7.   Feedback traps

- **Personal feelings / friendships**

Don't let personal feelings cloud the delivery of feedback. It is important to stay neutral and consistent when giving feedback.

- **Procrastination**

Don't put off giving feedback for a 'better time'. Feedback is most relevant and effective when it is given in a timely fashion. This is particularly so when negative feedback is required as it gives the feedback recipient the opportunity to instigate any changes required.

- **Watering down the message**

If the feedback recipient becomes distressed it is tempting to water-down the message or fail to convey the message entirely. This is not helpful to either the feedback provider or feedback recipient.

- **Overloading**

If there are several issues to be addressed, rather than overloading the feedback recipient with feedback on all of them, select 2-3 that are the most important. It is much easier for the recipient to successfully address a few identified areas for change than being faced with a dishearteningly long list.

- **Using unclear or insensitive words**

Avoid using labels to describe behavior. Words such as "unprofessional" or "irresponsible" are ambiguous and unclear and do little to help the feedback recipient understand what you are looking for. Try to eliminate extreme words such as "always" or "never". These words often trigger a defensive reaction. Avoid words that convey value judgments or personal attacks such as "good," "bad," "stupid," or "incompetent." These words reflect an interpersonal style that undermines the value of the feedback.

Weblinks to resources for information about giving negative feedback, dealing with difficult feedback situations and feedback traps:

Challenge Consulting
http://www.challengeconsulting.com.au/announcements/ten-smart-rules-for-giving-negative-feedback
Edgecumbe Health
http://www.edgecumbehealth.co.uk/library/publications/dealing-with-difficult-doctors/
Fair Work Australia
http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-guides/best-practice-guides/managing-underperformance
Handling Common Emotional Reactions
https://aglearn.usda.gov/customcontent/NRCS/NRCS-NEDC-000261/common/Job%20Aid_Handling%20Common%20Emotional%20Reactions_06.07.09.pdf
James Cook University
http://www.jcu.edu.au/wiledpack/modules/feedback/JCU_090545.html
SA Government
http://www.skills.sa.gov.au/DesktopModules/SearchBoost/DownloadDoc.ashx?filepid=6&file=/dmx/2015/06/file_20150630_154751_vrzegf_0.resources
The Commonwealth Institute
http://commonwealthinstitute.org/2010/07/three-keys-to-reducing-defensive-reactions-to-performance-feedback/
Tips for Giving Effective Feedback
http://www.evancarmichael.com/Business-Coach/2628/10-Tips-for-Giving-Effective-Feedback.html