



**Career Tips Thursday: Session 39**

# **Turning Criticism into Career Growth**

**Asking for and Receiving Feedback**

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UNIDO/COR/HRM/TMG/TDP


IOM/DHR/ITMD



# Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Reframe criticism as a catalyst for **professional growth**
- Learn to **ask for, receive, and apply feedback** constructively
- Explore **feedforward** as a future-focused career development tool



**“In the story of your career,  
make criticism the plot twist,  
not the ending.”**



# Before we start...

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**Poll: Whose responsibility is it to make sure you get feedback?**

1. My manager's responsibility
2. My mentor's responsibility
3. My own responsibility
4. All of the above



# Decoding Feedback

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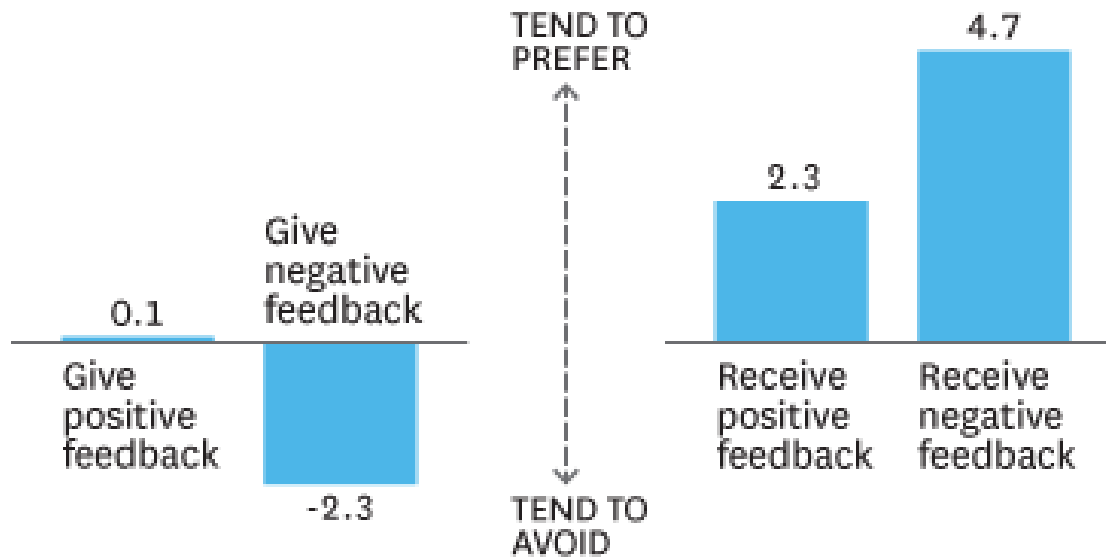


# Why Feedback Matters

- Helps identify **strengths** and **areas for development**
- Enhances **self-awareness** and **emotional intelligence (EQ)**
- Builds **trust** and **strengthens relationships**
- Helps prevent **repeated mistakes**
- Helps discover your **blind spots**

# Why Are We Not Getting Constructive Feedback?

NO ONE LIKES TO GIVE NEGATIVE FEEDBACK,  
BUT EVERYONE WANTS TO HEAR IT



SOURCE ZENGER/FOLKMAN

HBR.ORG

Zenger/Folkman found that  
*“people believe constructive criticism is essential to their career development. **They want it from their leaders. But their leaders often don’t feel comfortable offering it up.**”*

# Why We Resist Feedback

- **Ego bias** - Most of us overestimate how well we are doing
- **Brain response** - Feedback can trigger threat responses (fight, flight, freeze)
- Based on the **SCARF model**:
  - **S**tatus
  - **C**ertainty
  - **A**utonomy
  - **R**elatedness
  - **F**airness

*“Growth happens at the edge of comfort.”*



# Why receiving constructive feedback isn't easy

Our Ego (our self-perception):

70% of us believe we are in the top 10% of our peer group

82% of us believe we are in the top 20%

98.5% of us believe we are in the top 50%

"It's very hard to  
face the reality  
of our own  
performance"

# Why receiving constructive feedback isn't easy

Our Brain:

Our brain seeks to minimize danger and maximize reward. When a situation is perceived as dangerous, the brain goes into the threat response, “fight or flight”



Can I give you  
some feedback?

# The SCARF Model



## **Status**

One's sense of importance relative to others; where you are in the pecking order

## **Certainty**

Your perception of how well you can predict the future

## **Autonomy**

Sense of control over the events in one's life; feeling of having choices

## **Relatedness**

Feeling safe with other people, sense of connectedness

## **Fairness**

Just and un-biased exchange between people

# How to Ask for Feedback

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# How to Ask for Feedback Effectively

- Choose the right moment
- Ask open and authentic questions
- Encourage dissent
- Increase psychological safety
- Choose the right setting

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- **Choose the right moment**
- Ask open and authentic questions
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During **routine check-ins**, after **key events**, or at a **project completion**

Create space for **thoughtful responses**, not rushed replies

# How to Ask for Feedback Effectively

- Choose the right moment
- **Ask open and authentic questions**
- Encourage dissent
- Increase psychological safety
- Choose the right setting

Use “how” or “what” to prompt meaningful insights

- *“What is one thing I could do differently to be more effective?”*
- *“How could I have contributed more to this project?”*

# How to Ask for Feedback Effectively

- Choose the right moment
- Ask open and authentic questions
- **Encourage dissent**
- Increase psychological safety
- Choose the right setting

Signal you are open to constructive input:

- *“I value your honest opinion - even if it is difficult to hear.”*
- *“Please feel free to challenge my assumptions.”*



# How to Ask for Feedback Effectively

- Choose the right moment
- Ask open and authentic questions
- Encourage dissent
- **Increases psychological safety**
- Choose the right setting

Invite feedback in a way that **makes others feel safe to be honest**

Be **calm, open,** and **non-defensive** to encourage trust

# How to Ask for Feedback Effectively

- Choose the right moment
- Ask open and authentic questions
- Encourage dissent
- Increase psychological safety
- **Choose the right setting**

In person or virtual: ensure **privacy**, **cameras on**, and minimal distractions

Avoid asking in public or high-pressure settings

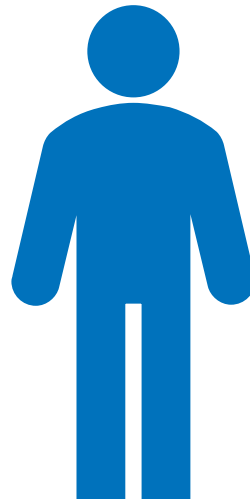
# A Step-by-Step Guide

## 1. Plant the Seed (for a feedback conversation)

*"I am really looking forward to working with you on X and will ask you for feedback along the way"*

## 2. Schedule the Conversation

Ask for 15 minutes, work around the person's schedule, ideally face to face (body language!)



## 3. Ask the Right Questions

Be prepared and specific so that the person does not feel like they are starting from a blank page

## 4. Closing Question

Is there anything else I should focus on that we have not discussed yet?

## 5. Say Thank You

Acknowledge the time they spent



# **Feedforward: A Future-Focused Alternative**

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How  
? WHAT

# What is Feedforward?

- A feedback method that focuses on **future actions**, not past mistakes
- Encourages **learning, curiosity**, and **goal alignment**
- Ideal for **mentoring, check-ins**, and **career development conversations**

# Why Feedforward Works

- Reduces defensiveness and fear of judgment
- Shifts attention to **possibility** and **progress**
- Encourages **growth mindset** and continuous development

*You cannot change the past – but you can shape what happens next.*

# Powerful Feedforward Questions

Ask questions that begin with **What** or **How**:

- *What is one thing I should start doing to grow in my role?*
- *How can I better prepare for my next challenge?*
- *What habits would help me be more effective over the next year?*
- *How can I collaborate more effectively with the team?*
- *What should I do differently in future presentations?*

# When to Use Feedforward

- During development conversations
- When preparing for a role change, lateral move or upward move
- After a project or new experience





# **Receiving Feedback with Confidence**

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# Scenario

## Setting:

Immediately after a project meeting where Kata (supervisee) reacted strongly to a colleague's input. Andrea (supervisor) schedules a private conversation.

“Thanks Kata for agreeing to a feedback meeting on the recent project meeting. From your perspective, how did it go?”

“Well, the usual, Lena came up with this crazy idea and nobody calls her out on it”.

“Actually, that’s what I wanted to discuss with you. The way you responded to Lena’s suggestion came across as quite dismissive, and it affected the tone of the discussion for the rest of the meeting.”

*(escalating - voice raised, arms crossed)* “Oh come on, Andrea. This is ridiculous. Lena's idea was completely unrealistic, and no one else had the guts to say it. Now I am the bad guy for being honest?”

*(pauses, grounds herself - calm but firm tone)* “Kata, it looks like you're frustrated and emotionally charged. I would like to have a constructive dialogue with you. I am ready to listen to your perspective.”

*(sharply)* “This feels like a setup. Every time I speak up, I’m the one who gets pulled aside. Maybe I should just stop contributing altogether.”

*(still composed, steady tone)* “I am sorry that you think stopping to contribute is the right course of action. You offer great value to the team with your contributions and I would like you to know that. It’s not about me not wanting you to speak up; it’s about reflecting on *how* your input lands with others. I would like all team members to feel safe to participate in the conversation. That includes Lena.”

*(hesitates, visibly tense but quieter)* “I just feel like I’m being singled out.”

“That’s not my intention and this is why I asked for this 1:1 meeting. It’s about awareness, not blame. I am here to help you succeed in your role *and* support the team dynamic. With a little bit of distance, can you see how your reaction contributed to the shift in tone during the project meeting?”

*(nodding)*



# What Happens in Your Body When You Feel Threatened

- Amygdala activation
- Adrenaline surge
- Tone shifts
- Pupils dilate
- Breathing quickens
- Heart rate increases
- Tension builds
- Cognitive control drops

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# **Managing Heat in Difficult Conversations**

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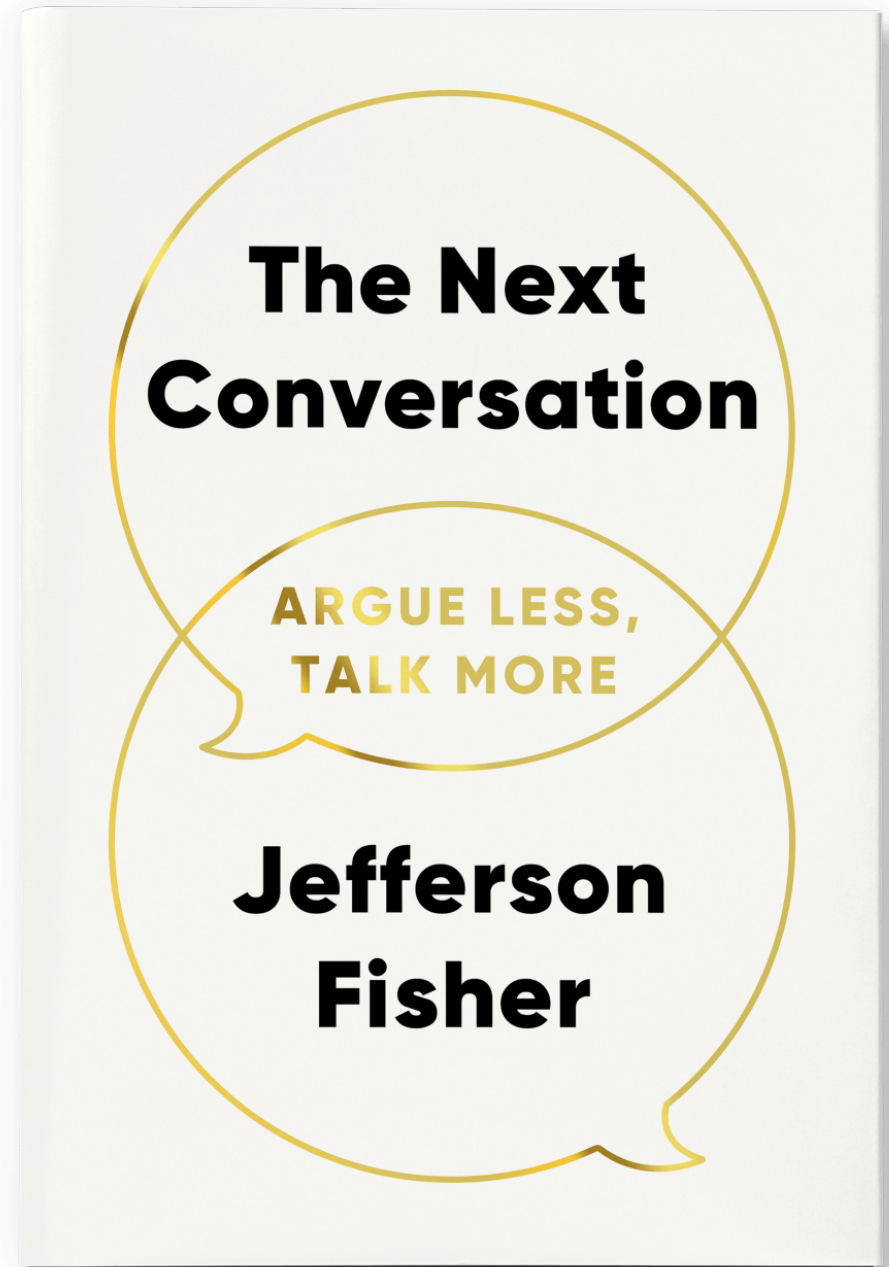




# The Source

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The Next Conversation by  
Jefferson Fisher

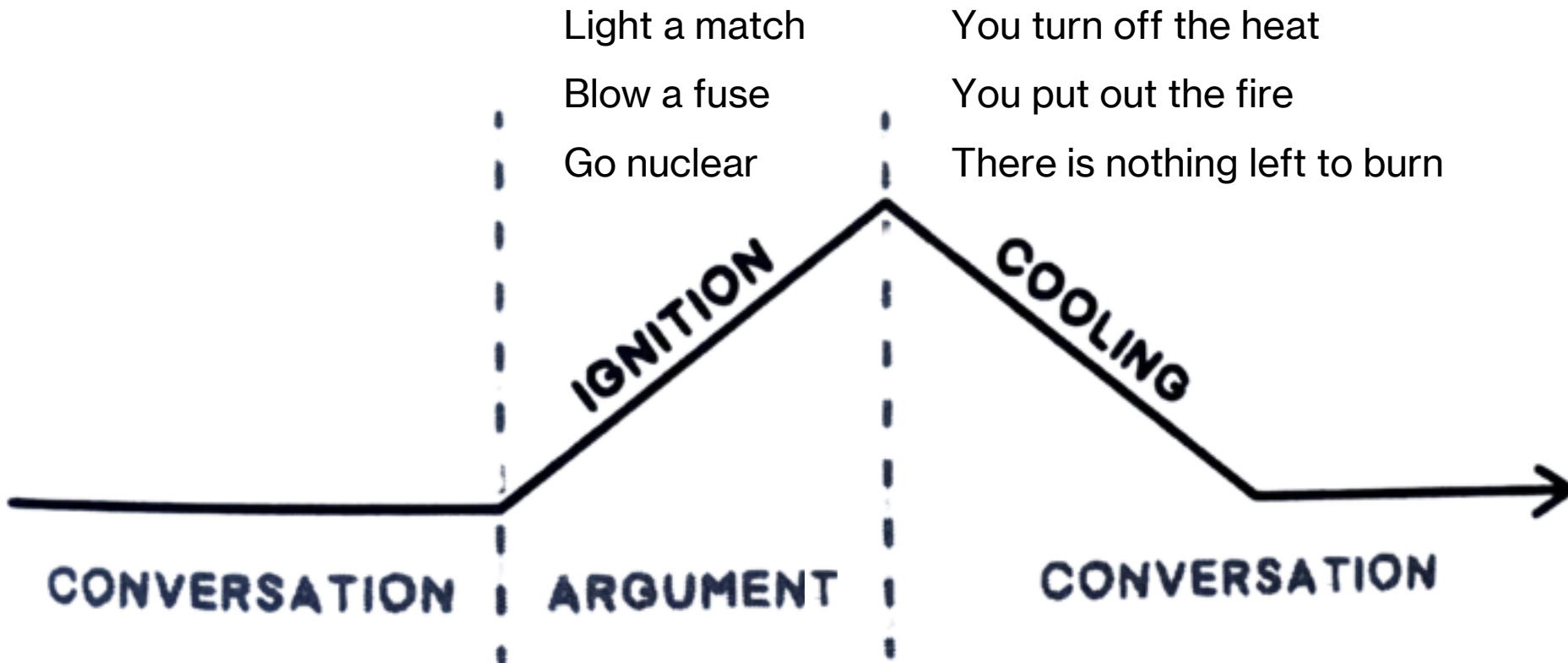


# You Can Learn to Handle Yourself

- Your **words**, **emotions** and **body language** all influence how conversations unfold
- Heated discussions can explode when we lack **self-awareness**
- To stay grounded, we must first understand how **communication** and **the body** interact under stress

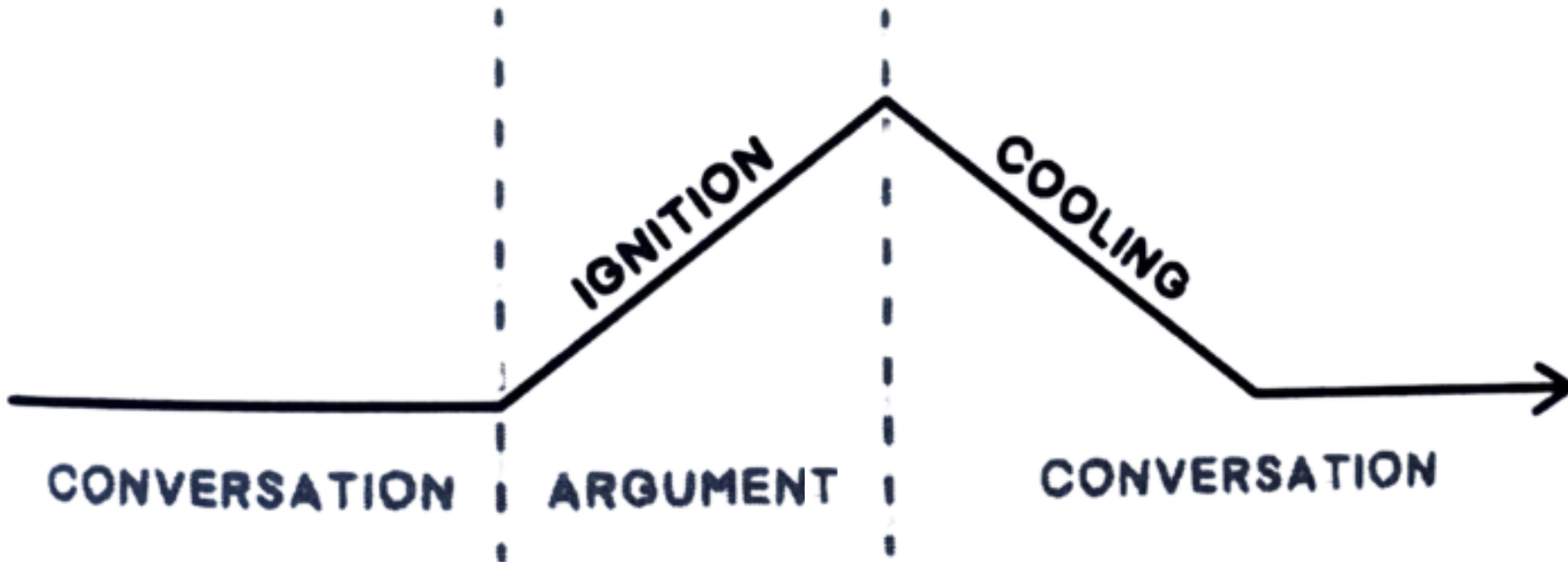
# Ignition to Cooling

Inside every argument, there is an ignition phase and a cooling phase.



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# Worksheet



# Worksheet – Reflection questions

- Feedback I am reflecting on (*What was said or implied?*)
- Why it matters to me (*Why do I think this is important for my professional growth?*)
- What I learned from it (*What insight did it offer about how I work, collaborate, lead?*)
- One action I will take to improve (*What is one concrete step I will take in the next two weeks?*)
- One feedforward question I will ask (*What future-focused question could I ask a colleague, a former colleague, a supervisor, a mentor, or a friend?*)

# What I Learned About Myself

- I let emotion override reason.
- I defended instead of reflecting.
- I wanted to be right more than I wanted to be effective.
- I heard feedback as criticism, not support.



# What I Would Do Differently Next Time

- Pause before reacting
- Listen to understand, not defend
- Ask a clarifying question
- Own my role
- Stay engaged

# My Growth Plan:

## Responding to Feedback More Constructively

Action	What I Will Do	When I Will Use It
Pause and breathe	Take a few seconds before speaking	In moments of tension or discomfort
Listen fully	Let the person finish, then paraphrase	Any time I receive feedback
Acknowledge and feedback	"I hear what you're saying. Thank you for being direct."	Immediately after feedback
Reflect and reframe	Focus on how my actions impacted others, not how I was perceived	After the conversation
Follow up	Reconnect with the person if needed to clarify or show progress	Within a few days

# Scenario

## Setting:

Immediately after a project meeting where Kata (supervisee) reacted strongly to a colleague's input. Andrea (supervisor) schedules a private conversation.

“Thanks Kata for agreeing to a feedback meeting on the recent project meeting. From your perspective, how did it go?”

“Well, it was an ok meeting. We managed to agree on a way forward for the project.”

“Indeed, we did. Did you notice that the tone of the meeting changed after you responded to Lena’s suggestion? From my perspective it came across as quite dismissive.”

*(composed, thoughtful)* “Thanks for bringing it up, Andrea. I can see how it might have come across that way. I was focused on the timeline, but I realize I did not handle that moment well.”

“I really appreciate your openness. I know your intention was to keep the team on track - and you raise valid concerns. At the same time it matters *how* we express disagreement. When someone feels shut down, it affects participation and trust.”

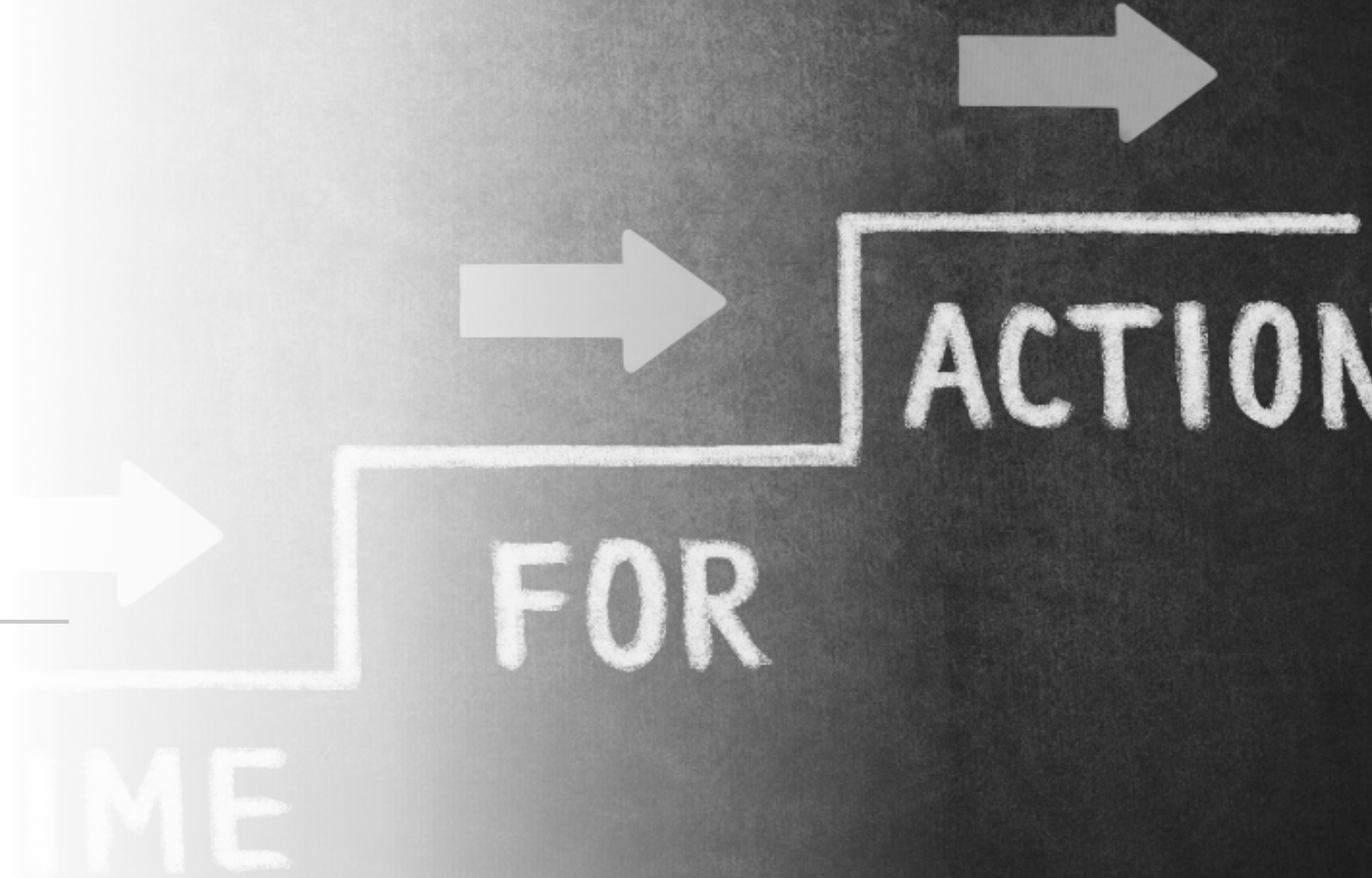
“You are right. I should have paused and responded more constructively. I actually think Lena’s idea had some potential - I reacted too quickly. I will check in with her and clarify that I respect her input.”

“That sounds like a good step. Your ability to reflect and take initiative here is much appreciated. We all misstep sometimes. What matters is that we reflect and are accountable. Thank you for being open and for suggesting to approach Lena to clear the air.”



# From Criticism to Action

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**Feedback is data – not a judgment. Growth happens when we act on it.**



**Questions?**



# Upcoming CTT sessions in 2025

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>26 June</b>      | Cultivating Mindsets for Career Growth           |
| <b>25 September</b> | UN 2.0 Behavioural Change for Career Development |
| <b>31 October</b>   | Neurodiversity and Career Development            |



# Let us know your thoughts about the session

Participant survey: Career Tips  
Thursday

