few minutes' reflection will reveal that we are surrounded by change. Think about some obvious examples: bereavement; changing jobs, systems and procedures; changing friendships/relationships; getting older; moving from infant to child to adolescent to adult; becoming a parent, etc.

So why do some people accept change whereas others reject it? Examining the table below, which lists possible causes, may give some clues. An underlying point is the way in which people perceive change: the way in which they are invited to contribute and the manner in which they are treated before, during and after the change.

Possible causes of accepting (passive attitude) and/or welcoming (positive attitude) change	Possible causes of resenting (negative attitude) and/or resisting (active opposition) change
<p>Personal gain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More security • More use of my skills • Salary increase • Self-satisfaction • Less time and effort • Increased responsibility • Better working conditions • Enhanced status • New challenges • Reducing boredom • Sense of moving forward • Improved prospects <p>Some accompanying statements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I trust this person's judgment • I like to be asked rather than to be told • I like the way my ideas have been sought and listened to • This gives me a chance to show what I can really do • This will require an effort but we cannot afford to delay any more 	<p>Personal loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less security • Job loss? • Personal pride; my special skills no longer needed • Less freedom, more supervision • Loss of friends and personal contacts • Less responsibility, more menial (automation?) • Loss of authority/status <p>Some accompanying statements</p> <p>What's wrong with the way things are done now?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will cause more problems than it's worth • I resent being told what to do • They never asked me for my ideas • I built up the present system and now they say it's not good enough • We will have extra work to do

Against this background are some key messages for trainers and others helping people with the process of change. Before planning (or even contemplating) *any* change, organizations, which usually means senior managers, would be well advised to try and systematically anticipate people's perceptions and particularly who might resist the change and why. Some common groups of reasons for resisting change are:

A. A DESIRE NOT TO LOSE SOMETHING OF VALUE

- parochial self-interest;
- a focus on own best interests rather than the organization's;
- "politics" and political "behaviors" before and during the change. For example, my/our best interests are not consistent with the best interests of the organization or other individuals/groups;
- overt/covert politics;
- a perception that change violates his/her "psychological contract" with the organization.

B. MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE CHANGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

- perception that personal cost is far greater than personal gain;
- low trust.

C. BELIEF THAT THE CHANGE DOESN'T MAKE SENSE FOR THE ORGANIZATION

- different perceptions from those of the initiators;
- personal and organizational costs far exceed personal and/or organizational gains;
- initiators often assume that they have all the facts and that those affected have the same facts! The differences in information and facts leads to differences in analysis and therefore to resistance;
- the resistance from non-initiators could be good in that they may have better information and analysis.

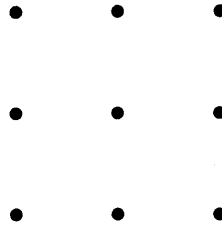
D. A LOW TOLERANCE FOR CHANGE

- a felt inability to develop new skills and behaviors;
- emotional blocking;
- resisting even good changes (for example, promotions and opportunities for more responsibility);
- saving face;
- peer-group pressure.

First-Order and Second-Order Change

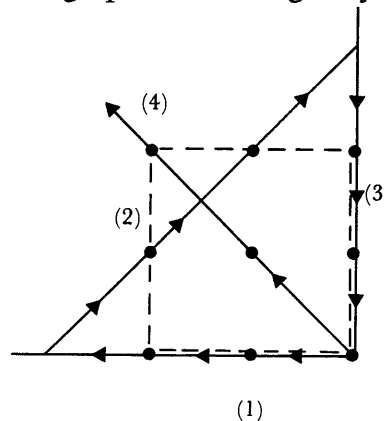
While working with people on the subject of change and in using the activities you will almost certainly benefit from introducing the "nine dots" puzzle. Some may already have come across this purely as a puzzle but it is unlikely that they will have appreciated its value in assisting them to think more deeply about change.

Consider nine dots arranged as shown:



The objective is to join these nine dots with four straight lines and without removing pen from paper. This links closely with people's perception and approach to change. Many will work for a solution that is within the box or square bounded by the dots (see solution below). This equates to first-order, or morphostatic change which preserves an order by treating disturbances as external "noise" requiring minor adjustment or blocking out. Any resulting change is therefore incremental—characteristically tinkering at the edges but essentially leading to more of the same. A typical response would be "What are the disturbances and what do we need to adjust?" Examples include installing a computer, slight redesign of jobs, setting up some skills training, reshuffling responsibilities, etc. The onlooker would see this as cosmetic change or "staying in the box" with the overall system remaining the same.

Second-order, or morphogenic change, on the other hand, requires a move away from the constraints of the box (see solution below). Disturbances are treated as information about internal conditions to which the system should respond by altering orders. Such change produces a logically different order from that which came before.



Solution to nine dots puzzle. The first-order change is represented by a broken line, the second-order change by a continuous line.

Typical questions would include:

- What is our current situation?
- Where are we going?
- What are the necessary steps to get there?
- How do our values and beliefs match up with our new journey?

Responses could lead to change, for example, in corporate strategy, organization structure, job design and management attitudes.

Encouraging people to reflect on their lives can reveal examples of both first-order and second-order changes. Conclusions can be drawn about attitudes to the different types; with this increased awareness some people are able better to understand their previous behaviors and the options open to them in the future.

Learning and Change

For years there was an unchallenged assumption that *training* worked better for some people than others, often ignoring their preferences or their attitudes to learning. In fact, the word *learning* was hardly used. A common defense for some trainers faced with this scenario was that "some people won't listen or pay attention" or even "they will never learn!" Fortunately, much has been done to move from trainer-centered to learner-centered processes. The work of Honey and Mumford on learning styles and preferences has done much to advance understanding.*

Trainers are now presented with golden opportunities. This stems from the fact that when people learn something it usually means it's new and that spells change. Also, if learners move to the point where they *use* the new learning and incorporate it into their very being (through behavior, beliefs, values, or attitudes) then they will have changed. In other words, learning and change are inseparable—people cannot learn without changing!

Also, and here comes the real delight, learning or the state of learning bestows some "permissions" on the learner to be doing something different—at the very least the permission to be trying something out without the expectation of getting it right or being competent or successful immediately. This suggests that if change is tackled under the umbrella of learning then legitimacy prevails and many of the obstacles about what others might think, feel or see are removed or reduced.

Using the Activities

LEARNING CYCLES

As a trainer you will probably be familiar with learning cycles and the fact that different people usually have different preferences for the ways in which they learn. Diagrams 1 and 2 show two commonly-used learning cycles and you may wish to consider these key points both before and during the training process.

When using the activities, it may help you to think of ways in which you can assist the participants in progressing through the learning cycle. Examples are given in the table on page 7.

*P. Honey and A. Mumford: *The Manual of Learning Styles* (1986); *Using your Learning Styles* (1986); *The Opportunist Learner* (1990); *The Manual of Learning Opportunities* (1990).

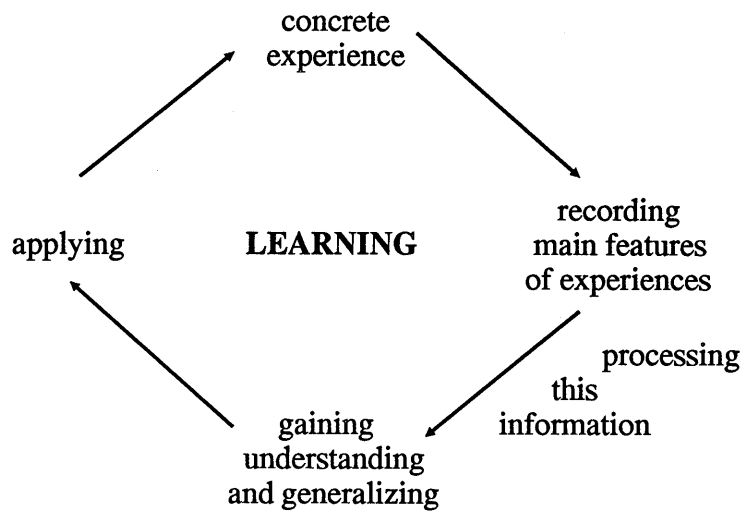


Diagram 1

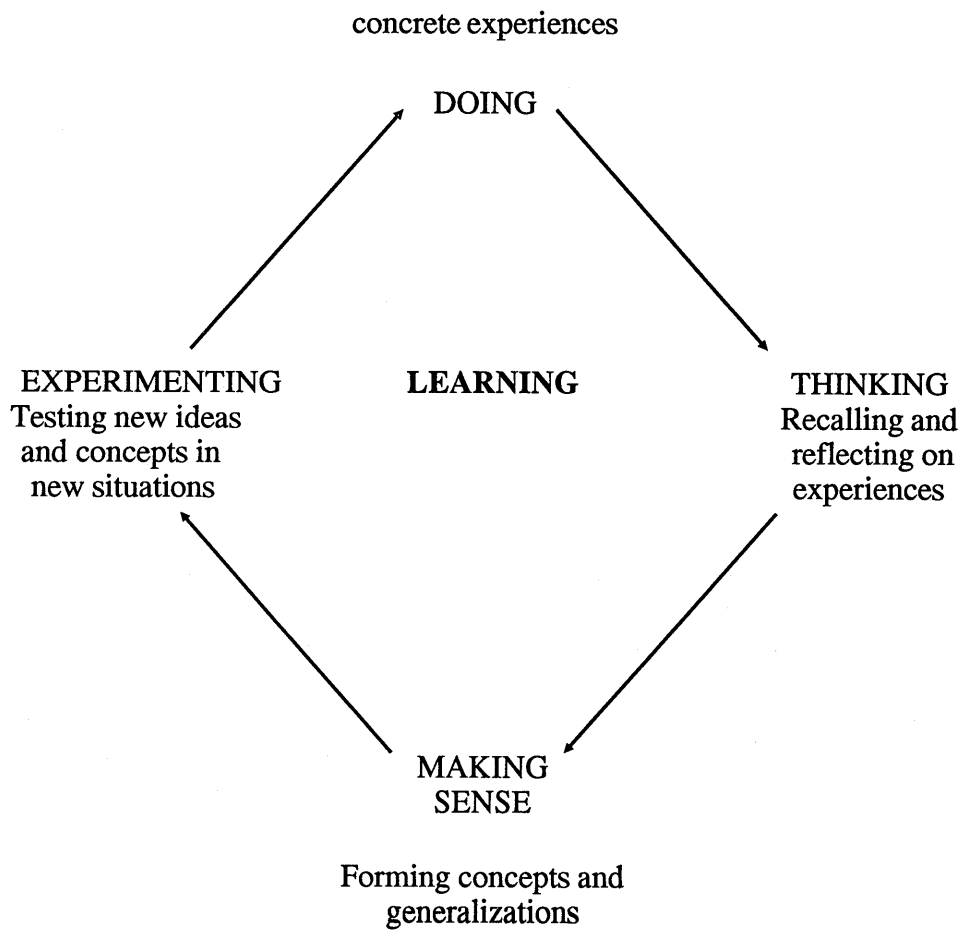


Diagram 2

Stage of learning	Behaviors to facilitate the learning cycle
a. Recall concrete experiences	Guide individuals (or pairs helping each other) to tune in to previous experiences and record these. Use role-plays and/or case studies (possibly filmed) and video clips as a means of providing participants with concrete data. Also use group discussion and brainstorming techniques to enable thoughts and memories to flow.
b. Record/share aspects of experiences	Guide pairs/trios to share experiences and the thoughts and feelings associated with these. Encourage people to help each other by listening and showing interest. Help participants to give and seek feedback and enable them to see the value of this.
c. Reflect/process the information	Help participants to reflect in depth and to stick with those aspects which they may want to gloss over. Encourage and seek further feedback in areas which are still "cloudy." Private and/or shared use of video material is encouraged.
d. Arrive at understanding, concepts and generalizations	Start to "see it" and "believe it" for oneself. Make sense of the feedback and other data and use it. Use theoretical information and models to support this process. Encourage others to share the understanding and insights reached. Express thoughts on areas for changing.
e. Test out new ideas and concepts in new situations	Use experiential techniques, such as role plays or bring "live material"—to be observed by colleagues and the trainer; take risks with new behaviors; be filmed; seek and receive feedback. This can be repeated a number of times to reinforce and consolidate the learning.
f. Move on to further concrete experiences and continue the learning cycle	Help people to make action plans for implementing change. Assist people to be clear on monitoring effectiveness of plans. Encourage people to share plans with others, together with doubts and apprehensions. Help the participants to feel confident about overcoming any perceived obstacles. Agree on support structure and networks. Identify areas for further training and development.

Initially, your participants will benefit from your use of the learning cycle in guiding the stages of learning, helping you to make choices about the nature and types of activities. There will then be benefits from sharing this thinking with participants, helping them to relate to those parts of the cycle that are easy or difficult for them. Remember, any action taken by you or your participants is legitimate if it can be seen to add impetus to the learning cycle.

DEVELOPING A LEARNING CLIMATE

First thoughts

An appropriate starting point for the trainer is to focus on his/her own personal preferences in terms of approach to learning. Where are you in relation to the following?

- a. "I feel the focus is initially on me and others learn by my showing them what to do."
- b. "I help others learn and if I am not in the limelight that is fine by me."

It is no doubt fashionable to be much closer to (b) than (a), that is, much more learner centered than the traditional approach. The occasional inward look can help you to establish what feels right and what is appropriate.

Getting a few basics right

You should ensure that you have everything prepared before the start of the activity. The extent of your preparation will vary depending upon your level of experience and willingness to take risks. You will need to think in advance of the activity so that when it starts you feel confident and this is transmitted to the participants. You need to consider the participants' possible needs and expectations and have an indication of a probable path. This may be changed according to the needs of your participants, your own ability to be flexible, and your ability and willingness to take chances.

Consider the size of the group you are working with. Ideally, the total group size for these activities is six to twelve participants, unless specifically mentioned otherwise. This would normally mean forming, if the activity required, a total of two or three subgroups.

The start

The start can determine the success of your training event. This does not mean that a poor start will automatically lead to disaster. You need to consider carefully the use of "icebreaker" activities and the mood you wish to set at the event. Do you want everyone to relax as soon as possible or do you want people to learn under pressure?

Your approach

- a. *Feelings*: Some questions you might ask:
 - How am I feeling at the moment?
 - How would I feel if I were a participant?
 - How might the participant be feeling?

- b. *Your behavior:* By tuning in to the feelings of your participants you can begin to demonstrate a level of sensitivity that helps them to learn. Your behavior demonstrates that you care for them. This is not always easy when you may feel anxious yourself. It is important to be aware of the effect of your anxiety on others.
- c. *Your material and how you use it:* You will already have considered this at the planning stage. Consider the following:
 - Involve participants at an early stage.
 - Encourage participants to voice their expectations.
 - Give an indication of the activity's objectives at an early stage. (But not too much and be prepared to change.)
 - Be prepared to use the "here and now" method of participants' feelings and experience.
 - Be ready to change direction.
 - Don't work slavishly through your program without considering the effect on the participants.
- d. *Observe the individuals/group and their reactions:* This is linked to the last point made above. You use your eyes and ears to decide how the individuals/group are developing, their reactions, and their feelings. By getting to know your participants and by your own subsequent behavior you can demonstrate your sensitivity to their needs.

Final thoughts

The learning climate you help to create is likely to be more significant than all the material you came armed with. Remember that each group is unique and if you feel frustrated at the rate of progress don't forget that this is the first time for *them*, even though it may be the 30th time you have run a similar session.

FEEDBACK

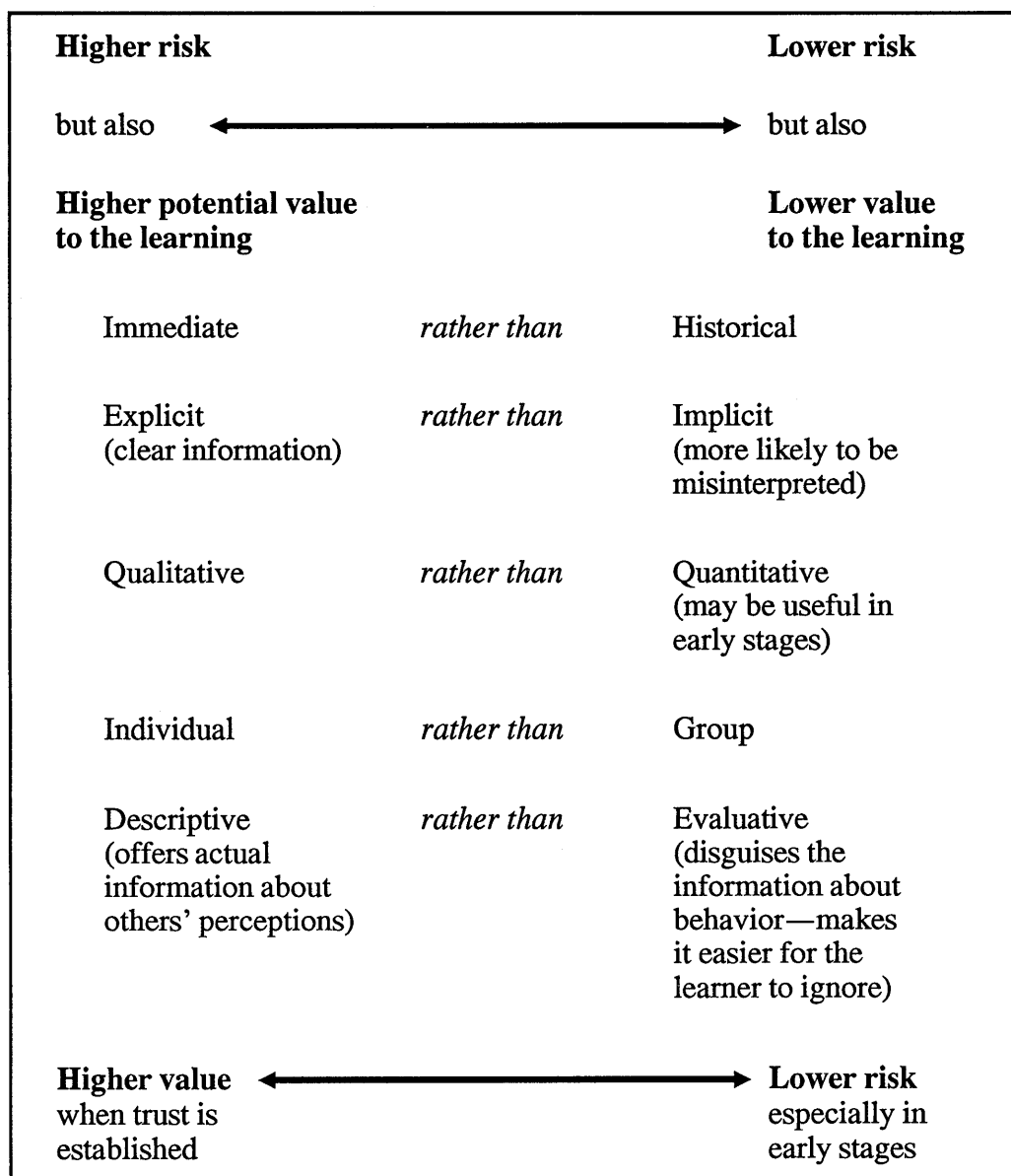
All trainers will acknowledge that feedback is an integral part of the learning process. Handled skilfully, in both the way it is given and received, it enables participants to learn about the effect they have on others and provides an opportunity for them to make changes in their behavior.

The learning process will profit, as will subsequent behaviors engaged in by participants, from some early agreement about feedback contracts. This is the process of establishing agreements between all the persons involved in the training program, including you as trainer, on the role of feedback in the learning process. You may wish to adapt the feedback contract shown in the table on the next page to suit your situation.

Receiving feedback	Giving feedback
<p>I will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be prepared to receive feedback as information; • decide for myself what to do with the information—for example, accept/reject in whole or part, check with others, etc.; • avoid arguing with the sender; • seek clarification <i>only</i> if I do not fully understand the feedback; • avoid justifying those aspects of my behavior that led to the feedback; • avoid rejecting the feedback. 	<p>I will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check that the other person is receptive; • address the other person directly (for example, eye contact; use of first name; first person statements—"I" instead of "you"; • own the feedback I give; • be specific about the behavior I am giving the feedback on; • be clear that these are <i>my</i> reactions to the other person's behavior; • avoid blaming; • offer feedback as information, free from attached conditions; • offer as much feedback, as I think is useful and avoid giving long lists.

Your participants will learn quickly about the degree of safety with feedback; that is, feedback not following the "contract" will usually lead to attacking, defending, justifying, arguing, etc. A healthy learning climate will support quick responses to clumsy or awkward feedback, such as people who start to interpret the feelings of others before the necessary trust has been established; others who wait far too long before giving feedback, and so on. You will soon feel the power and the benefits to be gained from encouraging free and open expression among the group about the effects people are having on each other.

Some other dimensions that can help you and your participants to derive the most benefit from feedback are shown in the following diagram.



The subject of feedback should be given serious attention during the learning process. You will soon discover that the feelings associated with both the giving and the receiving of feedback provide innumerable opportunities for people to learn, providing you can enable them to stay with the reflecting and comprehending stages. Videotaping can be used as a powerful technique for recording data for participants and thus providing feedback.

THE USE OF VIDEO FOR FEEDBACK

Video can provide rich material for participants engaged in learning. However, you may have heard comments such as: "I hate seeing myself on that screen." "I dread the thought of being filmed." "I will be conscious of the camera all the time." However, once the filming starts the participant is likely to forget the presence of the camera.

The advantages of and comments on video feedback:

- An effective aid to learning
- The benefit of the "Aha" factor: "Now I see the effect this might have on others."
- "I am better than I thought. I feel quite reassured."
- "I can see what I would like to change"
- A permanent record
- Not as much room for argument.

The disadvantages of and comments on video feedback:

- Time consuming
- Reassurance may be required
- Occasionally—"That confirms my worst fears."
- Participants can become too concerned about non-verbal behaviors or mannerisms, voices and accents. Subsequently, too much effort is put into correcting these, and changes that could be more significant are ignored.

Guidance notes

a. Before filming

- Have the equipment around so participants are aware of its presence.
- Be prepared to use it as early as possible. Avoid using it for the first time on the final day of a course.
- Familiarize yourself with the equipment and be prepared to let participants use it if possible.
- Decide how you will use video feedback within any feedback session.
- It may be useful to make contact with the group on its use rather than imposing your ideas. This may help to allay fears.
- Think carefully about layout of equipment, the camera, monitor and the room itself.

b. Filming

- Film unobtrusively.
- If filming a group, be prepared to concentrate equally on both the speaker and listener.
- Avoid excessive filming of hand movements and other mannerisms to the exclusion of other behavior.

c. Playback

- How you use the film will have been established at the contract stage.
- You may need to edit the material. To replay everything may be time consuming.
- Consider using a few highlights for the main group and looking at the entire film yourself on a one-to-one basis with each participant.

- Allow participants to make their own observations.
- In giving feedback avoid deflating someone just to provide the opportunity to build him/her up on subsequent attempts.
- Use the film to highlight possible areas for improvement but limit these to three or four.
- Honor any confidentiality the participants may wish to preserve; for example, be prepared to erase the tape.
- If practical and the participants wish, consider allowing them to keep the tape. To be able to view the tape on their own time can present a powerful learning opportunity.

Conclusion

You will need to think carefully about video feedback and the ways you can use it within these activities to enrich the learning process. If you decide to use it remember to allow plenty of time to process the material. Potentially video feedback is a powerful aid to learning but it must be handled with sensitivity and care.

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Time Checklist

This checklist gives an indication of the minimum time to be allocated to each activity. Times will be affected by the number of participants.

Between one and two hours

- 1 Raising My Awareness of Me
- 10 Widening My Support Network
- 23 Triggering My Ability to Influence Others
- 29 Encouraging Change by Personal Example
- 33 Identifying Strategies for Change
- 39 Innovating Change at Work
- 42 Lifting Our Heads Out of the Sand
- 43 Raising Awareness of Demographic Changes
- 50 Raising Awareness of Some Issues in an International Market

Between two and three hours

- 4 Increasing My Creativity
- 5 Raising My Confidence
- 6 Improving My Listening
- 7 Overcoming Resistance to Situations I Avoid
- 8 Reducing My Self-doubts
- 12 Deepening My Trust in Others
- 13 Strengthening My Motivation
- 14 Reducing Harmful Stress
- 16 Making Loss a New Beginning
- 17 Adjusting to the Phases of Transition
- 18 Raising Awareness of Other People's Problems
- 19 Creating License to Enjoy Change
- 20 Lessening the Pain of Change
- 21 Raising Awareness of the Value of People
- 22 Discovering Ways of Helping/Influencing Others
- 25 Raising Awareness of Different Learning Styles
- 26 Discovering New Ways to Learn
- 28 Enhancing My Counseling Approach
- 31 Removing the Blinkers
- 32 Understanding Reaction to Change
- 34 Heightening Awareness of Organizational Culture
- 36 Discovering Key Organizational Goals
- 37 Developing Team Goals
- 41 Adapting to the Effects of Acquisitions and Takeovers
- 44 Widening My Recruitment Avenues
- 46 Creating Customer-Conscious Attitudes

Over three hours

- 2 Heightening My Awareness of My Values
- 3 Reordering My Personal Goals
- 11 Shifting My Home/Work Balance
- 15 Turning Crisis Into Opportunity
- 24 Unlocking the Potential in Others
- 48 Improving Customer Service

Between one half and one full day

- 9 Letting Go of My Old Behaviors
- 27 Building My Consulting Style
- 30 Developing Tomorrow's Managers
- 35 Influencing Organizational Culture
- 38 Reducing the Negative Aspects of Conflict Between Teams
- 40 Striving for Internal Quality
- 45 Innovating New Patterns of Work
- 47 Shifting Our Attitudes to Service
- 49 Increasing Customer Markets