
Constructive Communication:
How to Give It and How to Take It

T r a i n i n g L e a d e r ' s G u i d e

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Constructive Communication:
How to Give It and How to Take It

P r e p a r a t i o n M a t e r i a l s

..Introduction

Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How to Take It is a flexible training session designed to help solve problems, strengthen trust, and increase productivity in situations that require giving or receiving criticism.

For most people, criticism is stressful. This training course gives your participants the keys to giving and receiving criticism. These techniques are:

- Communicate better in situations involving criticism.
- Resolve conflicts.
- Focus on facts, not opinions and personalities.
- Be assertive rather than aggressive.
- Strengthen relationships through constructive criticism.

If we can receive criticism without becoming upset, flustered, or defensive, then we can avoid unnecessary stress and provide ourselves with an opportunity for self-development. Giving criticism, on the other hand, is an essential part of helping others improve. If we don't feel able to criticize, then we force ourselves to conceal a major part of our feelings and opinions. And since becoming successful in today's business environment depends heavily on communication, we can significantly increase our effectiveness if we can communicate what we think and feel.

This Training Leader's Guide and the ***Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How To Take It*** video will allow you to facilitate a comprehensive training program on the subject of criticism.

Icon Key



Flipchart



Read or
Paraphrase



Overhead



Worksheet



Video



Ask and Discuss

Training Session Checklist

Use this checklist to help you gather all necessary materials for the training session.

Meeting Preparation

- Determine your training objectives.
- Measure the current status of your participants using the Pretraining Survey.
- Choose different ways to train to ensure transfer of information.

Location

- Create a relaxed environment.
- Make sure all seats have a good view of the visuals.
- Make sure there is enough light to take notes when participants view the video
Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How to Take It.
- Provide an adequate writing surface for participants.
- Check for good acoustics.
- Verify that your room is accessible and equipped for participants with disabilities.

Video Equipment

- Make sure the VCR is properly connected to the monitor.
- Test the VCR, and check monitor for proper picture, color, and volume.
- Make sure the tape is rewound and ready to play before beginning your session.
- Check all other equipment for proper operation.

Materials

- Training Leader's Guide
- Videotape—*Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How to Take It & Vignettes*
- AMI How-To Book—*The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback*
- Overheads
- Paper and Pencils
- Additional Equipment
- Participant Handouts



The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback

by Shirley Poertner & Karen Massetti Miller

Trainer's Instructions for Using the Book **The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback**

Group Training Sessions

The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback, part of AMI's How-To Book Series, is an excellent complement to your group training session. Throughout this guide, we have included one exercise from *The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback*. To use the book effectively, you may:

- Use the exercises we have developed for this course, incorporate other exercises from the book that you feel better meet the needs of your organization, or use a combination of both.
- Assign reading of an entire chapter of the book that covers an area you wish to emphasize in your session.
- Assign reading of the entire book and have participants complete assigned exercises.

Self-Study

No time to call everyone together for training? No problem—American Media has made training even easier with its self-study programs. By combining the effectiveness of the video *Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How to Take It* and AMI's How-To Training Book *The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback*, your employees can improve their skills through self-guided study.

Written in a user-friendly, easy-to-understand style, the book includes interactive exercises in each chapter to help the reader process the information and put it into action—ensuring that the information makes an impact.

On-the-Job Reference Tool

Providing copies of the book to each training participant allows you to continue instilling the importance of improving workplace performance after your session is completed. The book is an excellent tool for continued learning and provides an easy, hands-on reference for use on the job.

Order discounted copies for all your session participants today.

Tips for Transferred Learning

Keep in mind the following tips when conducting any adult training. You may wish to review these tips and incorporate them into your session planning.

1. Adults learn when they feel they need to learn.

Discuss ways your training will help participants improve job performance by learning how to communicate effectively.

2. Adults learn through practical application.

Use the exercises found in this Training Leader's Guide or create your own to give participants an opportunity to practice skills they can take back to their jobs. Also, provide reinforcement tools, such as copies of the How-To Book *The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback*, for your participants to take back to their jobs for continued and reinforced learning.

3. Adults learn by solving realistic problems.

Discuss and analyze actual on-the-job situations. Allow the trainees to solve these real-life problems by using what they have learned.

4. Adults learn in an informal environment.

Design your training room to be as informal as possible. Avoid classroom-style seating. If appropriate, encourage training participants to wear casual clothing. Encourage discussion and interaction to make participants feel more comfortable.

5. Adults learn by different training methods.

Vary your training methods. Combine discussions, role plays, case studies, self-evaluations, and action planning in your training session. Using a variety of methods reinforces your message and promotes audience involvement.

6. Trainers learn through follow-up methods.

Follow-up methods are crucial when determining the success of transferred training. Feedback from your participants' managers; follow-up surveys or training sessions; three-, six-, and nine-month skill-testing sessions; etc., can help you evaluate the information being used on the job site.

Possible Session Agendas

Two session agendas have been provided to help guide you through your *Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How to Take It* training session. You can modify these agendas to meet the needs of your participants. A blank agenda sheet is also provided on page 13 if you wish to create your own agenda.

2-Hour Session

Activity	Time	Page
Introducing the Session to Participants	10 minutes	18
Show Video and Review	25 minutes	20
Stage 1: Communicate Vignette Exercise	30 minutes	22
Break	10 minutes	
Stage 2: Clarify Vignette Exercise	20 minutes	24
Stage 3: Commit Skills Practice	20 minutes	26
Session Evaluation	5 minutes	

3-Hour Session

Activity	Time	Page
Introducing the Session to Participants	10 minutes	18
The Importance of Criticism Vignette Exercise	15 minutes	19
Show Video and Review	25 minutes	20
Giving and Receiving Criticism: The Importance of Preparation Exercise	15 minutes	21
Stage 1: Communicate Vignette Exercise	30 minutes	22
Stage 2: Clarify Vignette Exercise	20 minutes	24
Stage 3: Commit Skills Practice	20 minutes	26
Break	10 minutes	
Exercise from the Book <i>The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback</i>	15 minutes	27
Posttraining Survey	15 minutes	28
Session Evaluation	5 minutes	

Trainer's Personalized Session Agenda

You may want to plan a session that is different from the agendas provided on page 12. Below is a blank agenda to assist you in outlining your session.

Activity	Time	Page
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Invitation Memo to Participants

This memo can be sent to your participants approximately one to two weeks prior to your training session. Modify the memo to fit your specific needs.

(Today's Date)

TO: (Participant's Name)
FROM: (Trainer's Name)
RE: ***Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How to Take It***
Training Session

For most people, criticism is stressful—something we'd probably prefer to avoid. But if we learn how to give and receive criticism constructively, it can help us improve performance and increase productivity.

On **(insert date)**, we will hold a training session on giving and receiving constructive criticism. During the session, participants will learn how to:

- Communicate better in situations involving criticism.
- Resolve conflicts.
- Focus on facts, not opinions and personalities, when giving and taking criticism.
- Be assertive rather than aggressive or passive.
- Strengthen relationships through constructive rather than destructive criticism.

To help us get the most out of our training session, please take the time to complete the enclosed Pretraining Survey and return it to me by **(insert date)**. Your honest response to these questions will help us place emphasis on critical areas.

Please mark your calendars so you can attend this very important training session.

Thanks!

Trainer's Instructions for the Pretraining Survey



1. Complete the Invitation Memo to Participants (page 14), and send it along with a copy of the Pretraining Survey (included with Participant Materials) to each participant. Ask participants to complete the survey and return it to you at least five days before the training session.
2. Use the Pretraining Survey to evaluate the needs of your participants. This survey will allow you to design the training session to emphasize areas or topics of importance.
3. A Posttraining Survey is also provided for use at the end of the training session to determine if your training goals have been met or if further education and training are necessary.

Constructive Communication:
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T r a i n i n g M a t e r i a l s

Introducing the Session to Participants

Time Required:

- 10 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Overhead 1

Objective:

- To introduce participants to each other and create an environment conducive to training.
-

Trainer's Instructions



1. Ask participants to introduce themselves and briefly explain their jobs.
2. After all participants have finished their introductions, introduce yourself to the group. Then describe the agenda for this training session and outline the training goals.
3. Read or paraphrase the following to the group:
Giving and receiving criticism can create some of the most stressful situations we encounter in our daily activities. However, if done correctly, criticism can be a valuable tool in improving our own performance as well as the performance of others.

In this training session, we will learn how to:

- **Communicate better in situations involving criticism.**
- **Resolve conflicts.**
- **Focus on facts, not opinions and personalities, when giving and receiving criticism.**
- **Be assertive rather than aggressive or passive.**
- **Strengthen relationships through constructive rather than destructive criticism.**

Before we get started, let's take a few minutes to discuss our personal thoughts on giving and taking criticism. I want you to think of one or more incidents when you gave or received criticism.

4. Give the participants a moment to think about this statement, and encourage them to write their thoughts if they choose. Then discuss their answers to the following questions:
 - Have you ever been criticized in a way which you didn't find helpful? If so, describe your experience.
 - Have you ever been criticized in a way which you found helpful and non-threatening? If so, describe your experience.
 - What are your concerns about giving and receiving criticism?

The Importance of Criticism Vignette Exercise

Trainer's Instructions



Time Required:

- 15 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Vignettes 1 and 2 from video—*Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How to Take It*

Objective:

- To help participants understand the importance of effective criticism by viewing situations involving giving and receiving criticism correctly and incorrectly.

1. Read or paraphrase the following to the group:

How you handle a situation where an employee needs criticism will determine how they will continue to perform as well as their attitude towards you and their job satisfaction. Sometimes it seems as though it would be easier to avoid the confrontation all together. On the other hand, it is sometimes easier to blatantly tell someone that they are wrong rather than planning the best choice of words and actions. Situations involving criticism require time and care. These vignettes should demonstrate not only *why* giving criticism is important but also *how* you give criticism is important.

2. View Vignettes 1 and 2.

3. As a group, discuss the pros and cons of each vignette in terms of how the manager criticized the employee. Suggested answers are provided below:

- **Vignette 1:**

Pro: The boss attempted to confront the issue.

Con: The boss has a clumsy approach. He hasn't thought through what he wants to say and fails to communicate exactly what his problem is. He communicates so badly that the employee learns nothing constructive and has his feelings hurt.

- **Vignette 2:**

Pro: This course of action avoids conflict.

Con: The boss avoids the issue. By avoiding the conflict, he merely postpones the problem and makes it more difficult to deal with in the future.

4. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you were shown in this exercise, how you communicate criticism is very important. The boss in the first vignette failed to plan. His choice of words and actions ended up hurting the feelings of the employee. Also, it becomes apparent that avoiding conflict by not giving criticism will only create more problems in the future.

Show Video and Review

Time Required:

- 25 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Video—*Constructive Criticism: How to Give It and How to Take It*
- Overhead 2

Objective:

- To show video and discuss as a group.
-

Trainer's Instructions



1. View the video *Constructive Criticism: How to Give It and How to Take It*.
2. Read or paraphrase the following:
A general principle in giving and receiving criticism is to concentrate on the problem and not the personalities involved. The key is to talk in terms of objective factors, such as facts and consequences, not personalities, opinions, and so forth. A problem cannot be solved unless the people involved can clearly see and agree on the specific problem.
3. Ask participants the following questions and discuss their answer as a group. (Suggested answers are provided):
 - What key points did you learn from the video?
Communicate, clarify the problem, and commit to a solution.
 - Did you see yourself in any of the characters? Explain.
Answers will vary.
 - What caused the initial problem between the characters?
Both parties were handling the criticism incorrectly.
4. Read or paraphrase the following:
All the techniques for dealing with criticism are aimed at helping the parties arrive at a clear and mutual understanding of the problem in objective, factual terms. This understanding can help them find a solution to the problem they have defined. The three stages of criticism are:
 - Stage 1: Communicate
 - Stage 2: Clarify
 - Stage 3: Commit

These stages apply to both giving and receiving criticism. Remember, though, that criticism is not a one-way process. The three stages usually happen in that order, but criticism may recycle through each stage many times.

Giving and Receiving Criticism: The Importance of Preparation Exercise

Time Required:

- 15 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Preparing to Give Criticism Handout

Objective:

- To understand the importance of preparing before giving criticism and to follow the key points of the preparation process.
-

Trainer's



1. Give each participant a copy of the Preparing to Give Criticism Handout.

2. Read or paraphrase the following:

When you decide that there is a problem you wish to solve by giving criticism, think carefully about what you want the outcome of your criticism to be. Make sure that you can specify the behavior that you want the other person to change as a result of your criticism. If you can't do this, then do not attempt the criticism—you are not clear enough about what is bothering you, and you run the risk of making generalized statements that offend and worsen the situation.

One major difference between giving and receiving criticism is that you can and should prepare for giving criticism. In preparing to give criticism, you should (refer to the handout):

- **Set a goal for your criticism. Specify exactly what you want the other person to do or to stop doing.**
- **List specific examples that illustrate the behavior you want changed.**
- **Consider the person's situation. If he or she is under stress, your approach may be different than if her or she were more calm.**
- **Plan your approach. Carefully choose your words and tone of voice, and include positive comments to build empathy.**
- **Choose a time and place. It's better to criticize in private.**

Stage 1: Communicate Vignette Exercise

Time Required:

- 30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Vignettes 3 and 4 (Video 2)
- Overheads 3 and 4

Objective:

- To show effective and ineffective behavior, allowing participants to visualize the different results.
-

Trainer's Instructions



1. Read or paraphrase the following:
The vignettes we are about to watch demonstrate effective and ineffective ways to give and receive criticism.
2. View Vignettes 3 and 4. Ask participants to identify which scenario is the correct way and which is the incorrect way to give and receive criticism, and why.
3. As a group, discuss the following questions regarding Vignette 3. Answers are provided:
 - Which person handled criticism correctly—the giver or receiver?
Neither.
 - What could either person have done better?
They both could have asked questions to clarify the problem and used specific facts to back up their position.
4. As a group, discuss the following questions regarding Vignette 4. Answers are provided:
 - Which person handled criticism correctly—the giver or receiver?
Giver.
 - What did the person giving the criticism do right?
Built empathy; used specific examples.
 - What could the person giving criticism do better?
Ask questions to clarify the problem.
 - How could the person receiving criticism have handled the situation better?
Ask questions to clarify the problem, and come up with a solution.
 - What did the person receiving criticism do right?
Acknowledged the problem.



5. Read or paraphrase the following:
It is important to remember the “Don’ts” of receiving criticism:
- Don’t deny the criticism.
 - Don’t argue.
 - Don’t defend yourself.
 - Don’t run away from the situation.
 - Don’t justify yourself.
 - Don’t say, “Yes, but. . . .”



6. Read or paraphrase the following:
When giving criticism, take these three actions while communicating the problem:
1. Listen and establish communication.
 2. State the problem in terms of behavior, not personality.
 3. Ask for a solution or state the actions you want taken.

Stage 2: Clarify Vignette Exercise

Time Required:

- 20 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Vignettes 5–9 (Video 2)
- Stage 2: Clarify Vignette Worksheets (1 copy per participant)

Objective:

- To give participants an opportunity to practice clarifying the underlying problem by asking questions, whether giving or receiving the criticism.
-

Trainer's Instructions



1. Read or paraphrase the following:
Once you have dealt with any aggression or irrational behavior by the critic or the person being criticized, start clarifying the problem. Ask the person what he or she means, and ask for specific examples. Keep asking questions until you understand what the person means.
2. Show each vignette separately.
3. Distribute copies of the Stage 2: Clarify Vignette Worksheet to each participant.
4. After each vignette, ask participants to discuss and clarify what the criticisms really mean using these questions:
 - If you received this criticism, what should your response be in order to clarify the problem?
 - If you were giving this criticism, how would you rephrase it?
5. Ask participants to write down the best responses from the group on the worksheet.
6. Outlined below are the criticisms in each vignette to assist you in your discussion:
Vignette 5: Look, I'm really fed up with your attitude. You're always late, you never do anything to help me, and you are just downright inconsiderate.
Vignette 6: You know what I think? I think you don't know what you are doing. You just don't seem to be committed to your job.
Vignette 7: I wish you'd do something about your appearance. You look awful.
Vignette 8: This report won't do. It stinks!
Vignette 9: I'm sure it will come as no surprise when I tell you you are not cut out to be a manager.



7. Read or paraphrase the following:

Once you fully understand the problem, you may find that you disagree with the formulation of it. You must now state your point of view in a calm and clear way which does not threaten either party involved. Out of this process should come a new statement of the problem with which you both agree.

Stage 3: Commit Skill Practice

Time Required:

- 20 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Skills Practice Scenarios #1 and #2 (1 copy per group)
- Observer Note Sheets (1 copy per participant)

Objective:

- To practice the skills of giving and receiving criticism by role playing.
-

**Trainer's
Instructions**



1. Read or paraphrase the following:
After completing Stages 1 and 2, you are now ready to solve the problem. You can do this by either asking for or offering a solution to the problem. For example, you might ask, “If I were to. . . , would that solve the problem?” This will lead to a discussion of possible solutions, and then you can gain commitment for solving the problem.
2. Divide participants into groups of four, and have each person label themselves A, B, C, or D within their groups.
3. In each skill exercise, two people will act out a scene while two people observe. (A and B will act out a scene first using Skills Practice Scenario #1, while C and D observe using the Observer Note Sheets.)
4. Have observer C focus on the response of the person *being criticized* in terms of:
 - Body language—How does he or she look during the exchange?
 - How does he or she use receiving techniques?
 - How does he or she clarify the problem?
 - How does he or she commit to a solution?
5. Have observer D focus on the response of the person *criticizing* in terms of:
 - Body language—How does he or she look during the exchange?
 - General principles—How well does he or she remain calm and keep the conversation on specific, observable facts and behaviors?
 - How does he or she clarify the problem?
 - How does he or she commit to a solution?
6. After 10 minutes, have those who observed (C and D) now act out a new scenario using Skills Practice Scenario #2. Group members A and B will now be the observers, using the same instructions as above with the Observer Note Sheets.

Exercise from the Book The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback

Time Required:

- 15 minutes

Materials Needed:

- The AMI How-To Book—*The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback*

Objective:

- To review the steps of the entire criticism process.
-

Trainer's Instructions



1. Read or paraphrase the following:
The steps you have learned for giving criticism will allow you to give useful, supportive criticism that focuses on facts and actions rather than attitudes or personalities. Always try to follow those steps because they will give you direction and ensure that you provide the recipient with as much useful information as possible.
2. Ask participants to turn to page 58 of the book *The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback*.
3. Have participants read the “Staying on Track” section and complete the Take a Moment exercise on page 59.
4. After completing the exercise, read or paraphrase the following to the group:
Providing criticism that is constructive rather than hurtful is a challenge. That’s why preparing for the criticism, communicating, clarifying, and committing to a solution are important. Try to be as caring as possible when you present your criticism. Focus on the facts of the situation and the person’s actions, not his or her personality.



When you’re on the receiving end of the criticism, remember how hard it is to criticize people properly. Don’t defend or justify yourself—just listen and communicate with the person.

Posttraining Survey

Time Required:

- 15 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Posttraining Survey (1 copy per participant)

Objective:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of the training session.
-

Trainer's Instructions



1. Read or paraphrase to the group:
This worksheet is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of this training session. It will help us determine what areas we need to improve for future sessions. Your honest response to these questions is appreciated. In no way will it be used to penalize you.
2. Distribute the Posttraining Survey (included in the Participant Materials) and give participants time to complete it. Collect completed surveys from each participant. If time allows, discuss answers as a group. Answers will vary for each participant.

Follow-Up Memo

This memo below should be personalized and sent to each participant one to two weeks after your training session. By following up in this manner, you give your participants the opportunity to review and utilize what they learned in their work environment.

(Today's Date)

TO: (Participant's Name)
FROM: (Trainer's Name)
RE: ***Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How to Take It***
Training Session

Earlier this month, we had the opportunity to work together in a training session that focused on how to give and receive criticism constructively. I hope you found the session to be very helpful. It is important to remember the three stages of criticism:

- Stage 1: Communicate
- Stage 2: Clarify
- Stage 3: Commit

If you would like to continue your own self-study on how to effectively give and receive criticism, you are welcome to contact me or (name/department) for use of the ***Constructive Communication: How to Give It and How to Take It*** video, ***The Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback*** self-study book, and other materials we have collected on constructive communication.

Our hope is that you have been able to put the ideas you learned to work within your area. If you have any questions, please contact me at extension (###).

Constructive Communication:
How to Give It and How to Take It

P a r t i c i p a n t M a t e r i a l s

Pretraining Survey

1. What are some things you should do when you are criticizing someone?

2. What should you do if someone is criticizing you?

3. You should base your criticisms on a person's opinions and attitudes.

True

False

4. Delayed feedback is no more difficult to give than feedback given at the time of an incident.

True

False

5. When receiving criticism, you should defend yourself and justify your actions.

True

False

6. If someone begins to criticize you at an inappropriate time and place, you should politely ask him or her if a better setting could be found where neither of you will be distracted.

True

False

7. With the right attitude, you can learn from any feedback situation, even one that begins inappropriately.

True

False

8. Which of these are actions to take when giving criticism:

- A. Outline specific dates and times or examples of incidences.
- B. Make sure that the receiver understands the scope and significance of the problem.
- C. Ask the receiver for a solution to the problem.
- D. All of the above are correct.

Preparing to Give Criticism Handout

- **Set a goal for your criticism.** Specify exactly what you want the other person to do or to stop doing.
- **List specific examples** that illustrate the behavior you want changed.
- **Consider the person's situation.** If that person is under stress, your approach will be different than if he or she were more calm.
- **Plan your approach.** Carefully choose your words and tone of voice, and include positive comments to build empathy.
- **Choose a time and place.** It's better to criticize in private.

Stage 2: Clarify Vignette Worksheet

INSTRUCTIONS: In the spaces provided, write the answers your group generates during the discussion of the following questions after each vignette.

Vignette 5 - *“Look, I’m really fed up with your attitude. You’re always late, you never do anything to help me, and you are just downright inconsiderate!”*

If you heard this criticism, what should your response be in order to clarify the problem?

If you had given this criticism, how would you rephrase this criticism?

Vignette 6 - *“You know what I think? I think you don’t know what you are doing. You just don’t seem to be committed to your job.”*

If you heard this criticism, what should your response be in order to clarify the problem?

If you had given this criticism, how would you rephrase this criticism?

Vignette 7 - *“I wish you’d do something about your appearance. You look awful.”*

If you heard this criticism, what should your response be in order to clarify the problem?

If you had given this criticism, how would you rephrase this criticism?

Vignette 8 - *"The report won't do. It stinks!"*

If you heard this criticism, what should your response be in order to clarify the problem?

If you had given this criticism, how would you rephrase this criticism?

Vignette 9 - *"I'm sure it will come as no surprise when I tell you you are not cut out to be a manager."*

If you heard this criticism, what should your response be in order to clarify the problem?

If you had given this criticism, how would you rephrase this criticism?

Skills Practice Scenario #1 (Participant A)

You are very unhappy about Pat's appearance and grooming. His or her clothes are sometimes dirty, unprofessional looking, and inappropriate. Otherwise he or she looks okay, but you are really concerned about the hair and the shoes.

Start your criticism with:

"I wish you'd do something about the way you look. It's so untidy."

If Pat asks what exactly it is that you don't like, say:

"Well, for starters, your hair."

Once Pat has identified the exact problem (i.e., long hair, dirty shoes, or whatever you choose), be satisfied if he or she offers to correct the problem. But make sure that you get a commitment (i.e., a firm statement that Pat will correct the problem by an agreed-upon time).

Skills Practice Scenario #1 (Participant B)

You feel comfortable with your appearance. You have never wanted to dress or appear extremely nice. There has been no reason to, and no one has ever said anything about your appearance.

If Participant A asks you about your appearance, respond by asking for specifics.

Do not readily commit to changing your appearance. Make sure that Participant A asks you to commit. When he or she does, then commit.

Skills Practice Scenario #2 (Participant C)

You are frustrated with Chris's time-management skills. He or she always seems to be late.

Start your criticism with:

“You're never here on time! When are you going to do something about managing your time?”

If Chris asks you specifically when he or she was late and by how much, say that you haven't been keeping records, but that he or she was 5 minutes late this morning, and it seems to you that he or she is late more often than not.

You are in some difficulty here. You know that Chris is a poor timekeeper, but you have not prepared properly by keeping track of specific examples. See if you can still get a commitment from Chris to arrive on time in the future.

Skills Practice Scenario #2 (Participant D)

Participant C is a coworker who is criticizing your time-management skills. You don't feel you have a problem; you always get your assignments done and have never been criticized before.

If Participant C criticizes your time-management skills, ask him or her to be specific.

If Participant C cannot be specific, ask why he or she feels that way, and discuss his or her feelings.

Determine if either party can make a commitment to solve the problem.

Observer Note Sheet

Who are you observing? _____

Please comment on the following items:

Body Language -

Receiving Techniques -

Clarifying the Problem -

Committing to a Solution -

Observer Note Sheet

Who are you observing? _____

Please comment on the following items:

Body Language -

Receiving Techniques -

Clarifying the Problem -

Committing to a Solution -

Session Evaluation Form

Constructive Communication

Instructions: Please circle the number that best describes your evaluation of the training session.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This training program concentrates on the important points of giving and receiving criticism.	5	4	3	2	1
This training program helped me understand the importance of constructive criticism.	5	4	3	2	1
As a result of this program, I am more confident in my ability to constructively give and receive criticism.	5	4	3	2	1
The objectives of the program were clearly presented.	5	4	3	2	1
Opportunities to ask questions and discuss issues were sufficient.	5	4	3	2	1
The session was well organized.	5	4	3	2	1

The best part of this program was: _____

This program could be improved by: _____

Additional comments: _____

I would recommend this session to others. (circle one) **Yes** **No**

Constructive Communication:
How to Give It and How to Take It

O v e r h e a d s

Session Objectives

- **Communicate better in situations involving criticism.**
- **Resolve conflicts.**
- **Focus on facts, not opinions and personalities, when giving and receiving criticism.**
- **Be assertive rather than aggressive or passive.**
- **Strengthen relationships through constructive rather than destructive criticism.**

The Three Stages of Criticism

Stage 1: Communicate

Stage 2: Clarify

Stage 3: Commit

The “Don’ts” of Receiving Criticism

- **Don’t deny the criticism.**
- **Don’t argue.**
- **Don’t defend yourself.**
- **Don’t run away from the situation.**
- **Don’t justify yourself.**
- **Don’t say, “Yes, but”**

Three Actions for Giving Criticism

- 1. Listen and establish communication.**
- 2. State the problem in terms of behavior, not personality.**
- 3. Ask for a solution or state the actions you want taken.**

Notes