CRITIQUING PROGRESS

Adapted from Direct Skills Teaching- Coaching the Client, Cohen M., Danley, K., Nemec, P.

Critiquing progress is leading a learner (student, patient, supervisee, or colleague) through an assessment of his/her performance and future learning needs. It provides an excellent format to involve the learner in self-reflection and learning. It empowers the learner by encouraging him/her to actively participate in the learning process.

It can be done whenever a new skill or activity is taught or attempted. It is a useful learning process in any relationships where learning takes place: supervisor/supervisee, teacher/student, therapist/patient, mentor/mentee, etc.

Critiquing is best done interactively with both the coach and learner assessing performance and suggesting future learning needs. This process involves asking questions, listening, and giving constructive feedback. It focuses on three points:

- **Assessing strengths and weaknesses in performance**
- **Determining reasons for them**
- **Planning future learning activities**

The procedure begins with a brief, general, overall assessment of the learner's performance, which encourages him/her to openly share his/her feelings about how s/he did. The learner's overall self-assessment alerts the coach to the learner's "degree of self-awareness" about how well s/he performed.

The procedure invites the learner to be the first to assess. The coach then presents his/her perspective to add to the learner's critique. In essence, the coach leads the learner through a self-critique and then only shares his/her perspective if or when needed.

Sometimes it is necessary for the coach to share his/her perspective before requesting a self-critique from the learner. Usually this is done when a learner is consistently inaccurate or unwilling to share his/her thoughts first.

The following page suggests a step-by step procedure for critiquing. It emphasizes asking the learner to share first, and the coach adding additional information only as needed.

PROCEDURE FOR CRITIQUING PROGRESS:

1. **SHARE IMMEDIATE OVERALL REACTIONS**
   a. **Ask the LEARNER:** Ask the learner to give an overall (general) self-assessment of his/her own performance, including the positive or negative emotions.
   Example: Overall, how do you feel you did _____ (the activity, exercise, assignment)?

   b. **COACH:** Describe your overall (general) assessment and feeling about the learner's performance if positive or generally consistent with the learner's assessment.

2. **ASSESS SPECIFIC STRENGTHS/DEFICITS**
   a. **Ask the LEARNER:** Ask the learner to describe the strengths and deficiencies in his/her performance.
   Example: What specifically do you think you did well? What do you think you didn't do as well?

   b. **COACH:** Describe the specific strengths and deficiencies in the learner's performance. Begin with those that are similar to the learner's perspectives and, if needed, conclude with those that are different in perspective.

3. **ANALYZE SPECIFIC REASONS**
   a. **Ask the LEARNER:** Encourage the learner to suggest specific reasons for his/her strengths and deficiencies in performance.
   Example: What specifically helped you do _____ well? Why was _____ difficult for you?

   b. **COACH:** Suggest additional reasons for the learner's strengths and deficiencies.

4. **PLAN STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**
   a. **Ask the LEARNER:** Ask the learner to suggest how to improve performance.
   Example: What specifically might you do next time to improve how you _____?

   b. **COACH:** Offer additional suggestions of how the learner can improve performance.

5. **SHARE ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS**
   a. **Ask the LEARNER:** Invite the learner to discuss any performance issues not previously discussed.
   Example: Is there anything else we should discuss to help you to _____?

   b. **Ask the LEARNER:** Encourage the learner to describe his/her overall feelings about the critique.
   Example: Overall, how do you feel about this learning experience?

   c. **COACH:** Summarize your overall feelings about the learning experience.