Effective Communications

Communication is the process of transferring signals/messages between a sender and a receiver through various methods (written words, nonverbal cues, spoken words). It is also the mechanism we use to establish and modify relationships.

Giving Feedback

1. **Only give feedback if the gain will exceed the pain**: only use it for important things.
2. **Praise more than you criticize**: Identifying and developing strengths is more effective than focusing too much on negatives. The "praise sandwich" can be an effective way to give criticism to someone without alienating them:
   a) First make a positive statement to the person: "I think you are really trying your best"
   b) Then the criticism "But you need to structure your essay more logically".
   c) Lastly, make another positive statement to finish "However it's a very good first attempt"
3. **Describe positive behavior and it's effect in concrete terms**: "I really appreciate how you took the time to ...." rather than "Good job yesterday"
4. **Frame negative feedback as constructive criticism**, showing the person how she can improve. Not "Debbie, you were hopeless!", but "Debbie, you made some very useful contributions but your voice was a bit quiet. I couldn't hear you very well, so you needs to raise your voice a bit in future."
5. **If possible, ask permission before volunteering feedback**: "Do you mind if I give you some feedback?" This gives the person time to prepare.
6. **Try to give feedback immediately**: on the spot if possible: it's most effective when fresh in the person's mind. The more quickly it is given the more relevance and power it will have.
7. **Be direct and honest**: Get quickly to the point, don't have long and embarrassing introductions, although starting with some genuine praise based on what the person has actually done will help (remember the praise sandwich).
8. **Give feedback in private** if at all possible, it's insensitive to do this in front of others.
9. **Stick to a single clear issue**, don't pack in too much criticism as this can be disheartening.
10. **Don't repeat the same point** over and over: this will just build up resentment.
11. **Only criticize behaviors that can be changed**: "You need to improve your computing skills" rather than "You're stupid!"
12. **Give feedback on a person's behavior not about the person themselves**. Give accurate descriptions of behavior not comments about the person's qualities and worth as an individual: "You have been late for work a lot in the last month" rather than :"You're lazy"!
13. **Don't compare the person with other people**, as this can build jealousy: "Jane is always punctual"
14. **Use "I" not "You" statements**: "I feel upset" not "You made me feel upset".
15. **Use specific examples.** Don't say "You're hopeless at this", say "We need to give you training on how to do this"! Describe the behavior, describe your reaction, explain why you feel this way, show you understand what's behind their behavior, suggest a different way of behaving.

16. **Stick to facts:** describe behavior but also what happened as a result.

17. **The best decisions are those people reach for themselves.** Try not to tell the other person directly what they should and shouldn't do. Let him explore their behavior and say themselves what needs to be done. This avoids the build up of resentment.

18. **Allow the criticized person to express any concerns he may have.**

19. **Use tentative words** such as "sometimes" and "perhaps" rather than "always" and "never": these allow the other person to avoid argument by saying that "always" is not strictly true.

20. **Keep your emotions under control.**

21. At the end, **Check understanding:** "Does what I've said make sense to you?" and summarize what you've agreed.

22. If you are receiving feedback **yourself,** try to accept it in a positive and non-defensive manner.