Chapter 3
Delivering Performance Feedback

As supervisors, we have an incredible opportunity to not only influence our supervisees' professional development but also the clients that they serve. The quality of the behavior program a client receives is a direct result of the quality of the training and supervision we provide to our supervisee (DiGennaro Reed & Henley, 2015). Implementation of an intervention with poor fidelity diminishes the client's positive outcomes (Carroll et al., 2013; Pence & St Peter, 2015; Wilder et al., 2006). It is our responsibility as supervisors to proactively prepare supervisees to implement interventions with fidelity and immediately intervene when we observe supervisees implementing an intervention with poor fidelity.

Preparing a supervisee to implement an effective behavior program is complex and involves a number of instructional and supervisory approaches. The Behavior Analysis Certification Board (BACB, 2022) Supervisor Training Curriculum specifies a number of behaviors that supervisors should engage in to prepare their supervisees. These include setting performance expectations, delivering clear instructions, modeling desired behavior, rehearsing or role-playing, and delivering feedback. Among the many instructional approaches you use, the delivery of performance feedback may be one of the most valuable. Verbal and written instructions alone simply do not change performance (Fixsen et al., 2005). Performance feedback is critical in preparing supervisees to become competent behavior analysts (Carroll et al., 2022; DiGennaro Reed & Henley, 2015).

Many studies have demonstrated that performance feedback can improve the fidelity with which a variety of service providers implement skill acquisition and behavior reduction interventions (Codding et al., 2005; Coogle et al., 2018; Leblanc et al., 2005; Pantermuehl & Lechago, 2015). The BACB (2022) Supervisor Training Curriculum states that supervisors must deliver timely and effective feedback to supervisees. Moreover, the BACB (2020) Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts describes performance monitoring and feedback as one of several responsibilities supervisors have to supervisees. Despite the clear value of performance feedback, employers rarely prepare supervisors on how to effectively deliver performance

feedback (DiGennaro Reed & Henley, 2015). In a survey of supervisor practices, Sellers et al. (2019) found that while supervisors reported frequently providing performance feedback, there was much room for growth in this particular skill. In fact, they identified the top five supervision areas in need of improvement. Among those included two improvements related to the delivery of performance feedback: setting clear expectations for receiving feedback and using competency-based evaluations and tracking outcomes.

Daniels and Bailey (2014) define performance feedback as "information about performance that allows a person to change his/her behavior" (p. 157). Performance feedback is typically delivered for the purpose of improving the fidelity of implementation of an intervention (Solomon et al., 2012). Performance feedback can serve many functions. The praise delivered in feedback may function as a reinforcer, and the corrective feedback may punish a behavior. Additionally, performance feedback can serve as a prompt for a specific response in the next implementation of the intervention or function as a rule that governs behavior (Mangiapanello & Hemmes, 2015). Every chapter within this book will instruct you to deliver performance feedback to your supervisees. In this chapter, we review what constitutes performance feedback, best practices in implementing performance feedback, and provide you with some additional tools to provide performance feedback with ease.

Performance feedback most often occurs after the supervisor has directly observed the supervisee implementing a behavior analytic approach. It includes the following components (BACB, 2022; Carroll et al., 2022; Parsons & Reid, 1995; Reid et al., 2012; Shuler & Carroll, 2019):

1. Review performance data
2. Praise correct responses
3. Correct errors using empathy statements
4. Provide a rationale for changing incorrect performance
5. Provide instruction on how to correct performance
6. Model or demonstrate correct performance
7. Provide an opportunity for your supervisee to role-play correct performance
8. Provide an opportunity for your supervisee to ask questions

We frequently envision performance feedback as a conversation between a supervisor and supervisee. However, research supports a variety of formats of performance feedback. In this book, a great deal of performance feedback will be delivered in one-on-one fashion; however, performance feedback may also be delivered in a group setting (Solomon et al., 2012). Similarly, performance feedback can be delivered in writing or verbally. We do encourage you to deliver as much feedback as possible verbally because this facilitates many of the crucial steps in the performance feedback process (e.g., model, role-play, questions); however, when needed, written performance feedback can be an effective tool (Barton et al., 2016; Sleiman et al., 2020). Additionally, a supervisor can use videoconference technology to deliver effective performance feedback (Akers et al., 2022).

Effective Performance Feedback

There are several guidelines to follow to get the most from performance feedback (Scheeler et al., 2004; Sleiman et al., 2020; Solomon et al., 2012). First, feedback is most effective when it is objective and competency-based. For example, rather than reporting to your supervisee, "*your session was negative and uninviting,*" record the frequency of praise and correction statements they made toward their client and discuss how to improve this ratio. To ensure your performance feedback is objective and competency-based, use procedural fidelity checklists that contain observable behaviors to monitor. We have provided several throughout this book to facilitate this process that is specific to an assessment or intervention methodology. We have also included a *Supervision Observation Procedural Fidelity Checklist* that is meant to provide feedback about general expectations of supervisees working with clients (e.g., be on time, prepare materials prior to the start of the session) in Appendix A. You can use this checklist at any time throughout supervision to supplement the methodology-specific feedback. Moreover, consider graphing procedural fidelity across time to objectively report to your supervisee how their performance is continuing to improve.

Second, performance feedback should be specific. Rather than telling a supervisee, "*you did a good job,*" specify exactly what behaviors were correct: "*You immediately corrected your client's error exactly as we had discussed. Great job!*" Corrective feedback must also be specific. It is not enough to tell a supervisee they made an error in implementing an intervention, but rather specify exactly what needs to be corrected. For example, rather than, "*You did not provide the consequence correctly during the functional analysis*," a supervisor should say, "*the protocol states that you should deliver the preferred tangible for 30 seconds contingent upon challenging behavior, but I recorded that you provided it for only 15 second*s."

Third, performance feedback should be positive. All of us have experienced a situation in which we wanted to avoid a superior, whether it be your parent, teacher, coach, or boss because we quickly learned that any feedback that superior delivered would consist only of corrective feedback. As a supervisor, it is critical that you avoid this mistake because doing so will cause your supervisee to engage in supervisor-avoidant behavior. Our ultimate goal is that supervisees seek us out for feedback. The only way this will happen is to ensure we deliver a sufficient amount of praise and positive feedback so that the experience of receiving feedback is not aversive.

Fourth, supervisor should always deliver a rationale for changing an error in performance. Informing your supervisee of their mistakes can certainly feel awkward for the both of you. Most people do not like to hear an account of their shortcomings. However, errors must be identified so that they can be corrected. You can make this process more pleasant by providing a rationale for correcting errors. For example, avoid simply noting, "*Your reports contain too much technical language. You need to revise to parent-friendly language*." Instead, when correcting the error, justify why this must be corrected like this, "*Your reports contain a lot of technical language. I am concerned that [client's] parents will not be able to understand the report. You have created such an effective behavior reduction program; I really think his parents would enjoy implementing this at home. If we use more parent-friendly language and less technical language, it will be much easier for them to follow the protocol correctly. This will have great benefit for the parents and [client]. Moreover, we communicate respect for our clients and their caregivers when we take the time to ensure they can read and comprehend our reports*." As you can see from these examples, the rationale helps point out that there is a reason we correct errors and may motivate your supervisees to correct them immediately.

Fifth, to guarantee that supervisees will find performance feedback a positive experience to be sought out rather than avoided, tailor the delivery of performance feedback to your supervisee's preferences. We encourage you to conduct the *Performance Feedback Preferences Survey* (Appendix B) at the onset of supervision and again at regular intervals throughout the supervisory relationship. It is important that you make an effort to deliver feedback in a way that aligns with your supervisee's preferences; however, be clear to your supervisee that not all preferences can be honored. For example, a supervisee who finds performance feedback highly aversive may want to avoid it all together, but this is simply not possible.

Sixth, set clear expectations of how your supervisees should receive and respond to feedback. It is our experience that many supervisors and supervisees are simply unaware that they have differing assumptions about how feedback should be received and how the supervisee should respond. We suggest having a transparent conversation at the onset of supervision and planning to revisit this conversation at regular intervals. Within this conversation, make clear to your supervisee that performance feedback will identify both correct and incorrect behaviors. Be sure that your supervisee knows that they should solicit clarification when it is needed. Moreover, the two of you should discuss the timeline for correcting identified errors. For example, if you give your supervisee feedback that requires them to prepare new materials for a session, should those materials be prepared the following day? Or the following week? Any other expectations you have of your supervisee regarding how they should respond to feedback should be included in this conversation.

Finally, performance feedback is most effective when combined with other procedures. We encourage you to incorporate a number of antecedent interventions such a goal setting and prompting into your supervision in addition to performance feedback. You should also consider consequence interventions such as rewards for meeting a performance criterion. DiGennaro Reed and Henley (2015) offer excellent advice for incorporating rewards. These include first obtaining your supervisees' input on specific reward to ensure they are in fact preferred and rewarding (Wilder et al., 2011). Appendix C, *Performance Reward Survey*, provides you with a sample preference survey. Before using this survey, edit it so that only rewards that you can feasibly offer are presented. Second, create a sufficient list of low- or no-cost rewards such as use of a preferred parking spot and extended lunch break. And finally, reserve these rewards to be delivered only contingent upon the desired outcome.

Self-monitoring and self-evaluation are also excellent additions to performance feedback. Supervisees can select specific behaviors to monitor and do this both when practicing alone or when being observed. In fact, if your supervisee regularly self-monitors, you can occasionally observe their session collecting the same data that they are self-monitoring for the purposes of evaluating interobserver agreement (IOA). Self-monitoring can be helpful even if informal. In fact, one of our personal favorite techniques is to begin a performance feedback conversation by asking your supervisee, "*What are three things you did well and one thing that you would like to improve in the next session*?" This initial question serves many purposes. It encourages supervisees to self-monitor and self-evaluate, sets a positive tone for identifying and praising correct behaviors, and allows supervisees to recognize when they need to correct a mistake, which is typically more palatable than a supervisor calling out an error. We also find that this practice is very useful for supervisees suffering from imposter syndrome, low confidence, or difficultly promoting one's own strengths.

When and How Often

When planning to deliver performance feedback, a supervisor must determine when to deliver the feedback and how often to deliver feedback. The immediacy of performance feedback can range from delivering feedback immediately after the observation to delivering feedback days after the observation (Codding et al., 2005). A general rule of thumb is immediate is better. Immediate feedback is effective (Codding et al., 2005; Scheeler et al., 2004). Solomon et al. (2012) found that performance feedback delivered within the day of the observation was more effective than that delivered within a week of the observation.

The most obvious advantage of immediate feedback is that it prevents the supervisee from repeating observed errors before they are corrected. Additionally, if praise delivered within the context of performance feedback may serve as a reinforcer, a delay between the behavior and the delivery of that praise may weaken the response–reinforcer relation (Critchfield & Lattal, 1993; Sidman, 1960). However, there are caveats to be considered. Immediate feedback may disrupt ongoing client activities. For example, if you observed your supervisee conduct a preference assessment at 8:00 am, but they were scheduled to be with clients until 3:00 pm, there may be no choice but to delay feedback so that client sessions are not hindered. Similarly, supervisees who find performance feedback aversive or anxiety provoking may need time to think through feedback before returning to ongoing activities, making immediate feedback difficult to implement without disruption. Needless to say, performance feedback should be delivered as immediate as possible without losing the momentum of ongoing client activities (O'Reilly et al., 1994).

In order to deliver immediate performance feedback without the aforementioned drawbacks, we encourage you to consider the use of bug-in-ear devices that will allow you to deliver immediate praise and error correction without disruption. However, follow this with a complete set of performance feedback activities (e.g., rationale discussion, role-play). You may also consider using written feedback (e.g., written note or email) to deliver the most important praise and corrective feedback immediately and follow up with a scheduled meeting to complete the full performance feedback process.

As a supervisor, you not only need to plan for when to deliver performance feedback after an observation, but also how frequently to observe and deliver performance feedback. In this book, performance feedback is incorporated several times in each chapter. Other than feasibility, we can think of no drawbacks to frequent performance feedback. And as we stated earlier, if done well, supervisees will find this to be a preferred activity. Moreover, research indicates that performance feedback is more effective when it occurs more often rather than less often (Sleiman et al., 2020). Relatedly studies have shown that weekly performance feedback leads to increased fidelity of implementation and is also practical for supervisors (Mortenson & Witt, 1998).

Whether you are a novice or a seasoned supervisor, we know that performance feedback can be an intimidating task. At first, delivering performance feedback can feel awkward. This is particularly true if you or your supervisee currently associate performance feedback with feeling of being reprimanded. If you practice delivering feedback using this guidance, we are certain both you and your supervisees can begin to find performance feedback a rewarding experience for all.

Appendix A: Supervision Observation: Procedural Fidelity Checklist

Supervisee: ————————————————   Date: ————————————————

Supervisor: ————————————————   Client: ————————————————

Section One: General Observations

Instructions: 0 = Not completed 100% of the time. 1 = Completed some of the time. 2 = Completed 100% of the time. NA = not applicable.

Professionalism	Score	Notes
Begins session on time		
Ends session on time		
Treats client with dignity and respect.		
Environmental Arrangement		
Prepares materials and stimuli before the session begins		
Removes possible distractions		
Arranges physical environment to promote success		
Time Management		
Uses time effectively		
Paces time between activities appropriately		
Duration of blocks of teaching trials is appropriate to the child		
Instructional Practices		
Supervisee has established clear routines and procedures		
Provides client with choices when feasible		
Intersperses trials to prevent rote responses and boredom		
Ends instruction after a correct response		
Dimensions of reinforcement match behavior		
Varies reinforcement (social, tangible, etc.)		
Pairs non-social reinforcement with praise		
Use an effective schedule of reinforcement		
Changes reinforcer if not effective		

Section Two: Percent Opportunity

Instructions: When observing instruction, record if the supervisee performed each item correctly (+) or incorrectly (-) per teaching trial. After observing 10 opportunities, calculate the percent opportunity.

Instructional Trials	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Percent
Gains client's attention before delivering instruction											/	%
Proper instruction provided											/	%
Records data for each trial											/	%
Paces time between trials appropriately											/	%

Section Three: Momentary Time Sampling

Instructions: Operationally define engagement and indices of happiness for the client. Observe for 5 minutes. Use a 10-s momentary time sampling to record engagement and indices of happiness. Circle the "E" when the client engages in engaged behaviors and the "H" with client engages in indices of happiness.

Engagement Definition: _____

_____

Indices of Happiness: _____

_____

	0:10	0:20	0:30	0:40	0:50	0:60
0:00 – 1:00	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H
0:00 – 2:00	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H
0:00 – 3:00	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H
0:00 – 4:00	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H
0:00 – 5:00	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H	E H
Percent of Intervals with Engagement						
Percent of Intervals with Indices of Happiness						

Section Four: Frequency

Instructions: Observe for 10 minutes. During this time, record the number of praise statements and corrective statements your supervisees makes toward the client. Categorize them as specific praise (e.g., "yes, this is a cat") or general ("good").

Praise		Correction	
General Praise	**Specific Praise**	**General Correction**	**Specific Correction**
Total:	Total:	Total:	Total:
Ratio of Praise to Correction			

Section Five: IOA Sample

Instructions: Collect data with therapist on at least one target. Calculate IOA with the following formula: *total # of agreements/(total # of agreements + total # of disagreements) * 100.*

IOA Score: _____

Summary of Observation:

Skills to maintain:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Skills to improve:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B: Performance Feedback Preference Survey

Supervisee: _____   Date: _____

Instructions: Check the response option that best fits your agreement with each statement. Respond to the final prompt.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy receiving feedback.	O	O	O	O	O
I am apprehensive about receiving feedback	O	O	O	O	O
I dread receiving feedback.	O	O	O	O	O
I benefit from verbal discussion of feedback.	O	O	O	O	O
I benefit from written feedback.	O	O	O	O	O
I respond well to individual, rather than group feedback.	O	O	O	O	O
I respond well to feedback delivered in a group.	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer to receive feedback as immediately as possible.	O	O	O	O	O
I feel comfortable with my supervisor correcting my errors during the observation.	O	O	O	O	O
After I receive feedback, I need time alone to think about it before I am ready to ask questions or discuss ways to improve.	O	O	O	O	O
I feel comfortable asking my supervisor questions.	O	O	O	O	O
I feel comfortable role playing with my supervisor.	O	O	O	O	O
It is important for me to understand why my supervisee makes a recommendation.	O	O	O	O	O
I respond well to anecdotal feedback.	O	O	O	O	O
I respond well to quantifiable feedback.	O	O	O	O	O

My supervisor should know the following about me, as it relates to receiving performance feedback:

_____

_____

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_____

Appendix C: Performance Reward Preference Survey

Supervisee: _____   Date: _____

Instructions: Your supervisor would like to reward you for meeting performance criteria throughout your supervision process. Please check the circle that most closely describes your preference for potential rewards. Provide additional suggestions below.

	Highly Preferred	Preferred	Not Preferred	Aversive
Public recognition at group supervision meeting	O	O	O	O
Public recognition via group email	O	O	O	O
Public recognition on agency website	O	O	O	O
Extended lunch break	O	O	O	O
Sweet treats (e.g., cookie, candy bar)	O	O	O	O
Savory treats (e.g., chips, popcorn)	O	O	O	O
One-hour work break (e.g., come late, leave early)	O	O	O	O
Preferential parking spot	O	O	O	O
Handwritten note	O	O	O	O
Restaurant gift cards	O	O	O	O
Favorite drink	O	O	O	O
Financial support for professional development (e.g., conference travel)	O	O	O	O
Work-from-home "pass"	O	O	O	O
Catered lunch	O	O	O	O
New office supplies	O	O	O	O
Salon or spa gift card	O	O	O	O
Store gift cards	O	O	O	O

Additional suggestions for rewards:

_____

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