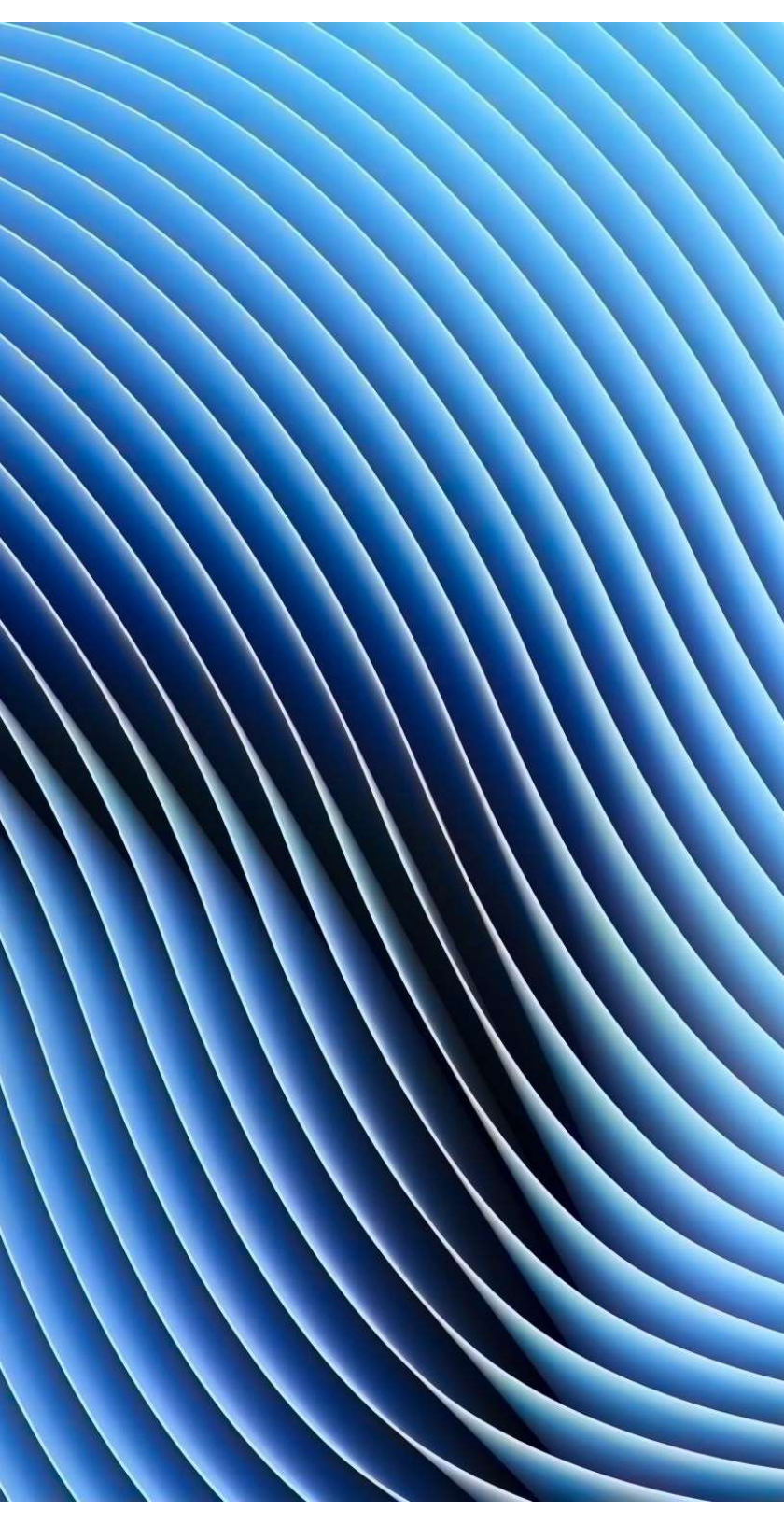


A background image showing a group of business professionals in an office setting. A man in a dark suit and striped tie is on the left, gesturing with his hands. A woman in a grey blazer is on the right, holding a smartphone. In the foreground, a tablet displays a document with charts and text. There are also coffee cups visible. The overall scene suggests a collaborative work environment.

Navigating Difficult Conversations With Management

Whitney Seaton



Think of a Conversation

A conversation you need
to have

A conversation you
avoided

A conversation that didn't
go how you hoped

A conversation you still
think about



Difficult Conversations
Are Difficult



Why These Conversations Feel Difficult

Power dynamics

Fear of perception

Assumptions

Fear of sounding
emotional/difficult

Fear of being labeled

Evaluations/opportunities

Emotional response

Professionalism

Observation vs Interpretation

Observation



My manager sent a short email



They looked at Teams, but didn't respond



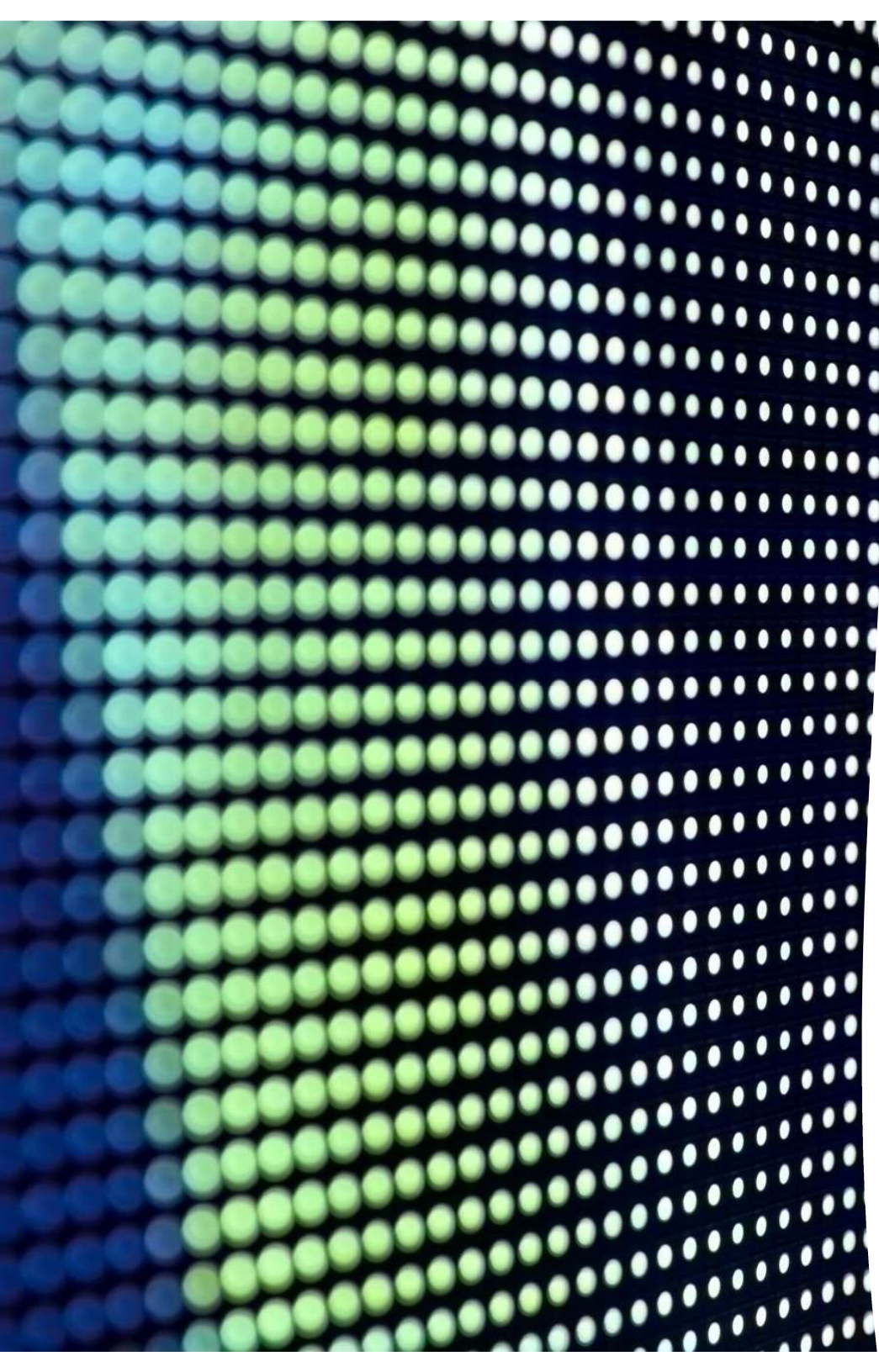
I received evaluative feedback



They responded to an email that I could have

Interpretation

- They're upset with me
- They're ignoring me
- I'm doing badly
- They don't trust my decisions



Niceness vs Kindness

Avoids discomfort vs
communicates honestly

Hints vs clarifies

Over-accommodates vs
sets expectations

What Makes Conversations Harder



WAITING TOO
LONG



EMOTIONAL
BUILDUP



ASSUMPTIONS



PUBLIC
CONVERSATIONS



ESCALATION

Communication Beyond Words

Tone

Body
language

Timing

Listening

Escalation /
de-escalation

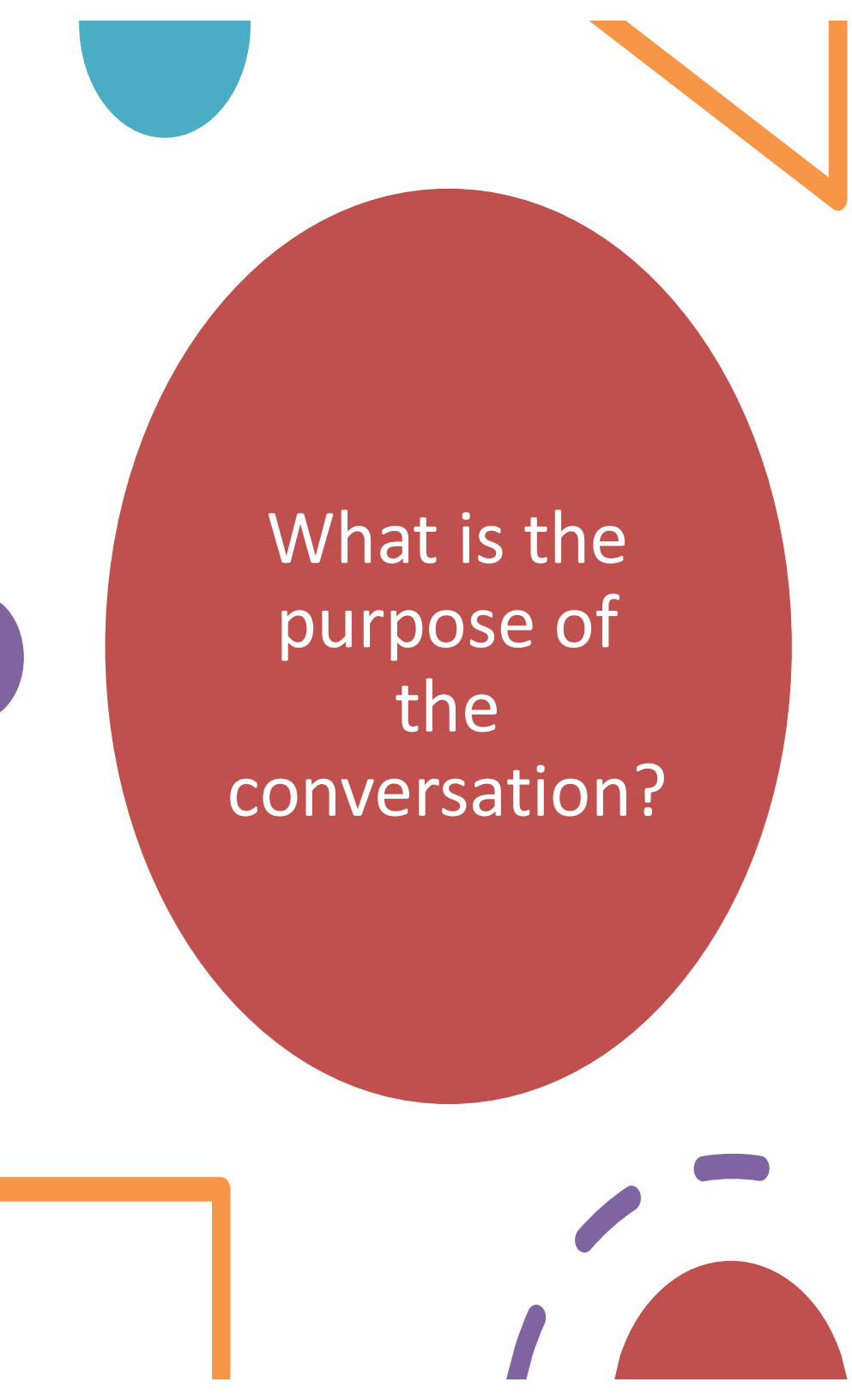


“Choose discomfort over
resentment.”

– Brené Brown

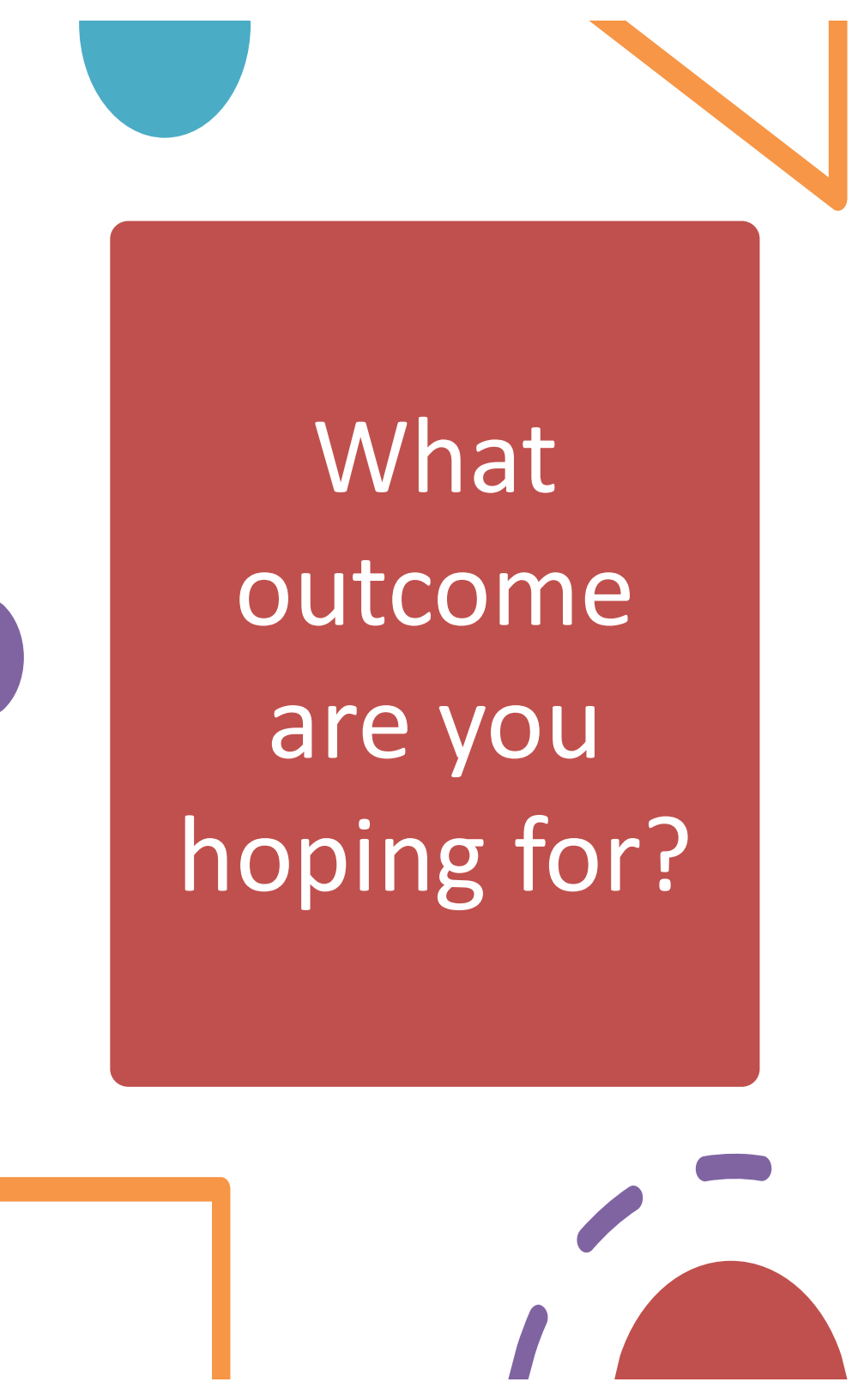


UNDERSTANDING THE GOAL



What is the
purpose of
the
conversation?

- Clarification?
- Support?
- Accountability?
- Feedback?
- Advocacy?
- Understanding?
- Problem-solving?



What
outcome
are you
hoping for?

- Agreement?
- Change?
- Resolution?
- Understanding?
- Acknowledgment?
- Support?

Purpose vs Outcome

Purpose

- Communicate Clearly
- Advocate respectfully
- Seek understanding
- Address concern

Outcome

- May or may not change
- May still hear “no”
- May still disagree
- May not resolve immediately

A conversation can still be successful even if the outcome is not what you hoped for.

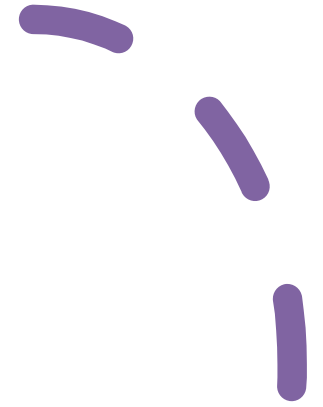
Within Your Control vs Outside Your Control

Within Your Control

- Preparation
- Professionalism
- Tone
- Clarity
- Listening
- Honesty
- Respect

Outside Your Control

- Reactions
- Feelings
- Agreement
- Final Outcomes
- Decisions



We can control intention
but not fully control
impact.

Before the Conversation



Clarify the
issue



Identify
assumptions



Understand
your goal



Consider
timing

During the Conversation



Stay specific



Ask questions

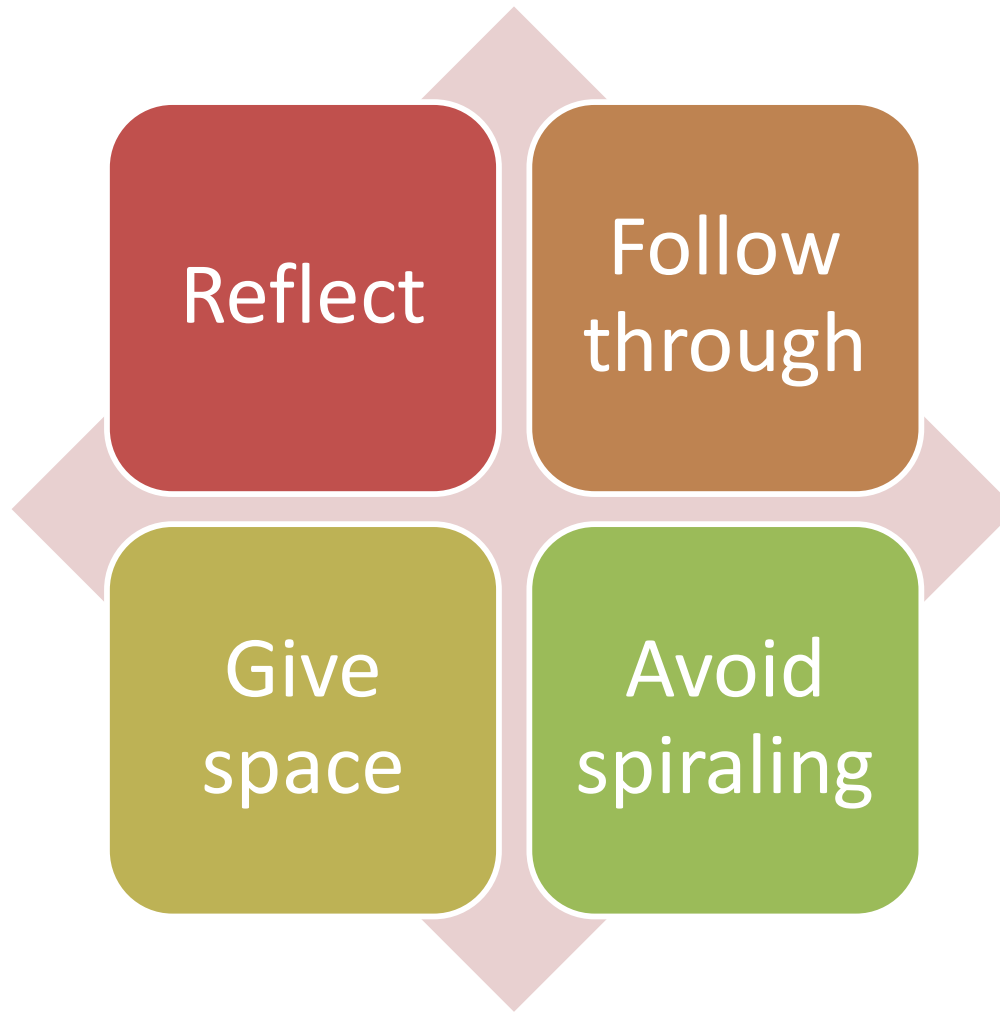


Listen fully



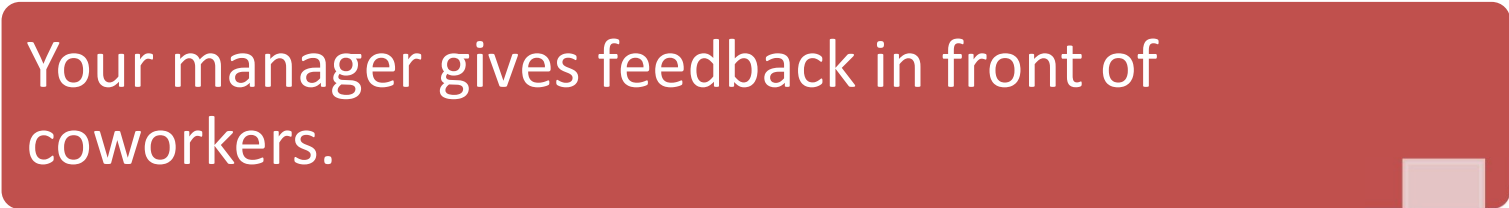
Stay calm

After the Conversation



Scenario Discussion

Your manager gives feedback in front of coworkers.



What assumptions might happen?



What could escalate this?



What might a productive response look like?



Back to conversation...



HOW MIGHT YOU
APPROACH IT
DIFFERENTLY?



WHAT IS THE
ACTUAL GOAL?



WHAT
ASSUMPTIONS
EXIST?



WHAT WENT WELL?



WHAT COULD HAVE
GONE BETTER?



You still may not look forward to the conversation... but maybe you feel more prepared to sit in it.