

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

MAY 2025

Prepared by
THE CREATIVE LEVEL

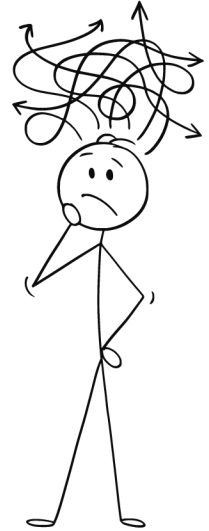
Prepared for
FILO 2025



WHY ARE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS SO DIFFICULT?

DEEPER WHYS

**Put a star next to the deeper whys that resonate with you.*



NOTES

DEFINITION

Feedback is _____ about reactions to a product, a person's performance of a task, etc., which is used as a basis for _____.

Things that can lead to...

DESTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

● _____ TRIGGERS

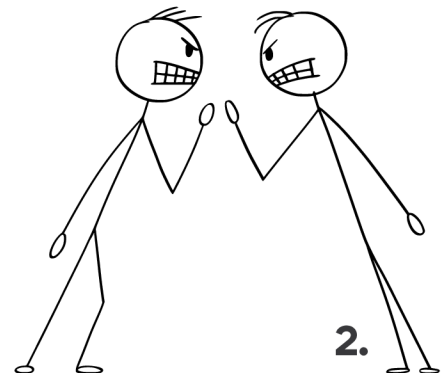
Set us off when the feedback is either unhelpful or untrue.

● _____ TRIGGERS

Based on WHO the feedback giver is, we might discard WHAT they're saying.

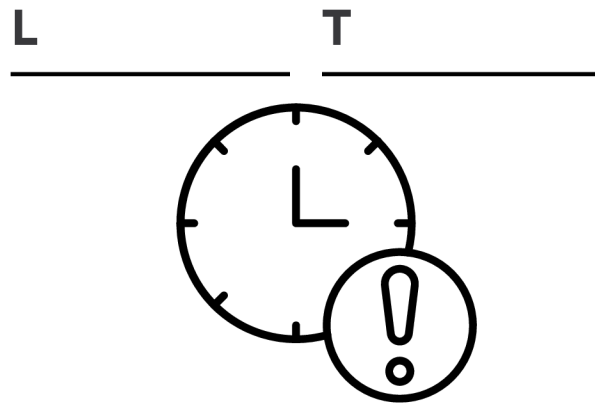
● _____ TRIGGERS

Something about the feedback causes our identity to come undone.



Things that can lead to...

DESTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS



THE ISSUE

The issue is the TIME between knowing there's a problem and then effectively confronting, discussing, and working to resolve the problem.

STEP ONE: DEFINE THE PROBLEM

Step back long enough to assess what's behind the conflict.
Work to uncover the **real issue** and **the best way to resolve it**.



1. CONTENT

Isolated incident. Focus on the person's action or the consequence.

2. PATTERN

The second time might be a coincidence. The third time, is a pattern.

3. RELATIONSHIP

Impacts trust, competence, and respect.

STEP ONE: DEFINE THE PROBLEM

Step back long enough to assess what's behind the conflict.
Work to uncover the **real issue** and **the best way to resolve it**.



GOALS

Your end-goal differs from someone else's.

METHOD

No agreement on how to accomplish goals.

VALUES

No alignment concerning values.

ROLES

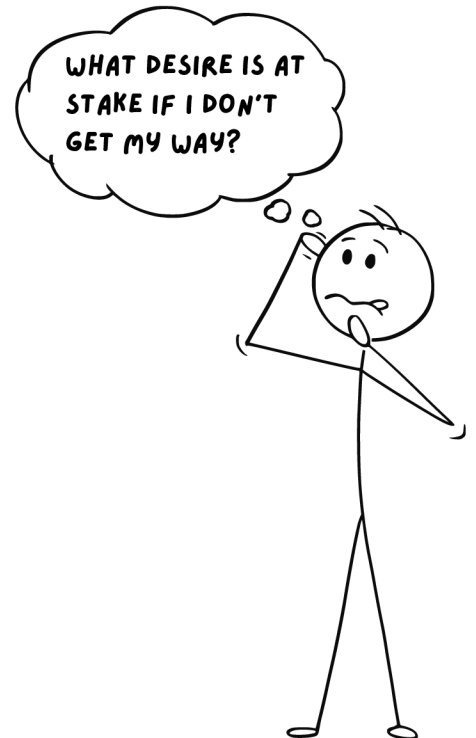
No clarity about who does what, when, and why.

POWER

Determined to control outcomes and call the shots.

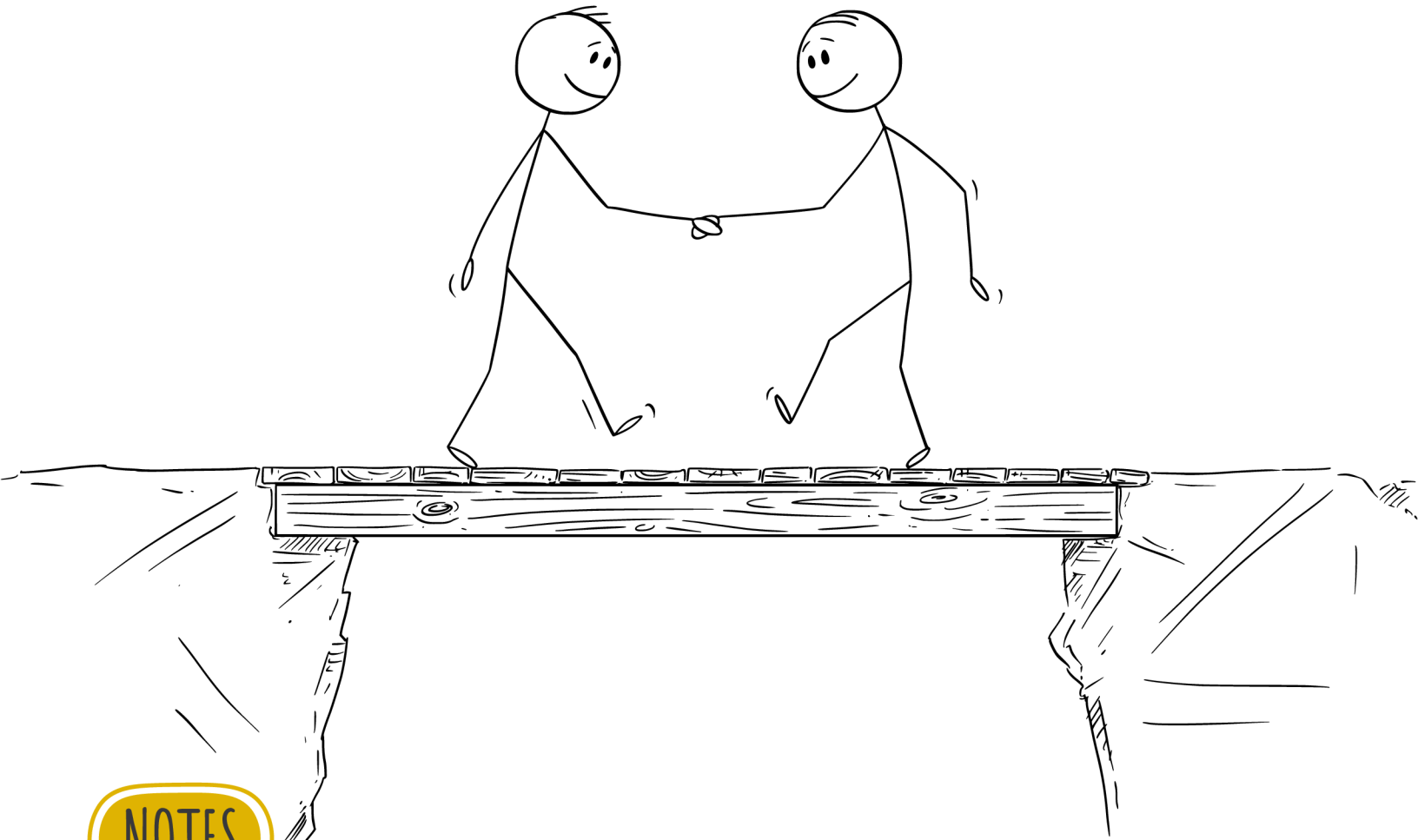
CHANGE

Disagreement around the restructuring of a team that impacts responsibilities, people, roles, or cultural norms.



STEP TWO: SET UP A TIME TO TALK

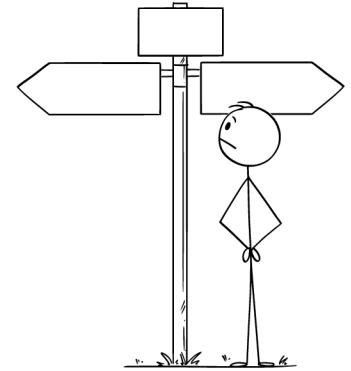
Take the initiative.



NOTES

STEP THREE: NAVIGATE THE CONVO

Five Principles and One Framework.



1. LEAD WITH EMPATHY

Put yourself in your team member's shoes. Consider them. Take their season, personality, temperament, tendencies, past performance and previous responsiveness into account.

2. OVER-PREPARE

Strategize your approach before delivering the feedback. Practice what you'll say and how you'll say it. Think about your posture, tone, the setting – all of these things add up to either help or hinder the moment

3. BE SPECIFIC

Focus on the behavior that you're addressing, state the impact that it's had, and what you'd like to see additionally (if it's encouragement) or instead (if it's corrective).

4. ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

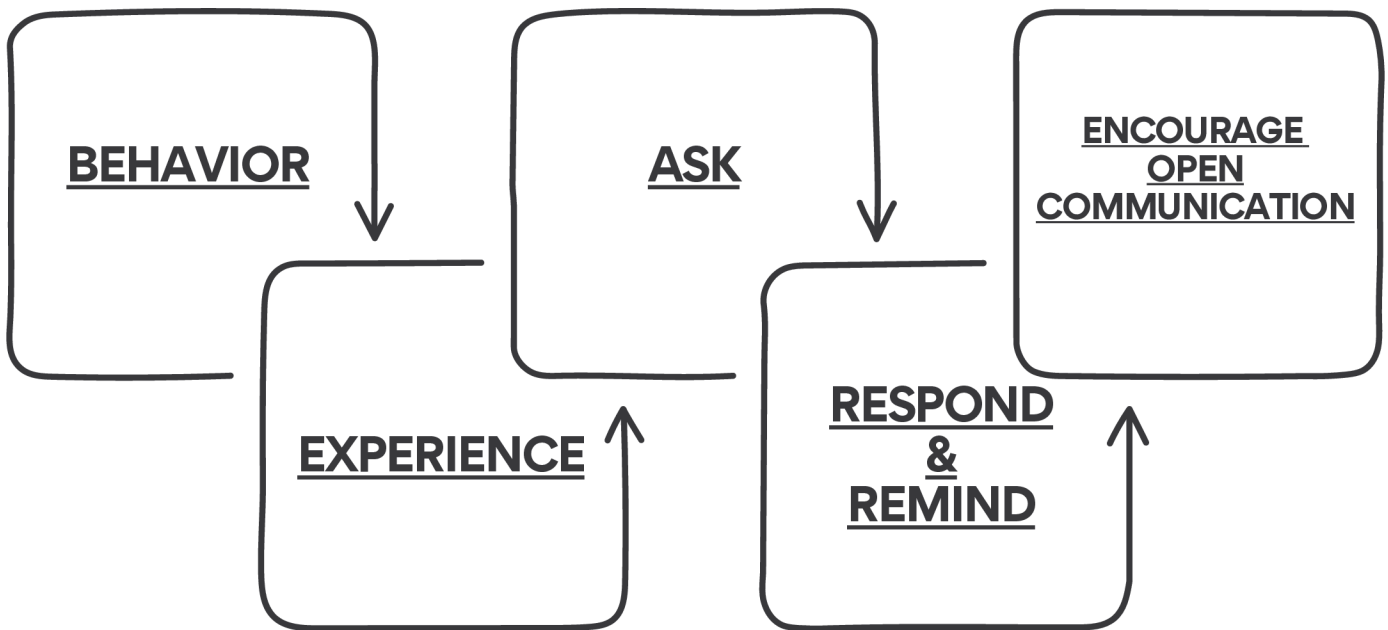
Ask them good questions. "What do you think?" "Do you have any questions about what I said or perspective that you'd like to share with me?"

5. ENVISION THE FUTURE

Ensure you're leaving the conversation envisioning a future or a common goal that both of you wants to become a reality.

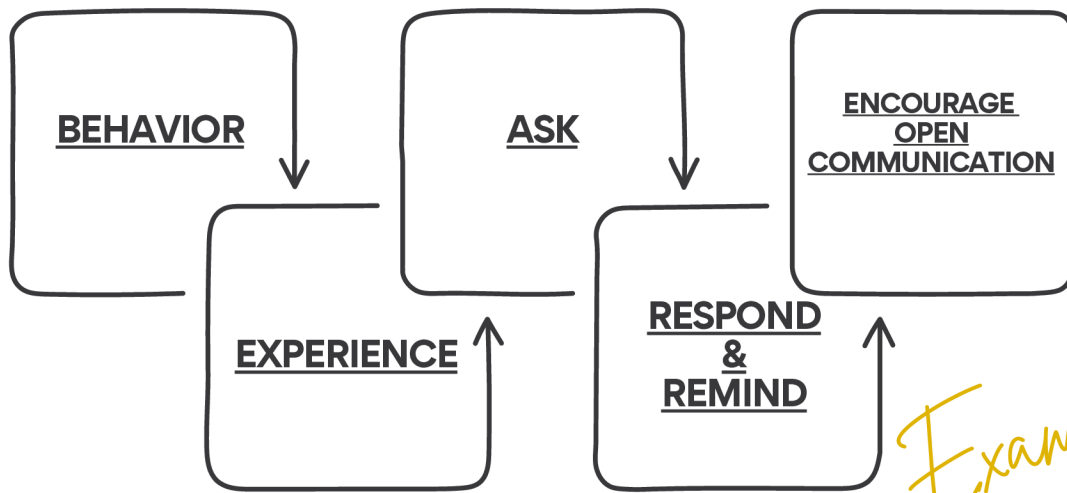
STEP THREE: NAVIGATE THE CONVO

Five Principles and One Framework.



- **Behavior** – The person's behavior.
- **Experience** – Your or your team's experience of their behavior.
- **Ask** – Ask a question to seek to understand their behavior.
- **Respond & Remind** – Acknowledge what the person shared. Remind them of the type of behavior your team and culture values.
- **Encourage Open Communication** – You're going to ask a question that gives them the opportunity to share what else they might have on their heart or mind.

BEAR-E IN ACTION



Example One

Behavior –

- *Thanks for meeting with me. I wanted to talk with you about yesterday's meeting. You interrupted James a few times.*

Experience –

- *That behavior caught me off guard because we don't work like that. So I want us to talk about that.*

Ask –

- *How were you feeling in the meeting at that moment?*

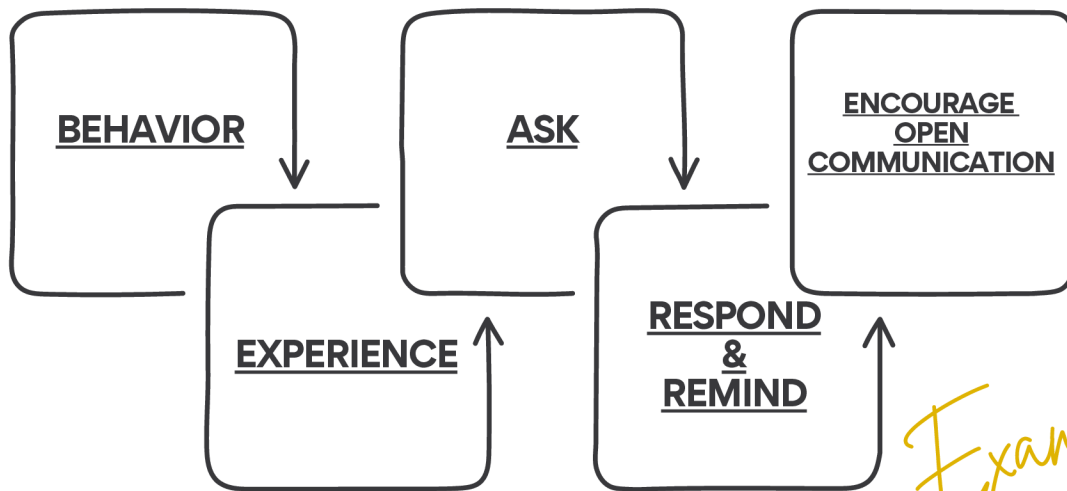
Respond & Remind –

- *Thanks for sharing that with me. I'm glad we're able to talk openly about these things.*
- *I want everyone on our team to be comfortable sharing their thoughts openly and creating a respectful environment that gives everyone the time and space to communicate without the fear of being talked over or cut off – it goes a long way to building more unity and collaboration on our team. I know we're all guilty of doing it from time to time, but we have to be more aware when others are speaking. And that goes for me too.*

Encourage Open Communication –

- *What do you think about that? Do you have any questions about what I shared or anything else that you'd like to share with me?*

BEAR-E IN ACTION



Example Two

Behavior –

- *Thanks for meeting with me. Great work on the project last week. I noticed you took the lead without being asked.*

Experience –

- *It kept the team organized and we hit the deadline.*

Ask –

- *I would love to hear how you think it went? What went well? Is there anything you would do differently?*

Respond & Remind –

- *Those are great insights. What you're doing is making a difference and it's growing your leadership abilities.*

Encourage Open Communication –

- *Is there anything else that you'd like to share with me?*

HOW TO RESPOND TO

NOTES

TRUTH TRIGGERS

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graph TD; A[TRUTH TRIGGERS] --> B[Seek to understand...]; A --> C[See your blind spots...]
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**Seek to
understand...**

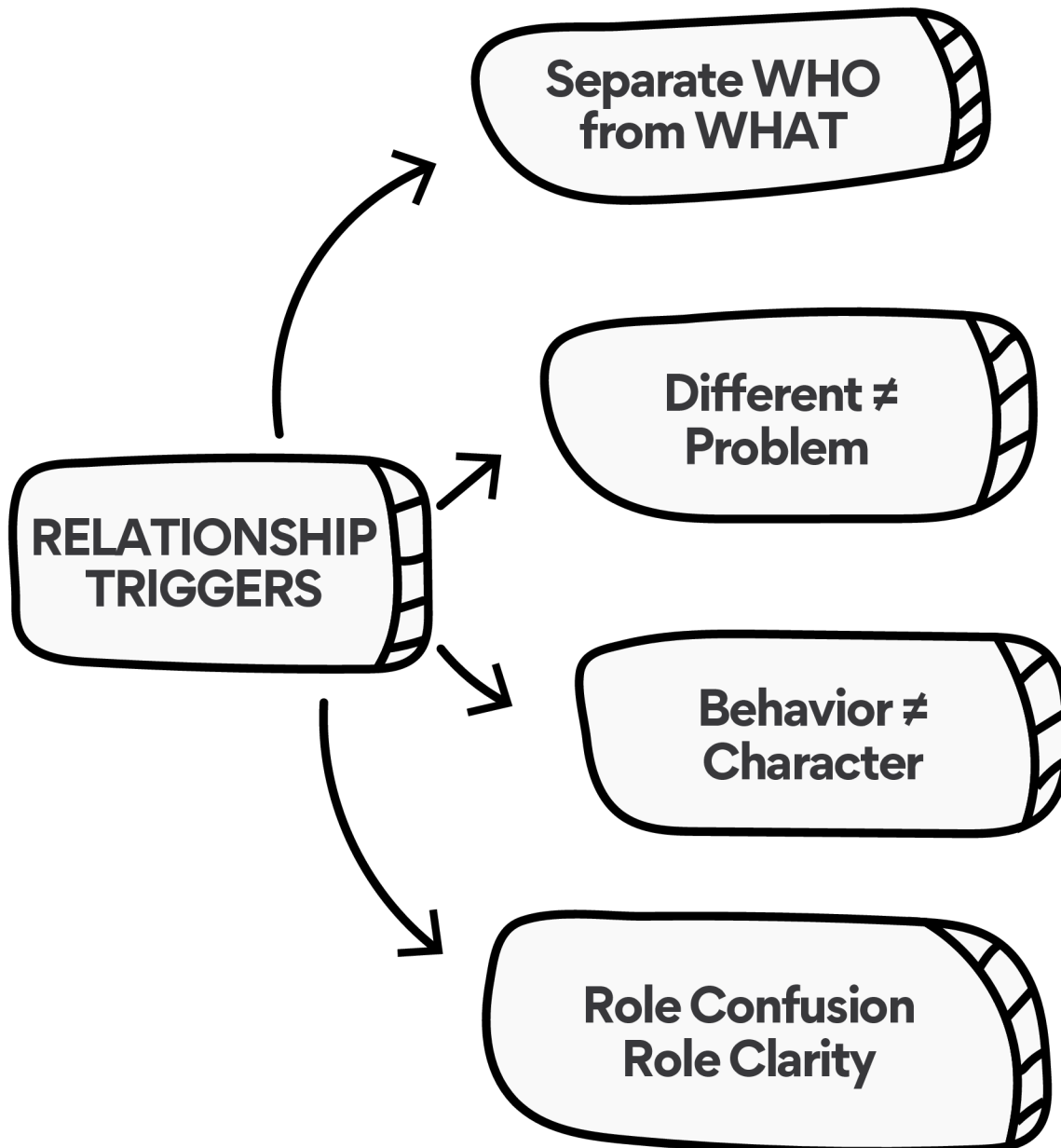
Shift from thinking,
“That’s wrong” to asking,
“Can you tell me more?”

**See your
blind spots...**

**Instead of dismissing what
is said, ask:** “I wonder if this
feedback is sitting in my
blind spot.”

HOW TO RESPOND TO

NOTES



HOW TO RESPOND TO

NOTES

IDENTITY TRIGGERS

See your
reactive
tendencies...

Your behaviors in the moment and after.

Seek to respond
instead of react.

In The Moment:

- Blaming others.
- Making excuses.
- Switching the topic.
- Denying.
- Running away / avoiding.
- Crying.
- Apologizing.
- Agreeing while silently resolving to never change.
- Arguing.
- Panicking.
- Becoming awkwardly friendly.
- Silence.
- Nervous chatter.

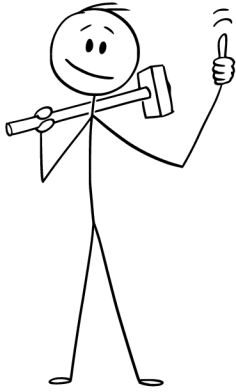
After The Moment:

- Coming around to accepting the feedback and working toward change.
- Rejecting or dismissing a lot of what you heard.
- Saying that you'll consider the feedback but then never thinking about it again.
- Obsessing over the feedback in an unhealthy way until there is something new to obsess over.

Seek To Respond Instead of React:

- Listening.
- Asking questions.
- Restating what you heard in your own words.
- Owning it.
- Sharing your perspective respectfully.
- Agreeing on next steps.

WORK ON IT



Work on applying what you learned today. **Information without application will never lead to transformation.** Here are some questions to help you think through how you can apply what you learned to your life and leadership. **You've got this!**

Think about a difficult conversation that you need to have or that you've been avoiding. Just pick one situation and write it below.

Use the Six Types of Conflict and the CPR framework to help you define the conflict.

Ask yourself the question: What desire is at stake of not being fulfilled if things don't go my way?

This question helps you define if / how you may have contributed to the problem and what kind of emotional connection you have to the problem.

Use the BEAR-E framework to consider and script out how you might have the conversation with the other person.

While you can't predict how the conversation will go, you can prepare for how you will start the conversation.

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