ND-Friendly Feedback Framework

A script-based guide for safe delivery and receipt of feedback

By Neal Glendenning

Contact: info@theneuroinclusionproject.co.uk

Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

Purpose

To deliver and receive feedback in a way that:

- reduces threat and defensiveness
- preserves dignity and psychological safety
- improves clarity and follow-through
- supports neurodivergent and neurotypical staff equally

This framework separates **information** from **emotion** and **decisions** from **identity**.

When to use

- Performance feedback (formal or informal)
- Development conversations
- Course-correction after mistakes
- Peer feedback
- Post-project reviews
- Early intervention before issues escalate

Core principles (non-negotiable)

1. **Safety before substance**
2. **Specifics before interpretation**
3. **One focus at a time**
4. **Processing time is protected**
5. **Feedback is about work, not worth**

Part A. Delivering Feedback (Manager / Leader)

Step 1: Safety framing (say this first)

Purpose: reduce threat so information can land.

Script options

- "This is feedback about the work, not you."
- "You're not in trouble."
- "The goal here is clarity and support, not criticism."

Do not skip this step.

Step 2: Name the scope

Purpose: prevent overwhelm and scope creep.

Script

- "I'm going to focus on **one specific thing** today."
- "This will take about **10 minutes**."

Step 3: State observable facts (no interpretation)

Purpose: keep feedback concrete and fair.

Script

- "In the last report, sections 2 and 3 were submitted after the deadline."
- "In yesterday's meeting, the decision point wasn't documented."

Avoid

- "You always…"
- "It felt careless…"
- "Your attitude…"

Step 4: Explain impact (briefly)

Purpose: connect behaviour to outcomes without blame.

Script

- "This meant the team couldn't review in time."
- "It created confusion about next steps."

Step 5: State the expectation clearly

Purpose: remove ambiguity.

Script

- "Going forward, I need reports submitted by Friday 3pm."
- "Decisions need a written summary within 24 hours."

Avoid hints or implied standards.

Step 6: Invite context (optional, not interrogative)

Purpose: understand capacity or barriers without pressure.

Script

- "Is there anything that got in the way here?"
- "Do you need any adjustments to meet this?"

Do **not** demand explanations in the moment.

Step 7: Close with reassurance and next steps

Purpose: prevent post-feedback anxiety.

Script

- "I appreciate the strengths you bring here."
- "I'll summarise this in writing."
- "We'll review how this is going in two weeks."

Part B. Receiving Feedback (Staff / Peer)

Step 1: Ground the moment

If needed, say:

- "I need a moment to process."
- "Can we slow this down?"

Pausing is allowed.

Step 2: Clarify the facts

Script

- "Can you repeat the specific example?"
- "What part of the work is this about?"

This is not defensiveness… it's accuracy.

Step 3: Separate meaning from feeling

Internally note:

- *What was said (information)*
- *How it landed (emotion)*

You don't need to resolve both at once.

Step 4: Ask for expectations in plain language

Script

- "What does 'good' look like here?"
- "By when and in what format?"

Step 5: Protect processing time

Script

- "I'll reflect on this and follow up."
- "Can I respond tomorrow?"

Immediate responses are not required.

Part C. After the Conversation (Both Sides)

Written follow-up (essential)

Send a brief summary:

- What was discussed
- What's expected
- Any adjustments agreed
- Review date

This reduces rumination and misunderstanding.

What to avoid (common failure modes)

- Feedback delivered in public or via Slack
- Sandwiching criticism between vague praise
- Emotional tone without specifics
- Multiple issues at once
- Surprise feedback with no warning
- Treating silence as agreement

Signals it's working

You'll see:

- less defensiveness
- clearer action steps
- fewer follow-up corrections
- reduced anxiety after feedback
- earlier course-correction
- stronger trust over time

One-Page Script (Copy-Ready)

Safety:

"This is about the work, not you. You're not in trouble."

Scope:

"I'm focusing on one specific point."

Fact:

"Here's what I observed…"

Impact:

"This resulted in…"

Expectation:

"Going forward, I need…"

Support:

"Do you need anything to make this easier?"

Close:

"I'll summarise this in writing. We'll check in on **date**."

Leadership framing (optional)

"We use this feedback framework to ensure clarity, fairness, and psychological safety. It improves performance by reducing threat and increasing accuracy."

Bottom line

ND-friendly feedback isn't softer feedback.
It's **clearer, calmer, and more effective**.

When people feel safe, they can hear the message.
When the message is clear, change can actually happen.