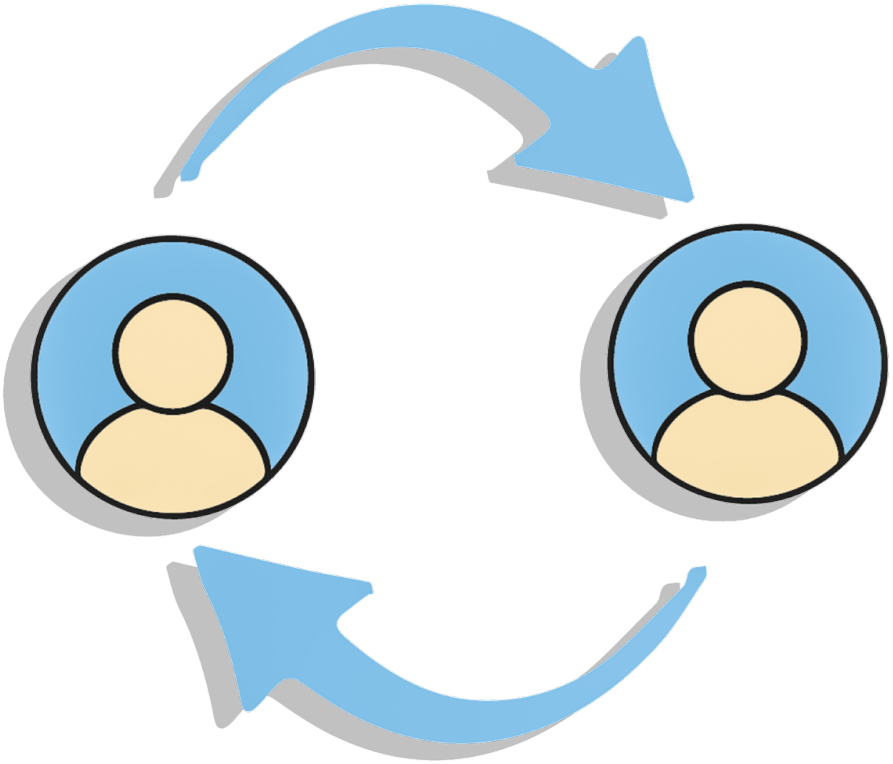
Short Feedback Loops



Short Feedback Loops (SFLs) are commonly mentioned within XR, and are referred to in the regenerative statement as part of developing cultures informed by our Principles and Values. SFLs are one way of enabling positive dialogue and good working relationships.

SFLs are interpersonal dialogues, they are called 'short' for two reasons: the aim is for the feedback to be given as soon as the person giving feedback is ready; in addition the process is to be directly between the people concerned.

SFLs may be useful when something has happened as part of our work in XR that makes us feel uncomfortable or has caused tension. This might include the way we don’t feel listened to or the way we feel someone hasn’t followed through with an agreed action.

Recognising the tensions is important and they can bring valuable learning for all. These tensions might be felt as a physical response, such as a clenching of the stomach; or an emotional response such as agitation or withdrawal. Sometimes we don’t recognise or give enough attention to these feelings especially when people are busy and focused on getting important tasks done.

We encourage ourselves to practice some self care and take responsibility for how we choose to address the feelings that arise e.g. taking a pause to get a sense of the scale of them; talk to a buddy to get a different perspective and some support; check in with yourself regarding your current capacity to self reflect and engage in tricky conversations.

Is a short feedback loop required?

Some things to consider are:

1. Sometimes after considering the tension, or talking with a buddy, we find it shifts on its own and we don't need a SFL conversation.
2. If we feel a further conversation is needed, is the tension best addressed directly with the person through a SFL?
3. Is the tension something that needs to be talked through with the group's Internal Coordinator? For example, it may be about clarity of roles or a group process. If it is, it may be better raised as part of a group tension shifting process.

What might a Short Feedback Loops process look like?

Thinking about having a short feedback loops conversation? Below is a suggested format.

What do we want to say? How could we address this in a way that focuses on connection rather than blaming?

There is an acronym (LASER) that can help you think through this. LASER can support us in the process of working with judgements and tensions that we may have about another person. The idea is to generate empathy and understanding for ourselves and the other person and prepare for a face-to -face conversation.

It is an exercise that can be done individually or with a trusted friendly listener.

Load: Giving time for unfiltered offloading of your judgements of the other person (which could include 'having a rant') to relieve yourself of the emotional load you are carrying.

Action: Describe, as if a neutral observer, what has happened with the other person that has created this load for you.

Self-Empathy: Explore how you feel about this person's actions. What is important to you? Are there needs of yours that aren't being met? Hold your difficult emotions with tenderness and care.

Empathy for other: Explore your empathy for the other person by trying to understand why they did what they did. What is important to them in this situation and what need might they be trying

to meet here? Are there any common values that you might share in this situation?

Reflect: Reflect on how you feel now. Has anything shifted in terms of your perception of the other person? Are there any requests you would like to make to them?

For more information see XRUK TC Transforming Enemy Images with LASER (Google doc).

Arranging the short feedback loop conversation

This may need some careful thought:

How to approach it ? Where? When?

Some suggestions:

- Once there has been time to self reflect (and possibly to try LASER) it’s good to have the conversation as soon as possible.
- Invite the other person to meet, saying we'd like to raise something that has been uncomfortable for us using short feedback loops.
- Share the understanding that SFL is an opportunity for learning, that our intention is for connection rather than blame and for us to understand each other better.

How to receive the request for a short feedback loop

Here are some tips on how to receive feedback adapted from Trust the People:

1. We can remember that we can take responsibility for our feelings and response. We can choose how to react in each situation.
2. We can try not to take the feedback personally. Assuming the best of the other person – they are sharing information so that we can improve at something or so that our relationship with them can improve.
3. Recognising that it is difficult to give feedback and the fact that someone is taking time to do so can show that they value us and feel comfortable enough in our presence to address the difficulty..
4. It can help if we make an effort to understand how something can be done differently – we might find it beneficial to get support with this.
5. It’s important to be honest – we can say if we feel like we have been misinterpreted but we can take care to do so sensitively.

6. If we are upset by some feedback, it’s important to take time to process it independently and think about why it is so upsetting. It might be that it’s related to a previous experience. We can do our best to sit with our feelings and, with kindness, spend some time working through them. Often it helps to get support with this.
7. We can learn to view feedback with a growth mindset. We can learn useful things about ourselves. We may start to welcome the feedback process as a way to improve our relationships with others.

Downloadable Tips on How to Give and Receive Feedback (Google doc).

The short feedback loop conversation format

Here is a possible structure for your conversation that you might find helpful as a starting point.

1. **Preparation:** start with sharing a gratitude for each other and your intentions for the conversation.
2. **Having the Conversation:** the person requesting the conversation - the Requester (R) speaks first and Co-participant (CP) listens using Active Listening.
3. **Response:** the Co-participant responds to the request, with Requester listening.
4. **Dialogue:** When both feel ready, begin a dialogue. Examples of what can be useful to explore-
   What do we need to do to keep our interactions positive going forward?
   Are there any actions that need to be taken or agreements made?
   Did anything arise that relates to a structural issue that needs to be taken to the circle?
5. **Completion:** clarify any agreements made and share an appreciation of each other.

R: Describes the specific moment(s) where they felt the tension, objectively and in detail, (imagine you were witnessing the situation from outside) using ‘I’ statements. Express what was difficult for you at that moment, how you felt and why it matters to you. Identify any needs or values Basic feelings and needs

CP: Reflects back what they heard was important to that person, checking that they have understood correctly. And asking for clarifications if something isn’t clear.

R: Responds to whatever needs clarifying and adds anything if needed.

CP: Continues to reflect back until R says they feel understood.

R: Thanks the other person for listening and makes any requests they have to the other person (would you be willing to….?) They then ask how the other person feels about that?

CP: Responds to request, giving thier point of view.

R: Reflects back what they have heard from the other person and checks for accuracy.

CP: Responds and when they feel they have also been heard, thank the Requester for listening.

R: May want to respond to what has been said in which case the Active Listening continues until both are ready to enter into dialogue.

R & CP: Discuss steps moving forward and conclude once satisfied.

NB: Checking in with yourself afterwards is important (for both requester and co-participant). Show appreciation to yourself for engaging in the process. How did you feel during the conversation? How do you feel now? The conversation may bring feelings to the surface so you might want to plan how to take care of yourself afterwards. What kind of support do you think you might need and how can you arrange it so it's available to you after the meeting?
