

How to Give Corrective Feedback

A practical guide for addressing issues without damaging trust or culture.

Why Corrective Feedback Matters

Avoiding corrective feedback doesn't protect culture—it slowly erodes it. When standards aren't addressed, high performers notice first. Over time, frustration and confusion replace accountability.

Corrective feedback isn't about punishment. It's about alignment.

Start With the Right Decision

Before you correct behavior, confirm you've chosen the right path.

If the issue was:

a mistake, a misunderstanding, a first occurrence - paired with openness to improve

You're likely in **coaching** territory.

If the issue involved:

intentional behavior, repeated patterns, real risk or harm

Corrective feedback may need to shift toward **discipline**.

(If you're unsure, reference the Coach vs. Discipline Decision Guide.)

The Corrective Feedback Structure

Keep feedback focused, calm, and specific.

1. State the Expectation

Begin with the standard—before the behavior. “The expectation is that...”

This removes ambiguity and keeps the conversation objective.

2. Describe the Behavior

Stick to facts. Avoid assumptions, emotion, or exaggeration. “What I observed was...”

No labels. No character judgments.

3. Explain the Impact

Connect the behavior to why it matters. “The impact of this was...”

This is where accountability becomes meaningful.

4. Set the Path Forward

Be clear about what needs to change. “Going forward, I need to see...”

Feedback without direction creates frustration.

Language That Matches the Moment

“This didn’t meet the standard. Let’s talk through what happened and what needs to change going forward.”

Calm. Clear. Direct.

Actions/Behaviors for YOU to Avoid

- Correcting in public
- Stacking multiple issues at once
- Speaking in generalities
- Letting frustration drive tone
- Delaying the conversation until it feels bigger than it is

Leadership Reality Check

- Coaching avoids discipline later.
- Delayed feedback feels personal—even when it isn’t.
- Consistency matters more than perfection.

Handled well, corrective feedback builds trust instead of breaking it.

Corrective feedback isn’t about control—it’s about clarity.

When leaders address issues early, calmly, and consistently, teams don’t fear feedback—they respect it.