

THE NANNY SOLUTION

HOW TO GIVE & RECEIVE FEEDBACK WITH YOUR FAMILY

PERSONALIZED CHILDCARE SOLUTIONS TO FIT YOUR LIFESTYLE

INTRODUCTION

Dear Nannies,

In any workplace, there will be things that you value and appreciate, and there will be things that could be improved upon or you wish were done differently. Many workplaces schedule regular performance reviews, which provide an opportunity for both the employer and the employee to reflect, give and receive constructive feedback, and problem-solve together. In a Nanny placement, the family is your employer and it is important to have ongoing communication with them about expectations, areas of improvement, any challenges that may arise, and what can be done to address those challenges.

Ideally, right from the beginning, the family will agree to have regularly scheduled meetings where you can discuss these topics without the child(ren) present. However, this is not always the case or, as everyone's lives get busy and other things take priority, these meetings don't occur regularly enough or are forgotten altogether. To help address this issue, we have put together some tips for requesting a feedback session with your family, along with how to give and receive feedback in an effective, professional manner.

The Nanny Solution Team

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REQUESTING A FEEDBACK SESSION

If you're able to ask to schedule a formal conversation in-person, that's great. If you're unable to ask them directly, sending an email requesting a meeting is also an acceptable means of communication, provided it is written professionally and sets the right tone for the conversation. Below, you will find some tips for requesting a feedback session, whether it's done verbally or through email.

REFLECT ON YOUR PURPOSE AND INTENTIONS

Why do you think it is necessary to have the conversation? What are you hoping to get out of it? There are right and wrong reasons to want to give feedback. For example, you could want to enhance or support the working relationship. You feel a sense of responsibility and commitment to the family. You are genuinely concerned about the safety and wellbeing of the child(ren) and/or family. Or you could be coming from a place of defensiveness and are wanting the opportunity to defend or excuse your actions. Or perhaps you want to condemn the parents for their actions. Maybe you're just feeling frustrated and overwhelmed with the child(ren)'s behaviour. It is important to reflect on your intentions beforehand, so you can have a clear idea of what the purpose is and what you're hoping to achieve by having the conversation.

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REQUESTING A FEEDBACK SESSION

ENSURE THE TIMING AND CIRCUMSTANCES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK ARE APPROPRIATE.

Feedback should be given in a timely manner. If something isn't sitting right with you, it's better to address it sooner, rather than wait for the frustration and resentment to build over time. Furthermore, it is easier for the recipient to recall specific behaviours or situations if you are able to provide recent examples. You also need to be mindful of the greater context in which the meeting is taking place. Is it a good time to be bringing up these issues? Who is going to be present and part of the conversation? What other external factors might affect the family's ability and willingness to engage in this discussion? We recommend finding a time where both parents can be present (if it's a two parent household), and the kids are absent or occupied.

SET THE TONE.

It is important to maintain a calm, composed, and professional tone when asking to have a meeting with your family, whether it's a verbal or written request. It is better to be assertive (but not aggressive) than passive or apologetic, in order to convey that you take the matter seriously and you expect the family to do the same. You also want to ensure that the family remains open, rather than going on the defensive; otherwise, the feedback session will not be constructive and it may put further strain on the working relationship. You can make the family feel more comfortable by reassuring them that it is a two-way conversation and you are hoping to work collaboratively with them to come up with ideas and solutions for how to move forward. As it is a two-way conversation, you must also be open and prepared to receive feedback from the family during the meeting.

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PROPOSE A COURSE OF ACTION.

Once you have expressed how you feel and let the family know that you wish to meet with them, be proactive in scheduling that meeting and ensuring that it actually happens. As the family's Nanny, you likely have a good idea of the parents' schedule and can propose some specific dates and times that the meeting could take place. Taking that step shows that you are serious about having a constructive conversation and interested in working cooperatively with the family; it also subtly conveys that you are not willing to have your feelings be dismissed. If you do not hear back from the family within a few days, you may want to follow up with them again as well.

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SAMPLE EMAIL

Sample email requesting a meeting with the family:

Hi _____ and _____,

It's hard to believe we've already been working together for eight weeks. Time certainly does fly!

When we first met, we agreed that we would schedule regular adult meetings, without the kids present, so that we could have a check-in and discuss how things are going. Now that we're at the eight-week mark, I think we should plan to have one of those meetings. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to have a conversation with the two of you, where we can reflect on the past two months, share any feedback we may have for each other, and come up with ideas for moving forward.

I understand that you are both busy with work and our schedules don't always align, so I would like to propose we meet on one of the following dates / times. Please let me know which date works best for you.

(potential dates and times for meeting)

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with your family so far, and I am looking forward to discussing ways to continue to support our working relationship in the months ahead!

All the best,

_____

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TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK



REMEMBER THE 3 C'S OF COMMUNICATION.

When presenting the family with the feedback, keep in mind the three Cs of effective communication: Clear, Concise, and Consistent. Identify the key messages you want to get across. Try to be direct and remain focused during the conversation -- it's okay to give a few specific examples, but try not to ramble on or go off-track. Finally, be consistent in what you're saying and avoid contradicting yourself. You may also want to revisit or repeat your key messages during the conversation, in order to highlight their importance.

CONVEY YOUR GOOD INTENTIONS.

It is important to remind the family (and yourself) that the purpose of the meeting is not to point fingers or shame and blame anyone; the purpose is to reflect, exchange constructive feedback, problem-solve together, and make a plan for moving forward. Ultimately, your intention is to enhance and support the working relationship and improve the situation for everyone involved.

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TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

MAKE THE CONVERSATION INTERACTIVE.

A feedback session is not the time to monologue. The conversation will not be productive if it only involves one person talking, while the others simply listen and don't have an opportunity to respond or share their perspective. You can encourage the family to participate in the conversation by asking them open-ended questions and inviting them to share their thoughts and observations as well. As we mentioned, this is a two-way conversation, the family will likely have feedback for you as well.

USE "I" STATEMENTS.

Another way to help the family remain open to hearing your feedback, as opposed to responding with defensiveness, is to use "I" statements. Saying "you did _____" or "you never _____" can result in the recipient of those statements feeling as if they are being blamed or shamed. Instead, try to only reference your own feelings about the situation. For example, you could phrase a statement as "I feel _____ when _____". "I feel undermined and embarrassed when I am criticized in front of the children" is far more effective than "you criticize me in front of the children" -- it communicates how you're affected by the behaviour, rather than simply pointing a finger at it.

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TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

FOCUS ON THE BEHAVIOURS, NOT THE PERSON.

Separating the behaviour or actions from the person is imperative in these conversations. By externalizing the problem, you're allowing the individual(s) to focus on what you're saying without feeling personally confronted or criticized. This, in turn, makes it easier to address the situation and helps avoid any hurt feelings or damaged relationships. Saying "I think the children are staying up too late and would benefit from a set bedtime" is less personal than saying "you're irresponsible parents and you let the children stay up as late as they want".

INCLUDE PRAISE AND POSITIVITY.

Chances are, it's not all bad, otherwise you would have already moved on, right? You can share with the family what you view as their strengths and inject compliments into the conversation, while still providing them with constructive criticism. The more you can frame the conversation positively, the more receptive the family will be to what you have to say. It is also important to highlight what is going well and what you appreciate about working with the family, so as to continue to foster and reinforce those aspects of the relationship.

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TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS AND STATE YOUR REQUESTS.

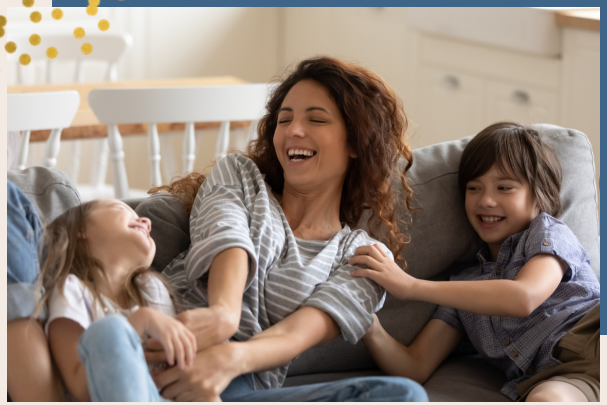
What do you need and value in a working relationship? How can you ensure that both your needs and the needs of the family are being met and your individual values are being respected? What changes need to be made and what concrete actions would you like to see happen? Make it clear what you are requesting from the family and try to do so without being demanding. For example, “I need my time to be valued. If you are going to be late coming home from work, I would like you to call or text me beforehand, so I am aware”.

DECIDE HOW TO PROCEED MOVING FORWARD.

Once both sides have had the opportunity to communicate how they’re feeling and state their needs and requests, it is time to work cooperatively to come up with a concrete plan for how to proceed moving forward. This may take time and involve some mutual brain-storming. It is crucial to come up with an agreed-upon plan of action before the end of the meeting; otherwise, there is a risk that nothing will actually change and things will simply revert back to how they were. We also recommend having a written agreement outlining what was decided on during the meeting, which both parties can then sign and have a copy of to refer back to.

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TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK



Examples of questions to ask when requesting feedback:

- Is there anything you'd like me to focus on more?
- How can I prioritize tasks to better suit the needs of your family?
- If you had to give 2 suggestions for how to improve my work, what would they be?
- How can we communicate more effectively, what is your preferred method of communication?
- Do you feel that I am managing my time effectively?
- Is there anything I can take off your to-do list (related to the children)?

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AFTER THE CONVERSATION

PROVIDE A SUMMARY.

Email the parents a summary of what was discussed in the meeting. Highlight any key points that were brought up, as well as any changes or courses of action you agreed on. End the email by thanking the family for their time and letting them know how much you appreciate being able to exchange feedback and communicate openly with them. This is a great opportunity to demonstrate your professionalism and commitment to the family!

FOLLOW THROUGH ON YOUR END.

If you expect the family to stick to the action plan, you must also follow through on your commitments. Here's an example: In the meeting, you discussed that you wanted to have more autonomy when looking after the children, rather than having the parents hovering and managing every detail of the day. The parents agreed that they trusted your decision-making abilities and would be willing to step back, provided you texted them with regular updates throughout the day. If you want the parents to hold up their end of the deal, you have to demonstrate that you are willing to hold up yours -- text them those updates and show them that they can take a step back!

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AFTER THE CONVERSATION

ENSURE THAT THE FAMILY IS IMPLEMENTING THE FEEDBACK.

Now that you're following through on what was agreed upon in the meeting, you need to hold the family accountable to do the same. Naturally, there may be a bit of an adjustment period as parents are learning to do things differently, and it's okay to give gentle reminders during this time. That being said, if time has passed and nothing has changed or the parents have reverted back to their original way of doing things, it may be time to have a more formal follow-up conversation.

FOLLOW-UP IF NEEDED.

As mentioned above, if you aren't noticing any changes or the parents aren't following through on the commitments they made in the initial meeting, it may be necessary to follow-up with them. This can be done in-person or through email, and you can refer back to the written summary outlining what both parties had discussed and agreed upon. Once again, it is important to be assertive, but not aggressive, in your use of language and tone.

SCHEDULE SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS.

Regardless of whether the feedback from the last meeting was implemented or not, it is important to have regular, ongoing conversations with the family to discuss how things are going and exchange constructive feedback. If the family did not follow through on what they had agreed to in the last meeting, it is important to bring those issues up first, explore why they weren't able or willing to implement the changes, and come up with a new way to approach the situation together. If things have improved since the last time you met, acknowledge that and give praise for the changes that have been made and what has been working well!

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