



TEACHING TIPS

Feedback Evaluation

GIVING TIMELY FEEDBACK

Tax season has recently passed and, with it, we all reviewed our net gains and losses. By the same token, have you done an accounting of this year's trainee relationships? Have you told them specifically what they have done well and what they need to work on? Or, did you decide instead that you would just write a final evaluation on them? Have you taken the opportunity to make clear your expectations and give them immediate feedback, or did you figure it would just be easier to complete an evaluation form at some point?

If over the past year you were in the habit of giving immediate feedback, then give yourself a net gain (as in gain for your trainees). If you chose to wait, or worse, did not even evaluate your trainees, then you need to record this as a loss (as in lost opportunities).

Typically, the medical education culture puts the trainee in sink-or-swim situations, without much prior direction. Either the trainee somehow quickly grasps situations, does what we expect and gets a good evaluation after the rotation, or disappoints us and eventually gets a bad evaluation.

Unfortunately, far too many trainees leave the rotation without any feedback of their performance along the way. Our tendency to withhold feedback and save it for a final evaluation is not helpful to their self-improvement. Those that do well feel good when they get their evaluations, but those who receive negative evaluations are often shocked and disillusioned. They are the ones who claim the process is unfair and often return to grieve the evaluation and, even worse, bad-mouth the experience to other trainees.

This year, claim no withholdings in your feedback of trainees. Communicate your expectations when you first meet, repeat these expectations as needed, and sit down with them regularly to give them feedback on their performance. Start thinking of yourself as a performance counselor. Write an "educational prescription," if necessary, specifying how to improve.¹ Make a resolution you can keep: eliminate your withholdings of missed opportunities to recognize and correct your trainees.

Source:¹ Alguire P, De Witt D, Pinsky L, Ferenchick G. *Teaching in your office. A guide to instructing medical students and residents.* Philadelphia: American College of Physicians, 2001:36.

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