

iBme Feedback System - A Living Document

Why, Who, When and How: Key Points for Sharing Feedback

Why:

At iBme, we believe that multi-directional feedback is a valuable tool for working collaboratively and for personal growth - in whatever roles we hold with iBme. Having space to share and hear different perspectives on how we are showing up and doing our work, will allow us to be more effective in that work. It is usually impossible to see our blind-spots without the help of others to lovingly and clearly point them out for us.

Additionally, we live in a culture of conflict avoidance that allows many things to go unsaid and unresolved. Conflict can arise when we are unwilling to be honest and straightforward with each other or when we give feedback that doesn't effectively support learning. As Miki Kashtan says, "Conflict is feedback not given." Building a culture of feedback is important to us - skillful feedback can be used to affirm connection, build trust, and contribute to shared success.

We can get better at giving feedback the more we are comfortable with the prospect of receiving it, of not being perfect. When we are not attached to the need to be perfect or the expectation that others should be perfect, we can have more ease when giving and receiving feedback.

It will take time to grow a robust culture of feedback and we see the long term value to each of us individually and to our shared mission to support the youth that we serve. Our feedback system is a living work in progress that all of us contribute to - we look forward to growing in this vital skill together!

Who:

As iBme shifts to a culture of greater collaboration and shared leadership, we are asking all members of our community to engage in regular feedback - multi-directionally with all the folks you work with consistently and within groups that work together on particular projects or retreats.

We ask that all iBme board, staff, teachers, and mentors cultivate a sincere desire to engage in a feedback process that supports their personal growth.

When:

Frequently, as often as needed, and probably more often than we think to or may want to at first. Feedback takes practice!

iBme Staff:

- As co-determined in each working relationship, ideally weekly when working closely. All staff who work together are asked to set a specific and regular time to offer each other feedback, this timing is likely to be more frequent the more time you spend working together.
- At bi-weekly staff meetings, feedback can be offered for the group work and working process, we may also establish a rotating feedback space for individuals by the group, such as the simple structure described below.

iBme Board:

- Each board member meets twice annually with staff holder they work most closely with (2 or 3 on the matrix) to share feedback. One of these times can occur during the Board retreat.
- Annually, each Board member and staff member will solicit feedback from other board/staff members via email using the simple format below. This will happen ahead of the board retreat, unless otherwise determined. ie. as part of an existing feedback opportunity such as described above.
- Working Teams: Solicit feedback about each meeting at the end of each meeting. Schedule a time to debrief/offer feedback around how the team functioned once the project is completed. Whoever is the “1” ensures that feedback is happening.
- Committees: Solicit feedback about each meeting at the end of each meeting. Each committee clarify when/how often to do more focused feedback around how the committee is functioning/working together (at least once a year). The committee chair (is the 1) and is responsible for ensuring that feedback is happening regularly.

iBme Retreat Teams:

- Core team (teachers and manager): at the start of the retreat, the core team share areas of growth each person is working/areas for feedback on then within 2 weeks after the retreat set a zoom meeting
- Health and Mental Health Coordinators: join first 30 minutes of the lunch meetings and offer and receive feedback
- Mentors to teachers: Retreat mentors are invited to share feedback on evaluation forms, which is shared with the office team and the retreat core team.
- Mentors to each other: small group co-leads are encouraged to regularly check in with each other, all mentors are invited to share feedback with each other on retreat and seek support of teachers if they need help with offering feedback
- Teens to mentors and teachers: teens complete evaluations at the end of the retreat, iBme staff will create a summary and post in mentor drive folder, and share with teachers.
- Teachers and mentors to teens: teachers and mentors are regularly giving feedback to retreat participants as they see appropriate, both positive and constructive

- Core team to iBme office staff: through post retreat reports and annual manager debrief, annual teacher debrief
- Mentors to iBme office staff: through evaluations
- Parent feedback: evaluation sent after retreat, add to retreat feedback summary

At the same time, in all of these relationships, we encourage all of us to offer each other feedback directly in as timely a manner as possible. iBme's office staff are happy to offer support and facilitation for these feedback sessions, especially when they are across power differences - please ask!

We invite your suggestions and proposals of relationships or groups you think would benefit from feedback times and formal structures that are not outlined above.

How:

Establishing a shared reality:

1. **Self kindness practice:** Because this process can be so counter-cultural and it can be so challenging to receive difficult feedback, you may want to either begin your meetings with self-kindness or compassion meditation practice either on your own before the meeting or at the start of the meeting. If it is a session when you will be receiving feedback you might also want to begin with sharing feedback about yourself, both appreciative and areas for growth that you see in yourself, areas that you are working on.
2. **Build Trust:** It's difficult to give feedback when there's a lack of trust. In fact Miki has expressed that you can not give feedback when there is not trust in the relationship. One way to establish or reestablish trust is for each party to share what they value about working with the other person. This might be all you are able to do in a first meeting where difficult feedback needs to be shared.
3. **Co-create criteria for what the feedback is about** - The more explicit the criteria, and the more they can be measured behaviorally, the more collaborative the resulting system. This is because the result is accountability to purpose, values, and specific criteria rather than to a person in power.
Criteria can be about any of the following:
 - How we work together
 - Shared and stated values + competencies
 - Specific competencies of the role - talent (aptitude), skill, availability, willingness, and resources/support needed.
 - Tasks and goals of the work
 - Goals that the individual has/is working on

Steps for offering feedback:

This is a set of practices designed to increase the chances that feedback will be useful learning rather than painful criticism or boring praise.

1. **Express your purpose** for giving the feedback - for example “To contribute to success of our shared work,” “To support you in your growth as a teacher.” Purposes can include supporting an individual, a relationship, or a team in working most effectively towards a shared purpose, or clarifying whether a person is a sufficient fit for job/tasks needed. Consider feedback to be an offering, something that will support and be useful to the person going forward.
2. **Check for willingness** - Are you willing to hear feedback about this specific issue with this purpose now? It’s okay for the receiver to say no and find a better time or ask for what they need to be able to best receive feedback.
3. **Share your observations** of a behavior and why it matters to you - what are the observable facts vs. your interpretation, evaluation or analysis. Offer:
 - Specific observations so as to provide sufficient clarity to the person receiving feedback to be able to know what is being talked about;
 - Tying the observations to why it matters to you in terms of purpose, values, or function;
 - Specific suggestions for what can be done to improve in the specific area
4. **Listen to the receiver:** Make space to hear from the other person and practice empathy. Ask how that landed for someone, check to see if you have a shared reality about the situation.
5. **Practice vulnerability and transparency:** the habit to hide truth is present even when we are engaging in a process to expose truth.
6. **Make an Action Plan together** to address any growth feedback; without a clear action plan feedback is less useful. An action plan is a set of practices and activities that will likely result in the desired change
 - The giver of feedback starts by drafting/proposing outcomes they would like to see, then the receiver responds yes or no or let’s change this, etc.
 - The action plan can fill the gap between what is happening and what is ideal - not necessarily about changing the behaviour completely immediately
 - Support for the receiver to process the difficult feedback can be part of the action plan

Our request and a simple way to start:

We request that all staff, teachers, mentors engage with the feedback process during established times, even when you think you don't have any - this will help us to develop the habit and skill of giving and receiving feedback and make it easier to bring up more difficult feedback sooner. Over time, we will be asking for feedback about how this practice is supporting you as individuals, teams, as an organization on the whole. We'll check in with retreat teams and staff regularly to see how this process is going, what support may be needed, or changes made to the process.

Start with this simple structure, especially if you think you don't have any:

- Specific Appreciation: Share with the person one behavior you've seen them engage that you appreciate and why it matters to you (to the work, to your values, to the shared mission)
- Specific Opportunity for Growth: Then, share with the person one behavior you've seen them engage that is difficult for you and why it matters to you **and** a suggestion for what they could do differently (as concrete as possible) that would more meet your needs or values.

In a group setting, each person takes a turn to offer to a specific person. This can happen in two rounds: first all offering the specific positive feedback and then a second offering the specific growth feedback. Refrain from repeating what's already been said. Check for confirmation of the feedback by asking after it's given if others in the group see this as well/resonate with the feedback.

A few tips/considerations:

- Make time for this process
- Make sure feedback is multi-directional: if you are in a position of authority, take specific care to make space for feedback to be offered to you. If you have feedback to give, also making space to receive feedback.
- Be aware of where your feedback is coming from, mindful of your own biases and/or triggers. If you feel emotionally charged, it may be a good idea to hold off on giving feedback until you are able to name your upset (including the intensity of it!) and why. This may take some time or you may want to seek support to do this. [
- It's important to do work around any strong feelings that are arising you don't dump on anyone and also to work with any fear of confrontation so that you are able to speak clearly and directly without back-peddaling.
- Be straightforward, assume people can hold it
- Be specific and focused on behavior/facts not personality or perceived intention
- Speak from your own experience and use 'I' statements

- Feedback is not about blame - most of us have been cultural conditioned to identify fault and blame, instead look for co-responsibility
- Empathy collision - we can't ask for empathy when someone else needs it. Be aware of this when offering feedback

2 kinds of feedback often not given:

- Specific appreciations including why it matters (not vague accolades)
- Difficult feedback
 - Not a comfortable situation - we don't need to make it comfortable; we can be transparent about the difficulty/discomfort of the situation
 - It's important not to make the impact of someone's behavior "invisible;" being able to name it will make the feedback more powerful/authentic and easier to receive

Additional Resources:

- [Feedback without Criticism Resource](#) - a longer document from Miki Kashtan
- [Feedback worksheets](#)
- [Empathy during Feedback Giving](#)