

Conversation Gifts

Everyone loves positive feedback.

Negative feedback, not so much...

Some of the most valuable gifts in conversation come horribly wrapped. They look bad, sound bad, and can even feel bad to open. Because we judge the gift by its wrapping, we don't like to open these gifts. Imagine you're having a conversation with a direct report or co-worker about his/her performance and he/she says, **"I would have achieved all my goals this year if I had support from you."**

If you ignore the comment, simply disagree, or say, "We were talking about your performance, not mine," you've just rejected the gift you've been offered. If you want to open the gift, try saying something like, **"I'm truly sorry you feel that way. I thought I was supporting you. Tell me more... what do you think I did or didn't do to support you?"**

If you want to get better at recognizing and opening gifts, be aware during conversations when people say something that bothers you, confuses you, or that you disagree with. These are powerful opportunities for learning.

How to give a gift in return.

When you accept a person's gift – no matter how terribly wrapped – and respond with curiosity and compassion (**by acknowledging and accepting feelings**), you are giving a gift in return. In short, you are creating a safe space to talk about things that really matter. This type of gift is priceless.