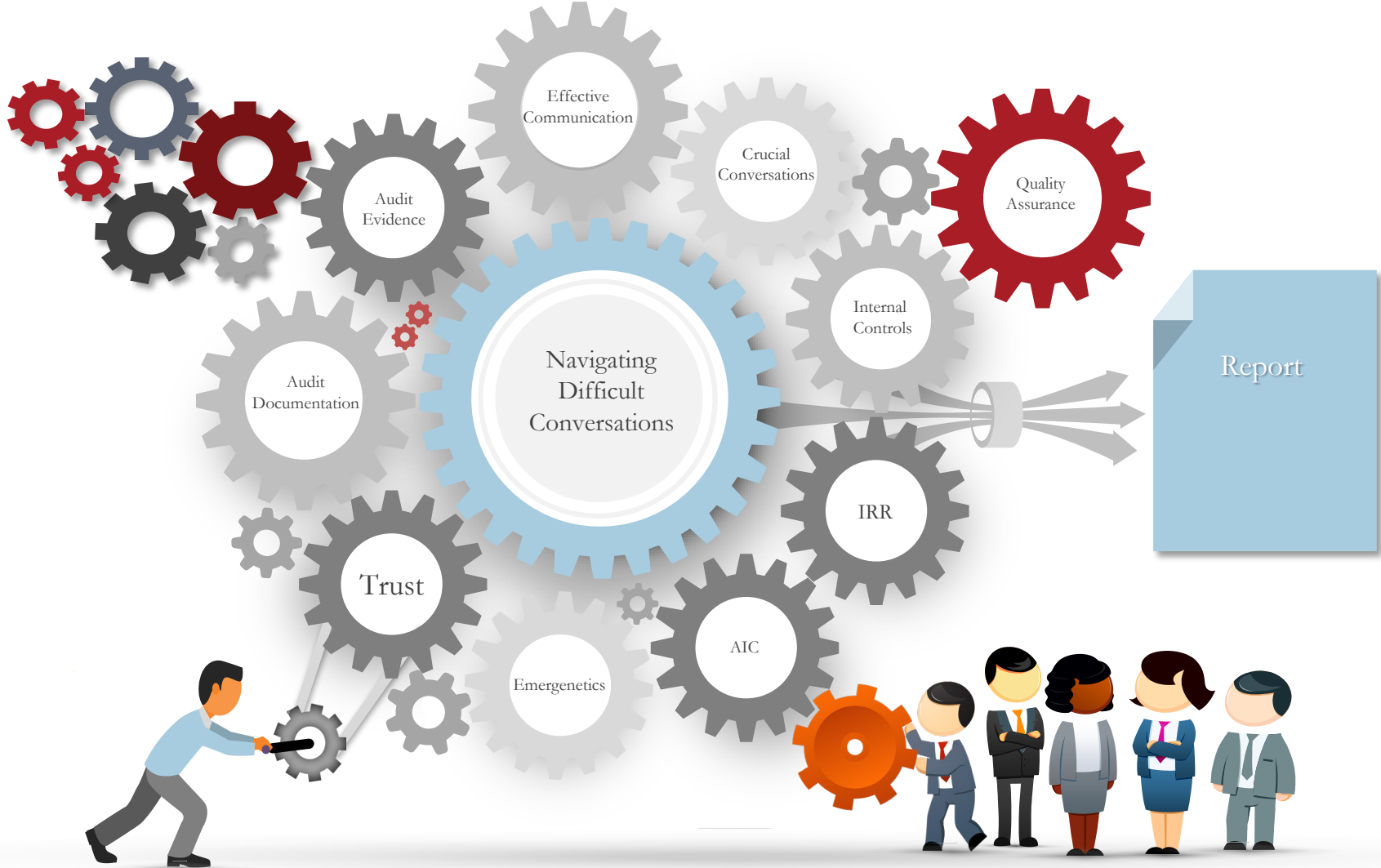


Navigating Difficult Conversations

The Many Elements of Success



Is it possible...



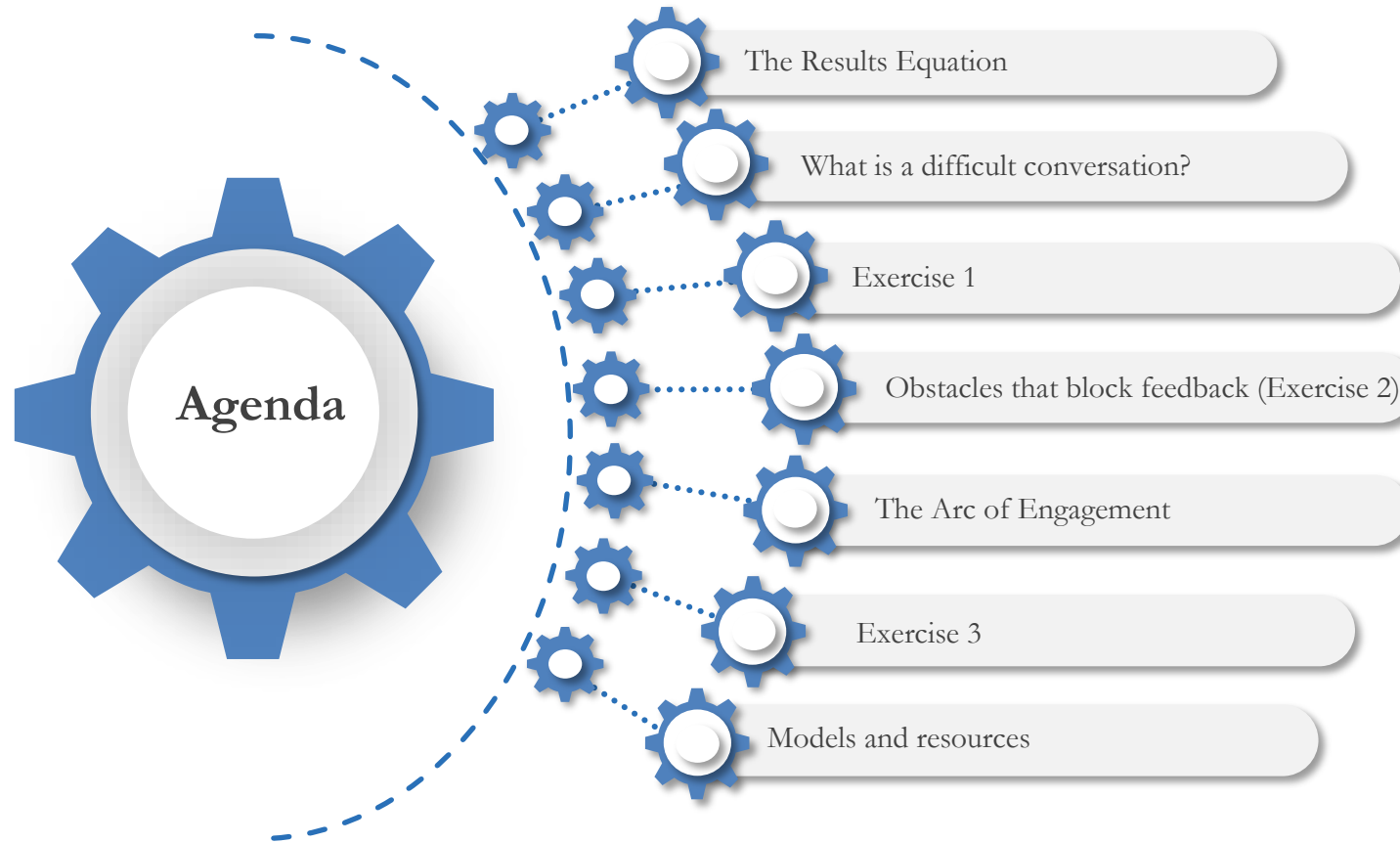
Navigating Difficult Conversations

Learning Objectives - Participants will learn:

- ⚙️ What are difficult conversations and how they differ from everyday conversation.
- ⚙️ The main obstacles that prevent people from engaging in difficult conversation.
- ⚙️ How the quality of conversation impacts employee engagement and results.
- ⚙️ Actionable strategies to navigating difficult conversations.

Course length: 50 minutes

Navigating Difficult Conversations



The Results Equation

$$\text{Task} + \text{People} = \text{Result}$$

Competent people working on tasks who engage, collaborate, and do their best work = optimal performance/results

How does how we talk to each other impact this equation?

Source: The Trust Advantage Course

What Are We Talking About?

What is a difficult conversation?

Feedback Definition



feed·back (*noun*)

/ˈfēd bak/ Clear and specific information that's sought or extended with the sole intention of helping people or groups improve, grow, or advance.

Exercise 1 - Difficult Feedback Conversations?

- Confronting disrespectful or offensive behavior?
- A colleague violates your trust?
- Critiquing a colleague's work?
- Talking with a teammate who isn't keeping commitments?
- Disagreeing with team consensus?
- Giving a critical performance review?
- Confronting dishonesty?

Exercise 1 - Difficult Feedback Conversations? (Cont.)

- Differences in opinion about promotions?
- A colleague “talks down” to you?
- Pointing out that work doesn’t meet standards?
- A colleague takes an inappropriate tone with the auditee?
- You suspect that someone isn’t being transparent?
- Any other topics we could add to the list?

What makes them different?

Opinions vary, stakes are high, and strong emotions.

They can have a huge impact on your life.

How they differ – The Canoe Metaphor



How We Normally Handle These Conversations

The quality of these conversations have a profound impact on individual and team performance.

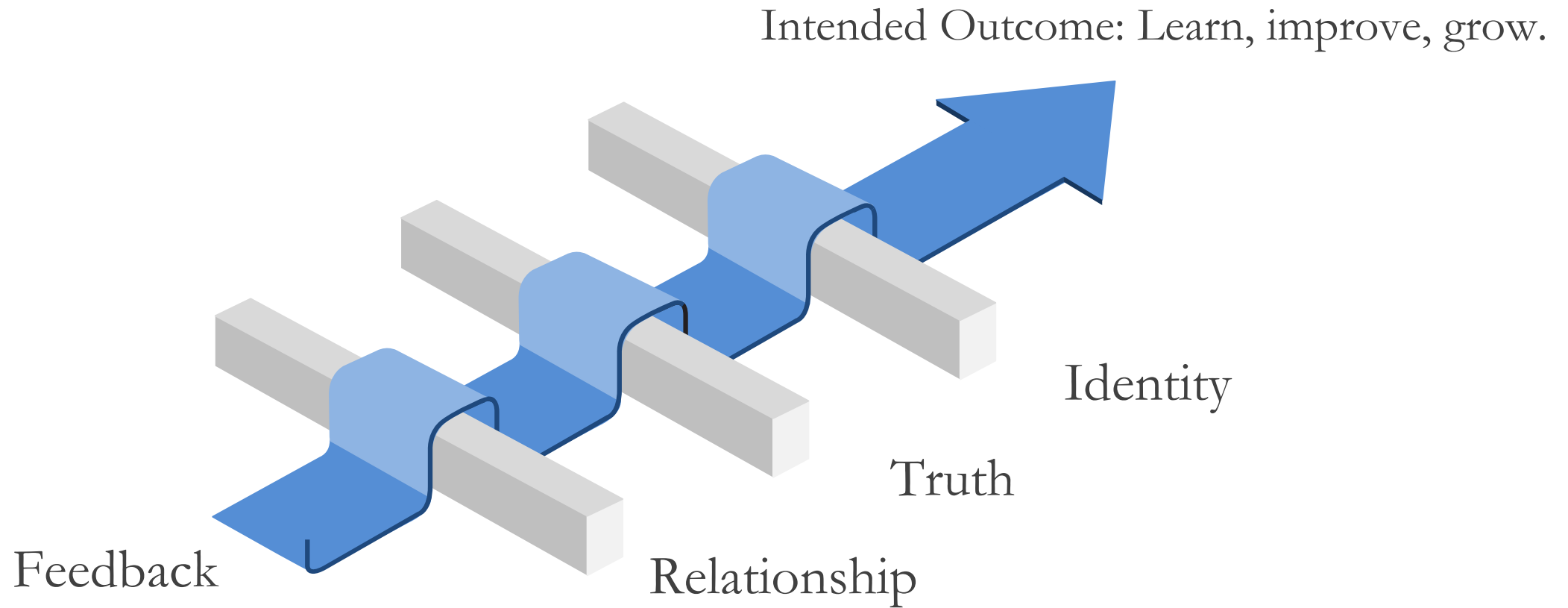
1. **Avoid them** and development, growth, engagement, and performance suffer.
2. **Handle them poorly** and development, growth, engagement, and performance suffer.
3. **Handle them well** and people develop and grow, engagement rises, and teams and organizations operate at optimum performance levels.

Effective Communication Definition

“Communication between two or more people where the intended message is successfully delivered, received, and understood.”

Source: Effective Communication Course

Obstacles that Block Feedback



Obstacles that Block Feedback

Relationship:

All feedback is colored by the relationship between the giver and receiver.

Something about the giver – their (lack of) credibility, (un)trustworthiness, or (questionable) motives.

Do they appreciate you? Are they being respectful?

What happens? We reject, defend, or counterattack.

Does learning occur? Do people improve or grow?

Quotes about Feedback

“Feedback is next to useless when it comes from someone we don’t trust.”

“When you lose someone’s trust, it’s like losing your voice. You lose your influence.”

“I can’t hear this feedback from *you*.”

Source: The Trust Advantage Course

Obstacles that Block Feedback



Truth:

The substance is somehow off, unhelpful, or untrue. It may seem ridiculous or just plain wrong.

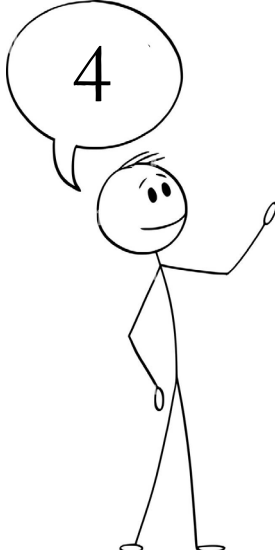
The advice is bad; the evaluation is unjust; or someone's perspective is different.

What happens? We reject, defend, or counterattack.

Does learning occur? Do people improve or grow?

Exercise 2 - Perspective

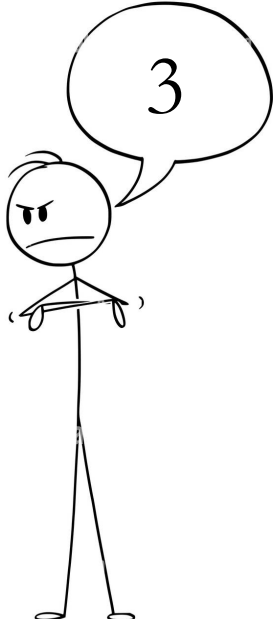
How many bars do you see?



~~Audit Manager~~
QA Professional



Who's right?



~~Staff Auditor~~
Executive Team

Exercise 2 - Perspective

“We argue for our view, we often fail to question one crucial assumption upon which our whole stance in the conversation is built: I’m right, and you’re wrong.

This simple assumption causes endless grief.”

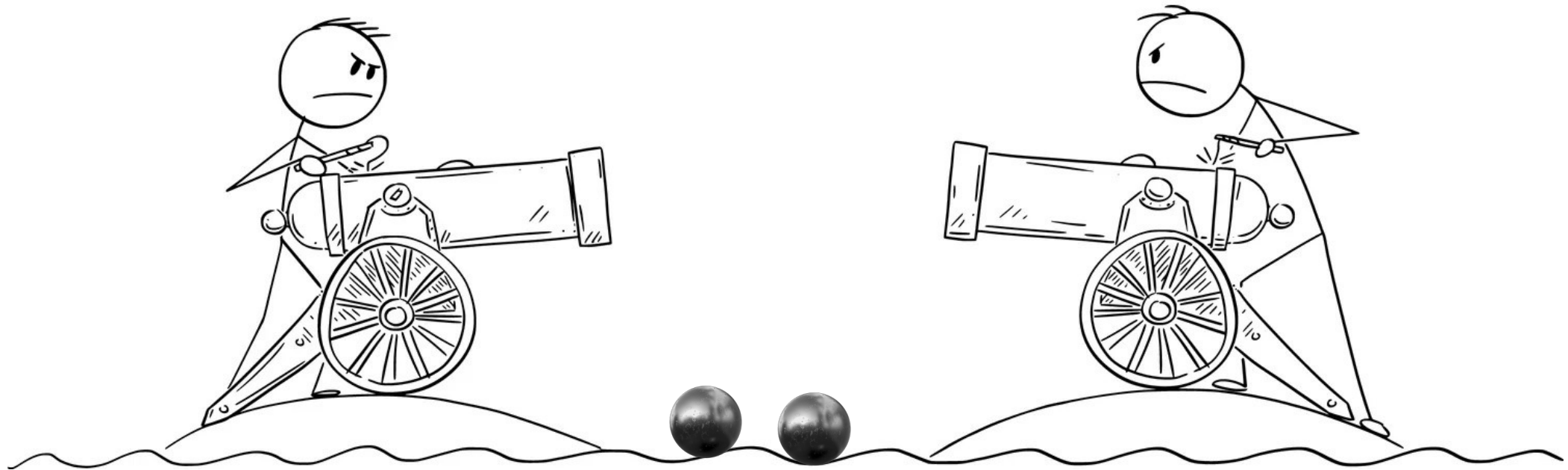
Source: Harvard Negotiation Project

Exercise 2 - Perspective

“Stop arguing about who’s right: explore each other’s stories.”

Source: Harvard Negotiation Project

Firing Cannonballs in a Vacuum



Obstacles that Block Feedback



Identity:

What does this feedback say about “me” – my sense of who I am.

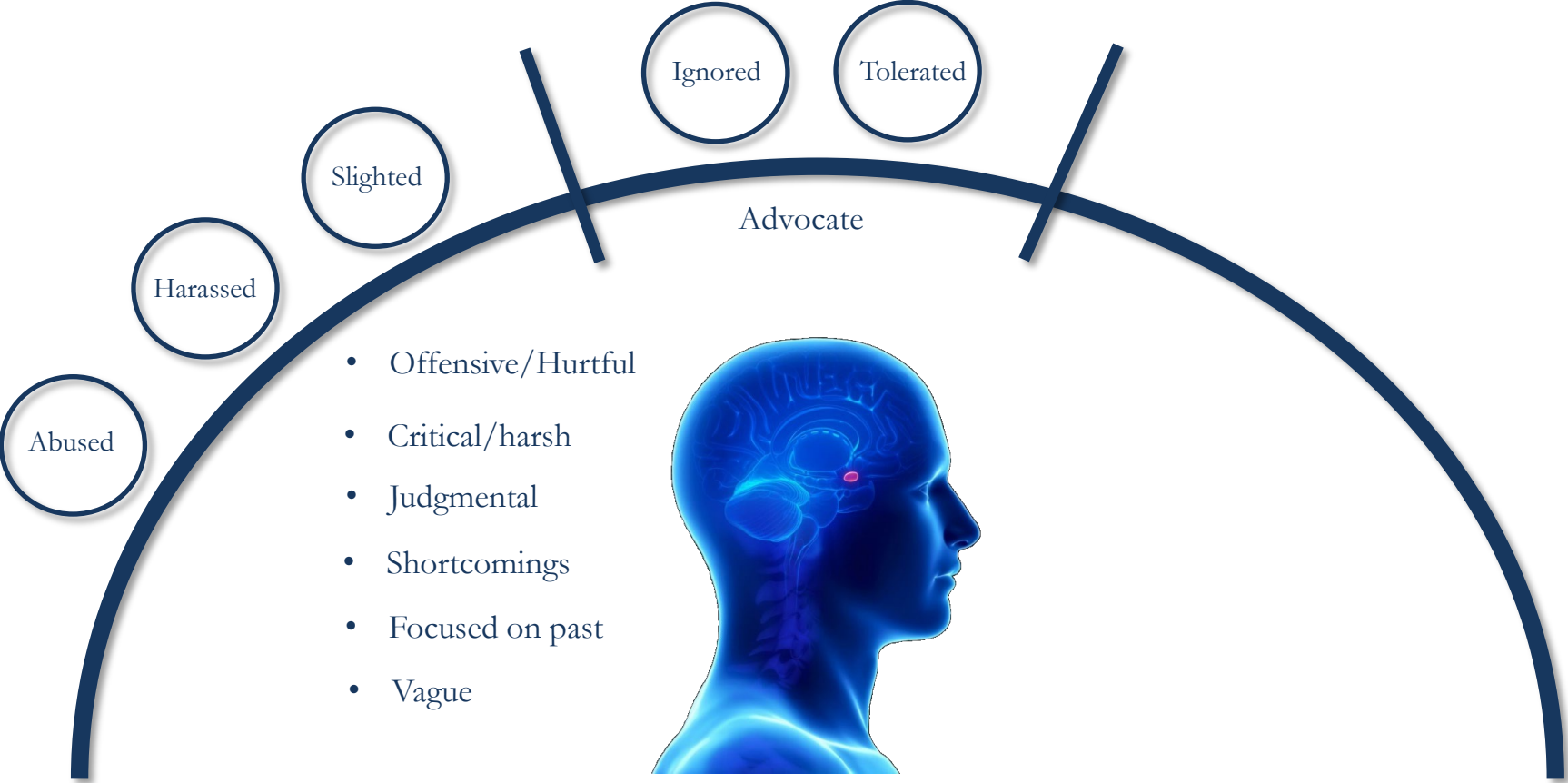
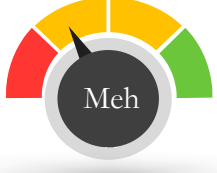
Does this feedback make me wonder if I’m really the person (or auditor, or leader) I think I am?

What happens? We reject, defend, or counterattack.

Does learning occur? Do people improve or grow?

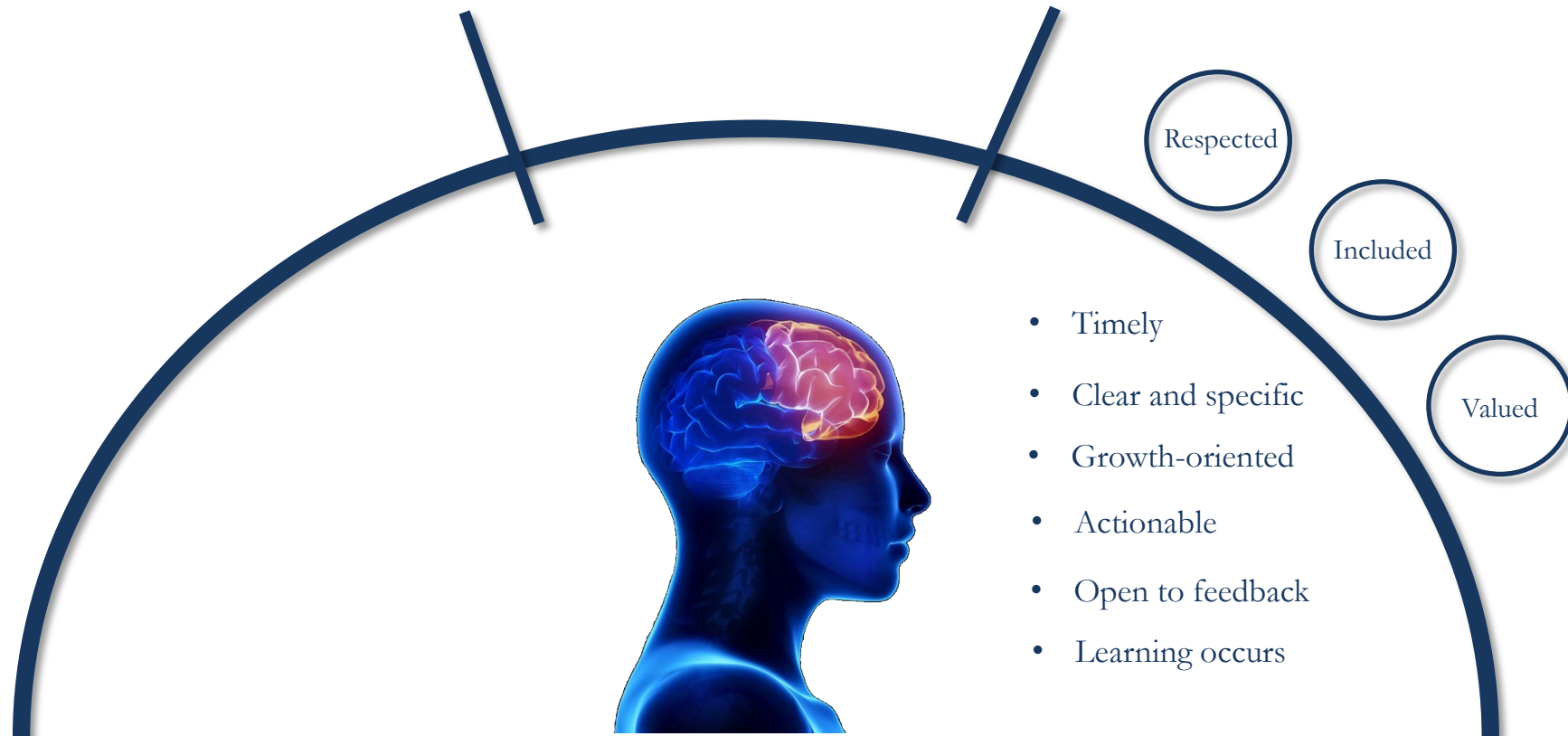
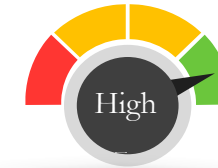
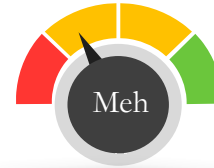
The Arc of Engagement

Engagement Meter:



The Arc of Engagement

Engagement Meter:



Respected

Included

Valued

- Timely
- Clear and specific
- Growth-oriented
- Actionable
- Open to feedback
- Learning occurs

The Arc of Engagement (Cont.)

“Excessive fear, judgement, and criticism renders peak performance neurologically impossible.”

- Sean Pettersen -

Exercise 3 - Feedback Examples

“Our words, and how we choose to use them can debilitate, discourage, or destroy people.”

Source: The Trust Advantage Course

Exercise 3 - Feedback Exercise

What do you think? Clear and Specific? Actionable?

- You rub people the wrong way.
- Your workpapers are clear and concise.
- You're not good enough.
- Your presentation is boring.
- You're too introverted.
- Everyone thinks you talk too much.
- You don't talk enough in meetings.
- Thank you for the hard work on this project...I appreciate you.
- This audit really benefitted from your ideas about the best way to answer the objective.
- You're not assertive enough.
- Your presentation was engaging and persuasive. Here's what I liked about it...and here are ways to make it better.

Time Check

Exercise 3 - Feedback Exercise

How would you feel in you were on the receiving end of this feedback?

I saw that you learned how to use Excel pivot tables and it really helped display the data and it made it easier for me to understand.

I appreciate you taking the initiative to learn how to do that, and it shows that you are a great learner and hungry to do the best job possible. Thank you!



The way you gave that “Results of Audit” presentation today really shows me you listened to what I said last month about how we can make these presentations better and more informative for our senior leaders.

I appreciate your mindful application of feedback. We constantly improve because of people like you. Thank you!



Feedback Examples



Walt Disney

At age 22, he was fired from a newspaper for “not being creative enough.”

MGM told him that his idea to put a giant mouse on the screen would “terrify women.”

Feedback Examples

Disney



Feedback Examples



Oprah Winfrey

She was fired from a local news station for being “too emotionally invested” in her stories. Her boss said, “she was unfit for tv.”

Feedback Examples



Elvis Presley

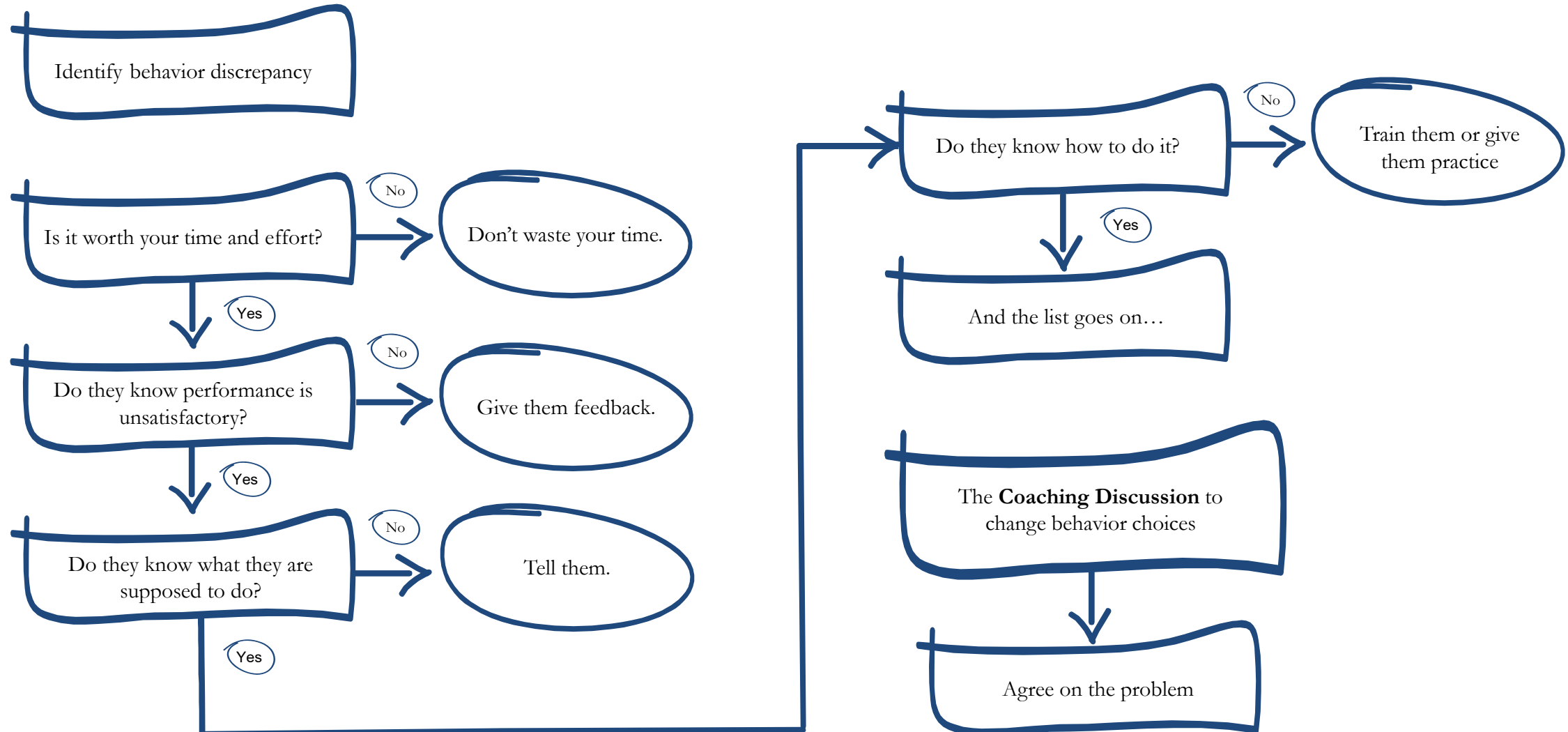
The manager of the *Grand Ole Opry* told him that: “you ain’t going nowhere” and “you should go back to driving a truck.”

Feedback Examples

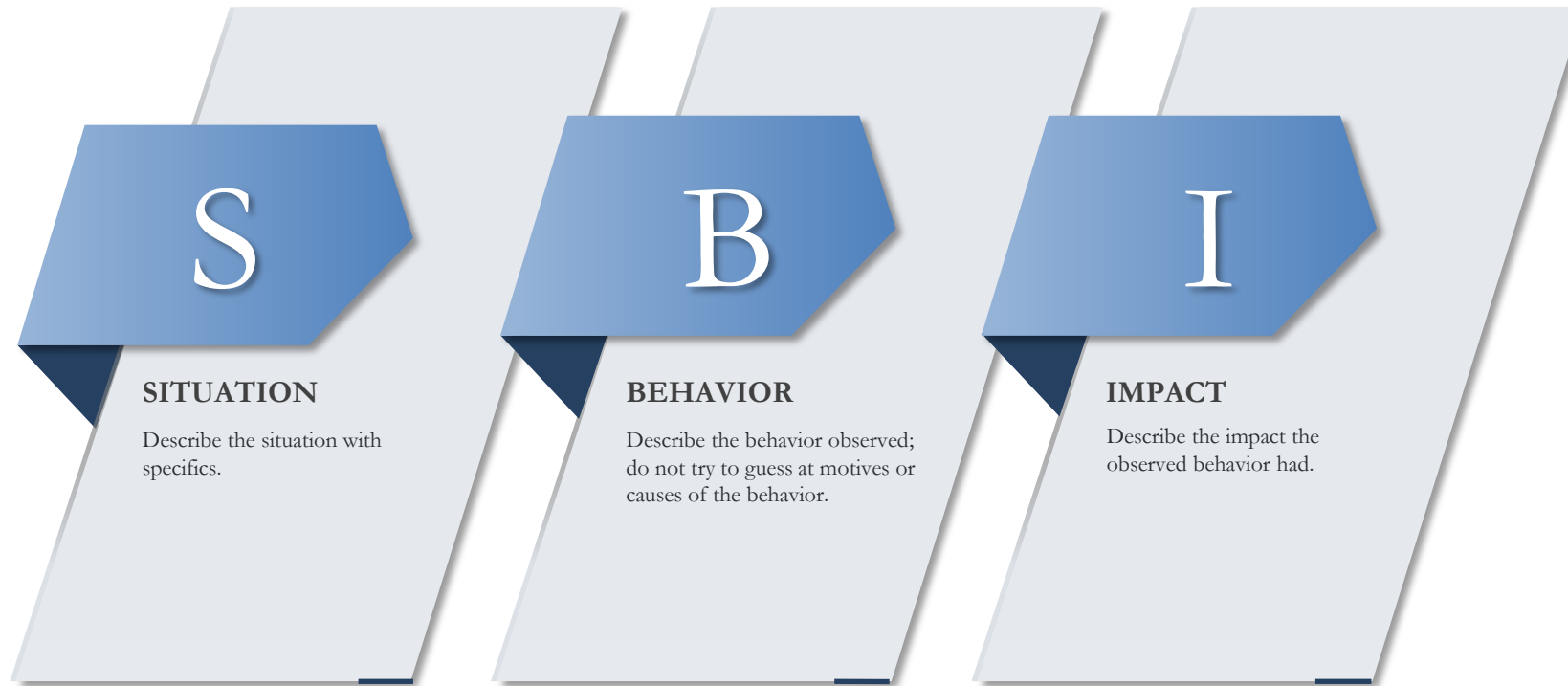


Early in their career, a record producer turned them away and said, “We don’t like their sound and guitar music is on the way out. They have no future in show business.”

Coaching Analysis – What is influencing behavior?



Situation-Behavior-Impact



Simple Questions



Simple Questions - How would you respond?

Do you know that...

...you're going too fast?

...you frequently interrupt you colleagues during team meetings?

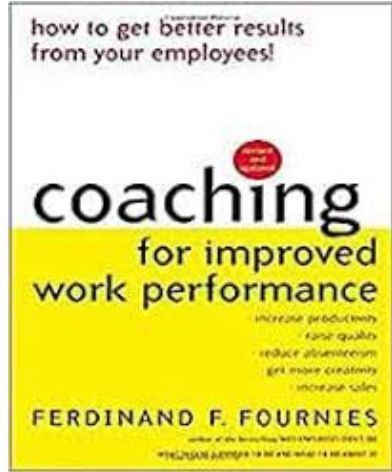
...this approach isn't working for me. Can we explore other options?

...the tone you had with the auditee in that meeting as disrespectful?

...your feedback isn't clear and specific and I confused about what to do?

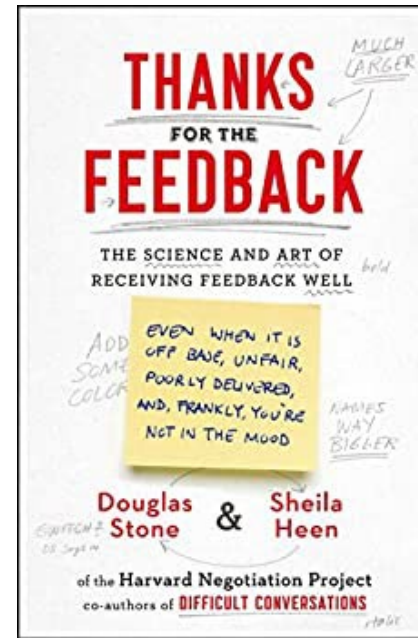
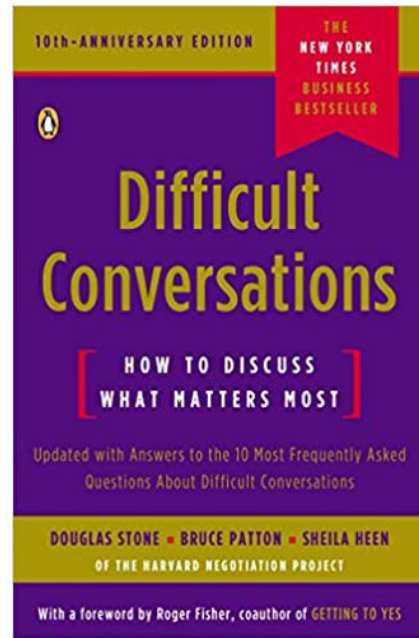
...your meetings are really long and people need a break.

Resources for Navigating Difficult Conversations

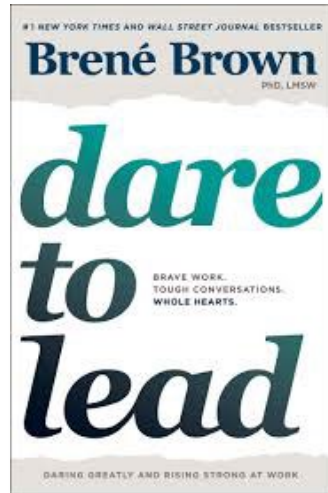


“Feedback is one of the most critical requirements for sustained high-level performance of any human act. Without frequent and specific feedback, performance varies and often fails”

Resources for Navigating Difficult Conversations (Cont.)



Resources for Navigating Difficult Conversations (Cont.)



The “Engaged Feedback Checklist” – Brené Brown

I know I’m ready to give you feedback when:

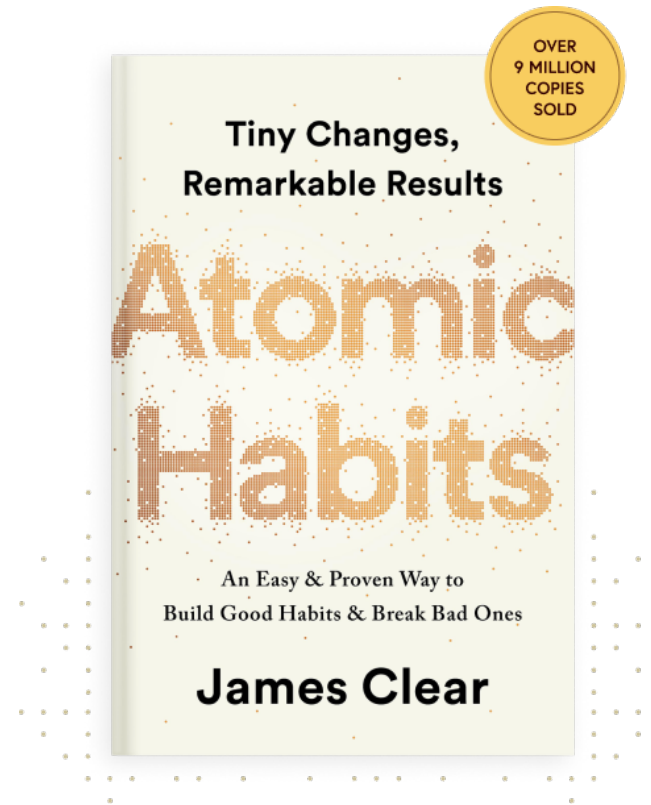
- I’m ready to listen, ask questions, and accept that I may not fully understand the issue.
- I’m open to owning my part.
- I can model the openness that I expect to see from you.

Parting thoughts...

“Be brave enough to have a conversation that matters.”

- Heather Dugan -

A recommendation...



The Coaching Discussion

Step 1
Get agreement
that problem
exists.

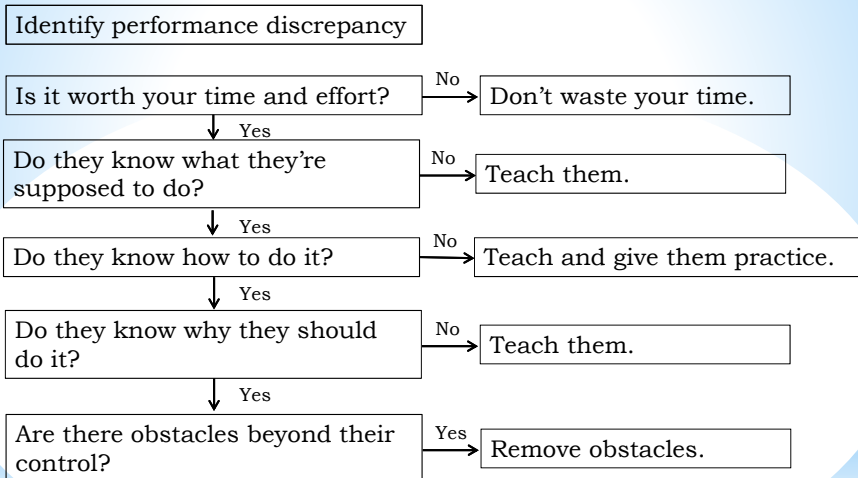
Step 2
Mutually discuss
alternative
solutions.

Step 3
Mutually agree
on action to
solve problem.

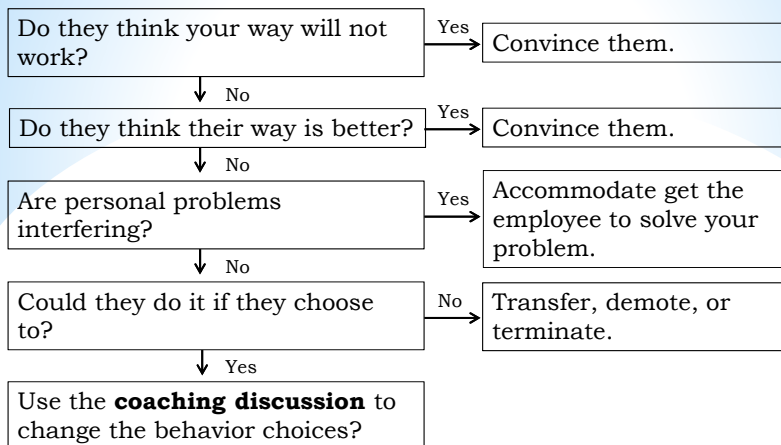
Step 4
Follow up to
measure results.

Step 5
Reinforce any
achievement
when it occurs.

The Coaching Analysis



The Coaching Analysis (Cont.)



Contact Information

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Questions?

