

Wheel of Well-being

Giving & receiving compliments



Giving compliments

Giving compliments to others such as peers, work colleagues and family is a good way to enhance your relationships with them as well as experience your own positive feelings. People often shy away from giving compliments as people can often feel suspicious (“what are you after?”) or embarrassed.

Here are a few simple tips on giving compliments which can make it a more useful and pleasant experience:

1 - be spontaneous

It is best to give a compliment spontaneously rather than retrospectively. If it looks too planned, the other person is more likely to feel you are buttering them up as you want something.

2 - be specific

Rather than saying “that was a wonderful speech”, it is much better to point out what you liked about the speech and compliment the person on that. Eg “I really liked the way you used humour to make a serious point.” Specific compliments of this kind are useful for people as it gives them information on what they are currently doing well. Being specific also means that the compliment is likely to sound sincere.

3 - keep it short

It is common for people to feel slightly embarrassed by over-the-top compliments. Eg “you are such a wonderful or brilliant person” It is much easier to accept and welcome a compliment if it is measured and specific.

Receiving compliments

Giving compliments is a good way to boost relationships and experience positive emotions.

However, people are often embarrassed by receiving compliments and don’t accept them graciously.

Here are some tips that might help to receive compliments:

1 - say thanks

Even if you don’t agree with the person, don’t contradict them as it is then a put-down for the person. eg if someone says, “what a nice garden you have,” and you reply, “it’s just a mess and full of weeds”, you’re contradicting them and undermining the positive intent in their remark.

2 - agree with a compliment

Often, we say something contradictory or deflect the compliment because we are embarrassed and don’t know what to say. In that case, agree with the compliment by saying “thanks” and “I really was pleased with how it turned out”, or something similar.

3 - don’t feel obliged to compliment back

If you feel you want to return a compliment, it is best to wait and do it on another occasion as it will then seem more sincere.

