

Self-Regard – build it and protect it

Instructions:

Response to Feedback Exercise

Psychologists refer to the units of feedback from others as ‘strokes’. Strokes may be verbal (‘I love working with you’) or non-verbal (a warm smile when someone you like enters the room). For our self-regard to develop and remain healthy, it needs positive strokes from other people. In contrast, regular negative strokes from others can reduce our levels of self-regard.

There are four types of strokes we can receive from others (and ourselves if we listen to our inner voice) and certain types have a higher weighting than others.

Unconditional strokes relate to the person as a whole whereas conditional strokes relate to a specific behaviour. Unconditional strokes have a higher impact on self-regard as they provide feedback on someone’s personal identity not their behavior. From an individual’s perspective it is much easier to change our behaviour whereas our personal identity is less adaptable as it is the essence of ‘who we are’ making the criticism feel more permanent and outside of our control to change.

The four strokes are detailed in this table with scores allocated to each one:

<p>Negative unconditional A criticism of who you are as a person eg ‘You are stupid’ Score: –10</p>	<p>Positive conditional Positive feedback on your actions eg ‘Your report was excellent because . . .’ Score: +1</p>
<p>Negative conditional Negative feedback on your actions eg ‘Your presentation would have been better if ..’ Score: -1</p>	<p>Positive unconditional Positive feedback on who you are as a person eg ‘I love your energy and enthusiasm’ Score: +10</p>

Rules: Strokes will only have a positive or negative impact on our self-regard if we allow them to. If we want to manage the strokes we receive effectively, we need to develop the habit of rejecting and accepting strokes as follows:

- Accept all conditional strokes – positive and negative - as these contain useful information on our performance that will inform our learning and development
- Accept all positive unconditional strokes – it is important to accept compliments when they are given to you eg ‘Thank you, that is lovely to hear’ In doing this, it is also important to stop any negative after comments that diminish either yourself or the comment, eg “I am sure you say that to everyone” or “I am not that good, you are just being nice”
- Reject any negative unconditional strokes – these strokes are never useful, as they are based on the perspective, beliefs and intent of the other person that are not shared by you as you accept yourself unconditionally *whatever*. It can be helpful to counter any such comments with rational positive affirmations about yourself (as positive self talk), eg “I am a good person as I am open-minded, honest, inspiring” etc (include any other values that describe yourself)

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Step 1: On a daily basis take 10 minutes to keep a journal of strokes you receive each day – create a grid like the table above and note details in each box

Step 2: Review the box and put a tick or cross next to the ones that you have accepted or dismissed. Also note any negative conditionals that you have ‘blown up in your mind’ into negative unconditionals

Step 3: Using the scores provided overleaf, tally the number in each box and work out your daily score – this will give you an idea of whether your self-regard is being built or eroded

Step 4: Working on your accept and reject habits:

- Reflect on each type of stroke and highlight the strokes where you have not followed the rules set out overleaf. Also note
- Take each of these in turn:
 - For positive unconditional strokes – recall the moment this happened – what did you see, hear and feel – take a moment to relive this moment and replay what was said in your mind, accepting the comment unconditionally as being part of who you are. Thank the person for this comment & repeat the moment of acceptance and thanking 3 times
 - For conditional strokes, positive and negative, identify what was said:
 - What have you learned about your performance?
 - What could you do differently next time to ensure you grow from this experience?
 - Thank the person for their help in bringing this to your attention
 - For negative unconditional strokes – recall the moment this happened – what did you see, hear and feel – take a moment to relive this moment and replay what was said in your mind and respond to this rejecting the comment respectfully. Examples of how this could work:
 - Thank you for your comment. Please could you be more specific with your feedback so that I can learn from this experience – this could elicit more helpful conditional feedback (and turn the score from a -10 to a -1)
 - Thank you for your comment. I do not share your view as I know that I am [insert word that is opposite to their word] because I am [include value words that describe you]

Step 5: Create an action plan detailing how you wish to respond to strokes that you receive going forward and notice how your responses change and what impact this has had on how you feel

Step 6: Complete steps 1-5 until you have reached the point where, on the whole, you feel you are following the recommended rules for accepting and rejecting strokes