

To: Professor Ellis
Form: Pamela Drake
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Module Purpose:

The purpose of this module is to help middle-managers give critical feedback to upper management by following a process of steps that will eliminate the fear giving criticism.

Case Study – A middle-manager has justifiable concerns with the decisions of his boss.

The manager feels that his boss is lacking in support for him and his staff and criticizes his boss in front of his peers. He puts his co-workers in the middle of his own personal conflicts with his boss and this makes them feel uncomfortable and unwilling to talk to him. How should the manager critically express his concerns without including his peers or creating a rift between himself and his boss? Should the manager ask his boss for a one-to-one meeting to discuss his concerns? Should the manager confront his boss in front of his peers or HR? Determining how to effectively offer criticism without seeming disloyal is the dilemma.

Roger is middle-manager of a department that is understaffed and overworked. Previously, Roger has asked his boss to provide more staff or restructure the work but has not received any feedback of support. Roger notices that his peers from other departments are sufficiently staffed and given a lot of support. This makes Roger feel that there is a bias situation and he is critical of Mark, his boss. Roger feels he must voice his concerns but is afraid of criticizing his boss to his face. Therefore, Roger is talking about his boss to his peers. Roger notices that his peers are avoiding him and feeling uncomfortable around him.

Roger has a right to request a change in his boss' behavior as it hurts and upsets him. Remember that requesting change does not mean that his boss will change. If Roger suppresses his resentment, it could cause further problems with the relationship. Giving direct feedback to others about their behavior can be both loving and helpful. This feedback can be negative or positive. It shows you value the other person and your relationship with them.

Choice A

Roger has spoken to his peers and expressed how he is feeling about his boss. Roger is afraid to talk to his boss and express constructive criticism. Roger's boss is also their boss and he has not showed any interest in Roger or the department he oversees. Roger's peers have started to avoid him and tension is building. What does Rogers silence towards his boss mean? Can Rogers silence be misinterpreted by his boss that all is well within the office?

Choice B

Roger bypasses his boss and goes to HR to report his boss. He wants to have a meeting with a mediator involved and decides that HR will handle the situation. HR has reported the complaint to Roger's boss and he is not happy with Roger. Is this fair to his boss? Is Roger's action fair and reasonable? Was Roger accusatory?

Choice C

Roger requested a meeting with his boss in writing and has expressed his feeling to his boss. To do so, Roger first went to his boss to ask for a meeting. His boss wanted to know what the meeting was going to be about. Roger told him the meeting would be a project status meeting. His boss agreed to meet with him at a scheduled time. Roger has planned what to say in advance and is prepared for the meeting. What might Roger's boss be thinking? What might Roger's peers be thinking? If things don't change, what would it take to have a positive outcome? Requesting change doesn't mean that Rogers boss will change.