



Previous editions of this series have highlighted the critical role of personal responsibility. The quiet, solitary discipline required to build your body, sharpen your mind, and steel your attitude is something you must ultimately own. However, we don't scale the peaks of excellence in isolation. Whether the goal is learning a new skill or overcoming a weakness, leveraging the shared strengths and wisdom of those around us accelerates learning, promotes integrity, and cultivates a culture of excellence.

No matter how experienced you become, there will always be things you can't see about yourself or your performance. **That's why feedback matters.** It's how we identify our blind spots and close the gap between where we are and where we need to be. The stakes in our profession are too high to compromise on excellence, and feedback is the means we use to ensure that the highest standards are being met. It transforms good Airmen into great leaders, trained journeymen into masters of their craft, and decent teams into exceptional units.

As you work to become the best version of you, don't passively wait for the formal milestone of a scheduled evaluation or an initial counseling session. If your goal is mastery—and I sincerely hope it is—you must trust those around you enough to ask where you can improve and what it will take to reach the next level.

Supervisors, the greater responsibility belongs to you. Airman under your supervision should never have to guess where they stand or wonder if they meet the standard. Feedback isn't a sterile paper exercise, a recurring calendar notification, or a quarterly chore. It's active, engaged, and invested leadership that happens in-the-moment, when and where it's needed most.

**Too often we let uncomfortable conversations slide under the guise of compassion, but allowing substandard performance to pass unchallenged isn't kindness—it's surrender.** True compassion is direct, constructive leadership. It's caring enough about an Airman's character, career, and safety to tell them exactly where they stand and how they can improve. Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force #12, Eric Benken, said it best: *"If anyone asks an Airman when they last received feedback, they better say today."* Feedback isn't about satisfying a policy or a regulation, it's about meeting a critical need to develop every Airman, including ourselves.



Receiving feedback can be difficult. There's an old proverb that says, *"Before honor comes humility"*, and folks, it's TRUE! If you want to be better tomorrow than you are today, you must be humble. It isn't weakness, it's power. The power to learn, appreciate, teach, and see things from the perspectives of others. Actively listen, resist the urge to excuse mistakes or shortcomings, and take the time to digest what you hear with the understanding that you don't have to agree with feedback to learn from it. Your ability to gracefully receive feedback, even when it's unsolicited or incorrect, will not only make you a better Airman but will transform your relationships with the peers and supervisors who stand with you in the fight.

As you may have heard, the Air Force recently updated its feedback process. It was an intentional revision designed to reinforce something great leaders have always understood: conversations matter. The new form serves as a means to facilitate those conversations and emphasize the Air Force's interest in your individual progress. Ultimately, the aim is to cultivate a norm where honest feedback is a constant, standards are unyielding, and every Airman knows they are valued enough to be told the truth.

**Have those difficult conversations today, ask for feedback with humility, give it with absolute honesty, and receive it with grace. Excellence isn't an accident—it's the result of caring enough to tell each other the truth.**

DAVID R. WOLFE  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

# The Feedback Series

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