

6 Evaluate, check, review and update

All the way through this guide, you have been asked to specify review dates and have been encouraged to make comments and be prepared to change. As this is an ongoing process, it is vital that you complete the learning cycle by evaluating, checking your perceptions, reviewing and updating your original objectives and amending action plans.

Progress checklist

It will have taken you some time to have worked your way through to this section, so you will have some idea of how your development is progressing. It is time to evaluate and review your progress so far:

- Have you set review dates?
- Have you transferred them to your diary?
- Have you evaluated the effectiveness of your objectives and plans?
- Have you reviewed them in the light of that evaluation?
- Have you changed anything?
- Has that made a difference to the way they are working out?

- Have you checked any of your perceptions with someone else?
- Have you updated any objectives, or set new ones yet?

If you answered **yes** to all the questions above, you are doing extremely well! If you answered **no** to all of them, you need to evaluate and review your commitment to the process, your methods or your time management skills.

Evaluate and review your progress

Setting objectives and just hoping that they will achieve themselves is not enough. Neither is thinking that you have ‘more or less’ kept to your plans. You have to track your performance and check that you are achieving objectives. If you are not, then you need to review them, think again about whether they are realistic or achievable, and update them.

If you are, then you can start on new challenges, with new objectives and with a success behind you.

When you have gone through all the lists and plans you have made so far: logging, reviewing and writing in your comments, write down any comments that occur to you and make suggestions for improvement and change.

Remember to:

- Keep your actions for change clear, short and achievable
- Only attempt one change at a time
- Make sure you are targeting the right component: changing an action plan will make no difference if your objectives are not realistic
- Start with the objective and analyse that before you look at your action plan.

Be proactive: ask for help and support

It can be very difficult to maintain motivation in isolation – particularly when things go wrong. It helps if you have made an arrangement – a contract with someone else who will support, encourage, make suggestions and remind you of your commitment. Make a formal appointment with that person to review progress at one, two or three month intervals. Make sure you both put them in your diaries and **keep the appointment**.

You also need a ‘reality check’ for your objectives and action plans. This is another good reason for asking someone to help.

What do other people think of you?

The reality check is vital in any review. You need to check your assumptions about yourself and to open your mind to the possibility of learning from their observations.

Everyone has a ‘blind spot’ about themselves, however self-aware they are, which often means that they don’t see their strengths as well as their weaknesses. Talking your thoughts through with someone else may give you insights into your own personality and abilities, because you will be talking about yourself in an objective way. You have to ask for observations about yourself – other people don’t often tell you the good things about yourself!

Giving feedback

If you are in the position of giving the feedback, these notes will be useful. Your task is to listen carefully and help the other person to talk through issues and clarify objectives and plans. You will also be helping them to examine their motives for choosing a particular course of action in the first place.

All that is fairly straightforward. The difficult part is when you have to be honest – and constructive – by giving them feedback on the negative aspects of themselves. You may have to point out that their objectives are too ambitious for the time being, or to alert them to a negative ‘blind spot’.

Giving constructive feedback: dos and don'ts

DO:

- Be clear about what you want to say
- Start with ‘I’ when giving your judgement
- Start with a positive statement, then move on to the negative
- Be specific about the behaviour
- Offer alternatives
- Be descriptive

DON'T:

- Waffle round the point
- Offer it as a universal opinion
- Negate or devalue the whole person
- Give general comments
- Leave the person with absolutely no idea of how to change their behaviour
- Judge

Summary

This section has been a reminder to evaluate and review your progress. You then have to act on your evaluation and update your plans.

Evaluating without acting on the information is like looking to the left and right, before stepping into the road in front of a car.

It is also important to ‘reality check’ your objectives and plans with another person. Even if they are not telling you anything new, talking things over can help you to put them in perspective.

Above all, don’t give up at the first hurdle. The first review is always the worst.