



giving compliments

Giving compliments to others such as peers, work colleagues and family is a good way to enhance your relationships with them as well as experience your own positive feelings. People often shy away from giving compliments as people can often feel suspicious (“what are you after?”) or embarrassed.

Here are a few simple tips on giving compliments which can make it a more useful and pleasant experience:

1 be spontaneous

It is best to give a compliment spontaneously rather than retrospectively. If it looks too planned, the other person is more likely to feel you are buttering them up as you want something.

2 be specific

Rather than saying “that was a wonderful speech”, it is much better to point out what you liked about the speech and compliment the person on that. Eg “I really liked the way you used humour to make a serious point.” Specific compliments of this kind are useful for people as it gives them information on what they are currently doing well. Being specific also means that the compliment is likely to sound sincere.

3 keep it short

It is common for people to feel slightly embarrassed by over-the-top compliments Eg “you are such a wonderful or brilliant person” It is much easier to accept and welcome a compliment if it is measured and specific.

receiving compliments

Giving compliments is a good way to boost relationships and experience positive emotions.

However people are often embarrassed by receiving compliments and don’t accept them graciously.

Here are some tips that might help to receive compliments:

1 say thanks

Even if you don’t agree with the person, don’t contradict them as it is then a put-down for the person. eg if someone says, “what a nice garden you have,”and you reply, “it’s just a mess and full of weeds”, you’re contradicting them and undermining the positive intent in their remark.

2 agree with a compliment

Often we say something contradictory or deflect the compliment because we are embarrassed and don’t know what to say. In that case, agree with the compliment by saying “thanks” and “I really was pleased with how it turned out”, or something similar.

3 don’t feel obliged to compliment back

If you feel you want to return a compliment, it is best to wait and do it on another occasion as it will then seem more sincere.



Wheel of Well-being

the bank of compliments



aim

This activity is designed to generate positive emotions and demonstrate how powerful they can be in connecting people. It works best with participants who know a little bit about each other.

This activity can be used in combination with the hand-outs on giving and receiving compliments.

what to do



- 1 Download the Bank of Compliments template and photocopy one sheet for each participant.
 - 2 Give each participant one sheet of 5 blank 'cheques' and get them to write their name on each one where it says 'to'.
 - 3 Once their names are on each of their cheques, ask each participant to hand their sheet to the person on their left. Ask that person to write a compliment about the person whose name is on the sheet - on the top cheque - and then fold the page to the back along the 'fold' line so the compliment is hidden.
- note:** Group members should think about writing compliments that are authentic and specific. Rather than, 'You're nice', (too general and relatively meaningless), they should be writing specific things like, 'I really appreciate the way you take time to talk to people. You're really warm and it makes people feel valued.'
- 4 Ask the participants to continue to pass the sheet to the person on their left to add a compliment and fold the sheet over again, so the second compliment is hidden as well.
 - 5 Continue the process until all 5 'cheques' have been filled in and the sheet is folded up. Return the sheet to its owner.
 - 6 Give people a few minutes to read and absorb the compliments they've received.

reflections on the process:

questions to explore with the group

How easy was it to come up with a compliment? (It probably would have been very easy to come up with 5 things that annoy you ...we're so much better at the negatives!)

What did it feel like to read the things people wrote about you?

How did you feel about the group after you read your sheet?

What particular compliments had the most impact? Why?

How might these reflections be incorporated into your relationships with others - at home, at work, in local communities?

