

Researchers Explain Why People Avoid Giving Constructive Feedback

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. underestimate /ˌʌn.dəˈres.tɪ.mɛnt/ to fail to understand how strong, skilful, intelligent, or determined someone is
Example: I never underestimated my opponent.
2. constructive feedback /kənˈstrʌk.tɪv ˈfiːd.bæk/ the type of feedback aimed at achieving a positive outcome by providing someone with comments, advice, or suggestions that are useful for their work or their future.
Example: We would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback.
3. typo /ˈtaɪ.pəʊ/ a small mistake in a text made when it was typed or printed
Example: There were a lot of typos in the email that she sent.
4. stain /steɪn/ to leave a mark on something that is difficult to remove
Example: Tomato stain is hard to remove.
5. smudge /smʌdʒ/ a mark with no particular shape that is caused, usually by accident, by rubbing something such as ink or a dirty finger across a surface:
Example: Her hands were covered in dust and she had a black smudge on her nose.



People consistently **underestimate** others' desire for **constructive feedback** and therefore don't provide it, even when it could improve another person's performance on a task, according to research published by the American Psychological Association.

"People often have opportunities to provide others with constructive feedback that could be immediately helpful, whether that's letting someone know of a **typo** in their presentation before a client presentation, or telling a job candidate about a **stained** shirt before an interview," said lead author Nicole Abi-Esber of Harvard Business School. "Overall, our research found that people consistently underestimate others' desire for feedback, which can have harmful results for would-be feedback recipients."

Constructive feedback is helpful in learning and performance, and research has shown that people commonly report wanting this type of feedback, according to the researchers.

However, even if people want constructive feedback themselves, they often avoid giving it to others.

In an initial study conducted by the researchers, only 2.6% of participants informed a tester of a visible **smudge** on his or her face (e.g., chocolate, lipstick or red marker) during a survey.

Previous research suggests that people avoid giving feedback for fear of negative results, such as the other person's becoming embarrassed or upset. Abi-Esber and her colleagues said there might be another reason why people avoid giving constructive feedback: They simply do not fully recognize the possibility that it will be helpful to others.

DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever given constructive feedback to someone in your office? How did you do it?
2. Were you ever given constructive feedback at work? What happened?
3. Can you apply constructive feedback in your personal life, like to your friends or family?
4. If your boss is about to give a presentation and you saw that there was a typo on his presentation, will you let your boss know? How?
5. Why do you think constructive feedback is important?
6. Have you ever given constructive feedback before that was taken negatively?