

## Tips for TOP Mentors

### 1. Preparation in advance of observation

- Contact mentee prior to their teaching session:
  - Introduce yourself, confirm scheduled day/time for observation.
  - Review goals of TOP program: engage in confidential dialogue about teaching, offer opportunities for improvement.
  - Ask how you can best help your mentee, have mentee establish focus for observation (pacing, organization of content, handling of questions, use of A/V materials, etc).
  - Learn context of the teaching encounter (e.g. Is this the first encounter with these learners or is this part of a series of encounters? what is the setting? – classroom vs. clinic, etc)
  - If it is a small group or clinical session, talk to the mentee about letting the learners/patients know you will be there and explain the purpose of your presence (e.g. observing the teacher, not the learners).
  - Obtain copies of your mentee's slides or teaching materials, if any.
  - Arrange a time for the feedback session (~30 min). Its best to provide feedback within a couple days to achieve the biggest benefit. It is also useful to allow some time for reflection and to formulate your feedback rather than meeting immediately after the teaching session.
- Review content and teaching materials (slides/small group material etc).
- Print and review observation form for the specific type of teaching.

### 2. The Observation

- Use observation form to take notes; be as specific as possible, include examples so you can offer specific suggestions.
- Separate yourself from clinical issues and discussions, and avoid interjections. Remain focused on the learning environment and teaching effectiveness.
- Consolidate your observations and suggestions into a few main points (three max) that will be most beneficial for your mentee and their learners.

### 3. The Feedback Session (*See also "Elements of Effective Feedback"*)

- Reiterate that your conversation is confidential. The goal is to foster a culture where it is normal and welcomed to have teachers provide each other with feedback.
- Begin by asking the mentee to self-assess their teaching – both strengths and areas for improvement.
- Provide specific feedback, focusing on areas requested by the mentee.
- Balance your discussion of strengths and weaknesses – begin and end with strengths.
- Limit feedback to 3 main points.
- Refer to specific examples you observed.
- Provide specific suggestions for improvement.
- Leave time for mentee to respond and ask clarifying questions.
- Give the mentee a copy of the observation form with your feedback.

## Elements of Effective Feedback

### A. Principles of Giving Good Feedback

- Well timed and expected
- Safe and mutually supportive environment
- Understandable- keep it clear and simple
- Comment on strengths before weaknesses
- First-hand data, based on direct observation
- Focused – address only 2-3 issues, limit to behaviors that are remediable
- Channeled – directed toward behavior to be corrected, not the person
- Specific and concrete – use specific examples, avoid generalizations
- Descriptive non-evaluative language (i.e. no judgement)
- Informative – explain why the behavior is a problem, provide suggestions for improvement

### B. Principles of Receiving Feedback

- Listen with an open mind; Avoid interrupting or defending a behavior
- Ask clarifying questions
- Relate feedback back to your own goals
- Ask for specific suggestions
- Take time before responding

### References:

1. Ende, J. Feedback in Clinical Medical Education. *Medical Education* 1983; 250(6):777-781.
2. Michaelsen L, Schultheiss E, Making Feedback Helpful – The Organizational Behavior Teaching Review, 1988, vol. 13, iss. 1, p. 109-113.