



The **POWER** of **FEEDBACK**

BY ANDY ARMSTRONG

Don't skimp on the positive feedback (it works wonders), but use meaningful feedback to get the best from your clients over and over during a session. It's one of the best tools in your bag.

Feedback is "a reaction or response to a particular process or activity." It's an important tool that aids in the direction of any photography session, but it is particularly useful in a portrait session. And generally speaking, there are two types of well-known feedback: Positive Feedback and Negative Feedback.

Positive feedback is feedback that conveys a positive reaction or response. Some examples of positive feedback are saying things like, "Wow," "Beautiful," or "Perfect." Positive feedback can really give your client's confidence a boost and make them feel great.

Negative feedback is feedback that conveys a negative reaction or response. Some examples of negative feedback are saying things like, "Whoa," "Not good," or "That makes you look fat." Negative feedback is dangerous and should be avoided. It's a confidence killer and will really hurt your portrait sessions.

Your body language and expression also provide feedback to your client. A smile or a laugh is positive feedback. A huff or silence is negative feedback.

Both positive and negative feedback have their own issues. While it's obvious that negative feedback can hurt a session, there are times we need to convey an issue to a client in order to correct a pose. And while positive feedback can boost a client's confidence, it doesn't really convey any useful information other than praise. In other words, when I say, "beautiful" to a client during a session, it offers praise but no information that will help the client or me get there again. That's why I suggest that we use what I like to call "Meaningful Feedback" to deliver both positive and negative feedback.

Meaningful feedback gives information to a client that allows her to not only feel good about the situation but also learn what made it good.

For example, if I say, "Wow, that smile is perfect," then a client gets the same boost in confidence that a "Wow" would have delivered, but she now knows exactly what my "Wow" was about, and she'll try to do it again in our next pose.

Meaningful feedback also allows you to deliver negative feedback in a way that is useful and doesn't assign blame to the client. For example, if I say, "If we slouch we're going to create issues that we don't want. If we sit up nice and tall and arch our backs, we'll show off that body." And while it deals with the exact same issue, it's much different than saying, "That makes you look fat."

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By the way, did you notice that when I offered negative meaningful feedback that the "problems" became "issues" and "you" became "we?" Deflection or avoiding blame assignment are equally important tools of delivering meaningful feedback, but it seems I've run out of space to discuss this here. Maybe next time. §

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