

## Straight Talk: A Peer Evaluation Model

The peer evaluation model of Straight Talk was developed by [Growing Green](#) an urban, organic agricultural training program that develops life-skills and provides meaningful work to low-income, at-risk youth in Buffalo, NY. The program includes a peer evaluation component that they've called 'Straight Talk'. Here are the basic principles of their Straight Talk model:

### **Straight Talk – Speaking It!**

- **Be kind:** Speak to others the way you hope they will speak to you.
- **Call it as you see it:** Think carefully about both strengths and areas for improvement, and tell the truth, even if it is hard.
- **Speak the details:** Describe moments and examples that illustrate your point. Do not generalize, because generalities are hard to believe.
- **Balance the scales:** People will find it easier to hear your message if you provide a balance of positive feedback and constructive criticism.
- **Pick and Choose:** Talk only about the essentials. Less can be more and can help people focus on one or two areas for improvement.
- **Read the listener:** Watch the person to whom you are speaking to carefully; talk to them as if in a personal conversation, not as if you are an angry teacher or policeman.

### **Straight Talk – Hearing It!**

- **Open up:** Remain open while receiving feedback. Notice if you begin getting defensive or stop listening.
- **Look up:** Make eye contact with the person when they are speaking to you. Without it, the speaker won't know if you're hearing the message.
- **Listen up:** Good listening takes practice. Stop your inner voice so that you can hear the other person's words. Don't allow yourself to get distracted.
- **Store it up:** People are telling you important information. Pay attention and remember what they said. When finished, think back on what you heard. Absorb it. Ask for clarification if you need it.
- **You decide:** You are the only person who can decide what feedback you want to act on. Be honest and courageous.

**Straight Talk Feedback Form:**

- Print out a copy of this form for each participant.
- Ask them to indicate something they liked about the program in the left hand column under the plus sign.
- Ask them to indicate something they would like to change next time in the right hand column under the delta sign.

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