



# Giving and Receiving Feedback

HARVARD SEAS HUMAN  
RESOURCES

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# Agenda

- Objective, Why, What, When, and Where
- Preparation, Mindsets, and the “Art” of Receiving Feedback
- Listening and Open-Ended Questions
- Feedback Formulas
- Meaningful Conversations Process 2025
- Key Takeaways, Q&A, and Resources



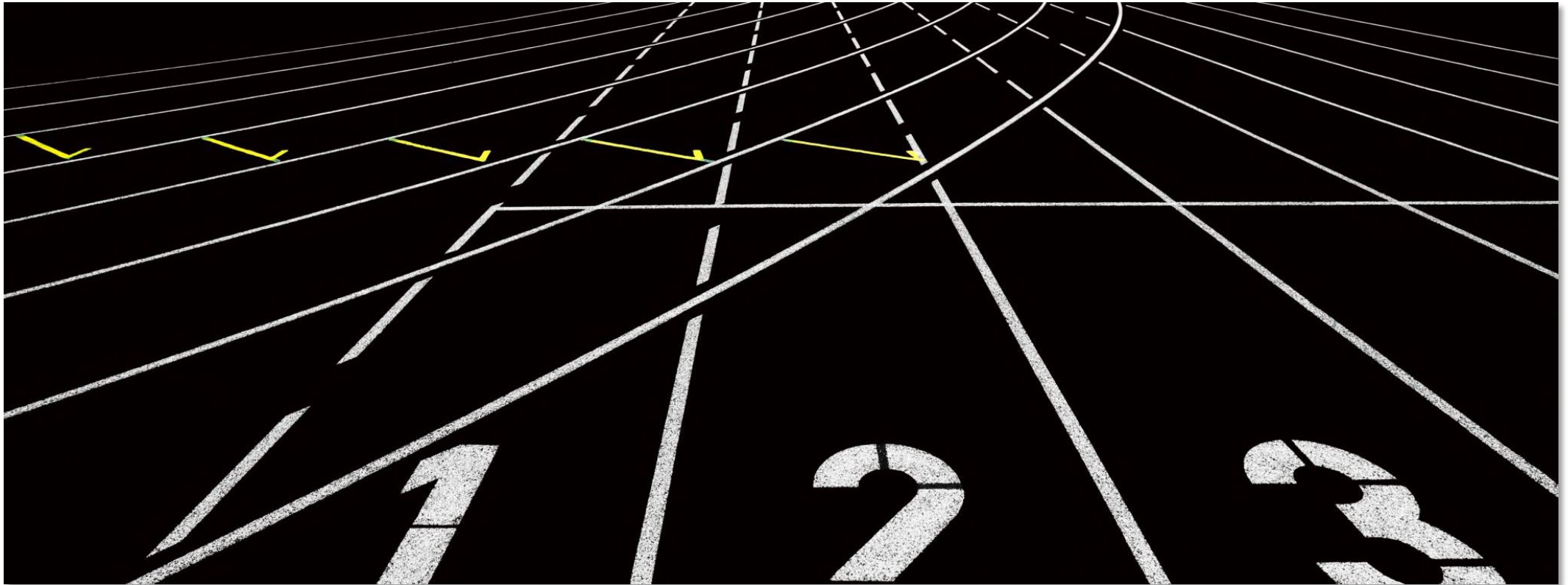
# Objective

To provide staff with guidance and tools that enable you to have effective and meaningful conversations involving performance feedback.

*\*Giving and receiving ongoing feedback is a vital driver of meaningful conversations.*



# Getting Started





# Check-in

- What do you **value** about receiving feedback?
- What **works well** for you in conversations with others when receiving feedback?
- What **doesn't work well** for you in these conversations?
- What **challenges** have you faced, or are you currently facing, relative to receiving feedback?

# Giving and Receiving Feedback: Why



- Creates **connectivity** around how an individual's work **impacts** the organization.
- Generates innovative **ideas, options, and solutions.**
- Improves **accountability, trust, and respect.**
- Influences **positive behaviors and outcomes.**
- Provides **clarity and transparency** around expectations.

# Giving and Receiving Feedback: What, When, and Where

## What?

- Feedback can be positive, constructive, or difficult

## When?

- It can be a planned and intentional engagement or could occur “in the moment”
- Recommend a frequency of at least quarterly; ongoing even better

## Where?

- Private 1:1 vs. in a group setting



# Feedback in Times of Uncertainty



- Feedback and meaningful conversations are **part** of an **ongoing, standard SEAS process**.
- Approach is **consistent** and **aligned** with **university norms**.
- Meaningful conversations and feedback **provide** an **opportunity** to:
  - **Reflect**
  - **Engage in growth and development discussions**
  - **Ensure ongoing clarity on expectations**



# Giving and Receiving Feedback: Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Confirm** with manager on **scheduled meetings**.
- ☐ Maintain an **open-mind**.
- ☐ **Prepare** yourself to actively **listen** to, and **receive**, feedback.
- ☐ **Reflect in advance** on your goals, priorities, and accomplishments.
- ☐ **Consider** how you've demonstrated **growth, development, and progress**.
- ☐ **Determine questions** to ask, **topics** to discuss, and areas **where further guidance or clarity is needed**.
- ☐ **Identify challenges, potential solutions, and ideas** on how or where you could adjust **moving forward**.

# Mindsets: Fixed and Growth

## Fixed Mindset

Sees basic qualities as fixed traits

Avoid challenges

Thinks talent alone creates success

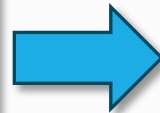
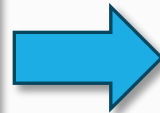
Additional effort is a waste of time and energy

Gives up easily

Ignores feedback

Lacks resiliency

Worries about looking bad or making mistakes



## Growth Mindset

Believes basic qualities can be developed

Thrives on challenges

Talent or innate abilities are merely a starting point

Puts energy into learning and improving

Persists even when things get difficult

Listens to, learns from, and applies feedback

Perseveres through, or quickly recovers from, difficult conditions

Focuses on the process, not just the results

# The “Art” of Receiving Feedback



- ☐ Be an active participant.
- ☐ Actively **listen** and **seek** to understand.
- ☐ Ask clarifying, open-ended questions.
- ☐ Assume positive intent.
- ☐ Create shared goals and action plans.
- ☐ Avoid defensive responses.
- ☐ Recognize and **manage** triggers.
- ☐ Express gratitude.
- ☐ Make conscious decisions about how to use the feedback.

# Listening Skills

| Skills  | Phrases / Behaviors   |
|---|---|
| <b>Create the Right Environment:</b> Set aside physical distractions to focus completely on the other person. | <b>Speaker:</b> <i>“Can we talk about a challenging situation that I am having?”</i><br><br><b>Listener:</b> <i>“This is a good time. I will silence my phone and close the door to give you 100% of my attention.”</i> |
| <b>Seek to Understand:</b><br>Focus on the speaker's message, rather than your response.                      | <b>Bracketing:</b> <i>Imagine putting aside your nagging thoughts or the debate</i><br><br><b>Body Language:</b> <i>Lean forward, establish and maintain eye contact, comfortable posture</i>                           |



# Listening Skills, Cont'd

| Skills  | Phrases / Behaviors  |
|---|--|
| <b>Paraphrase:</b> Validate the speaker's message by rephrasing, using your own words to confirm their meanings. Use reflective language. | <i>"As I hear it, you..."</i><br><i>"I'm picking up that you..."</i><br><i>"It sounds like you..."</i>   |
| <b>Perception Check:</b> Check your belief(s) about what the speaker feels or thinks – unspoken assumptions, conclusions, feelings.       | <i>"It appears that you place a high value on..."</i><br><i>"So, the way you're feeling now is that..."</i><br><i>"You seem to have a sense of..."</i> |

# Exercise: Practicing Listening

*Scenario: Pre-think about a topic you're familiar with and can speak to for 2 minutes.*

- **Exercise:** Random groupings of people in breakout rooms (**10 minutes**).
  - Group: Decides who will be the speaker, listener, and observer.
  - Speaker: Determines topic and shares description (**for 2 minutes**) of a movie, book, article, work challenge, etc..
  - Listeners: Listens, then provides **1 minute** recap of what they heard.
  - Observers: Provide **1 minute** of observations and additional feedback.
  - With the remaining time, swap speaker, listener, observer roles and repeat exercise.
- **Return to main group:** Debrief (**5 minutes**)

# Open Ended Questions

Open-ended questions help managers and staff to more clearly understand what is happening, what is needed, and to discover different ways of thinking and acting to be more satisfied and fully contributing to our roles.

*What, How, When, Where, Who, Why\**

# Open Ended Questions Examples

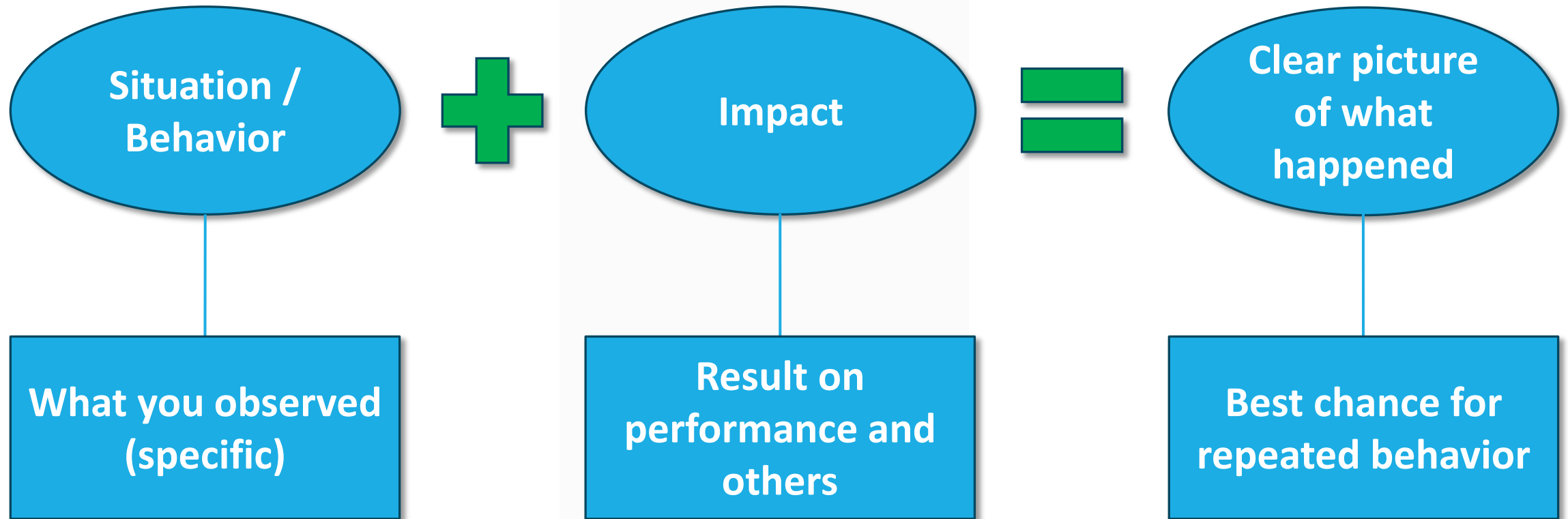
- ☐ **What** priorities should I focus on this year?
- ☐ **How** will I know if I'm on the right track?
- ☐ **When** are the best days and times for us to meet?
- ☐ **Who** else might be a resource to me (or us)?
- ☐ **Why** do we use this process over that one?
- ☐ **What** is your (our) understanding about the project?
- ☐ **What** might I (we) do differently (to achieve success)?
- ☐ **How** can I (we) best mitigate xyz risk?



# Open Ended Questions Examples, Cont'd

- ☐ **What** impact do you want me to have this year?
- ☐ **What** do you need from me?
- ☐ **What** would you like to see from me in advance of our meetings?
- ☐ **How** will I know which areas I can improve in?
- ☐ **How** can I best prepare for our meetings?
- ☐ **Why** is this project a higher priority over that one?

# Feedback Formula: Positive



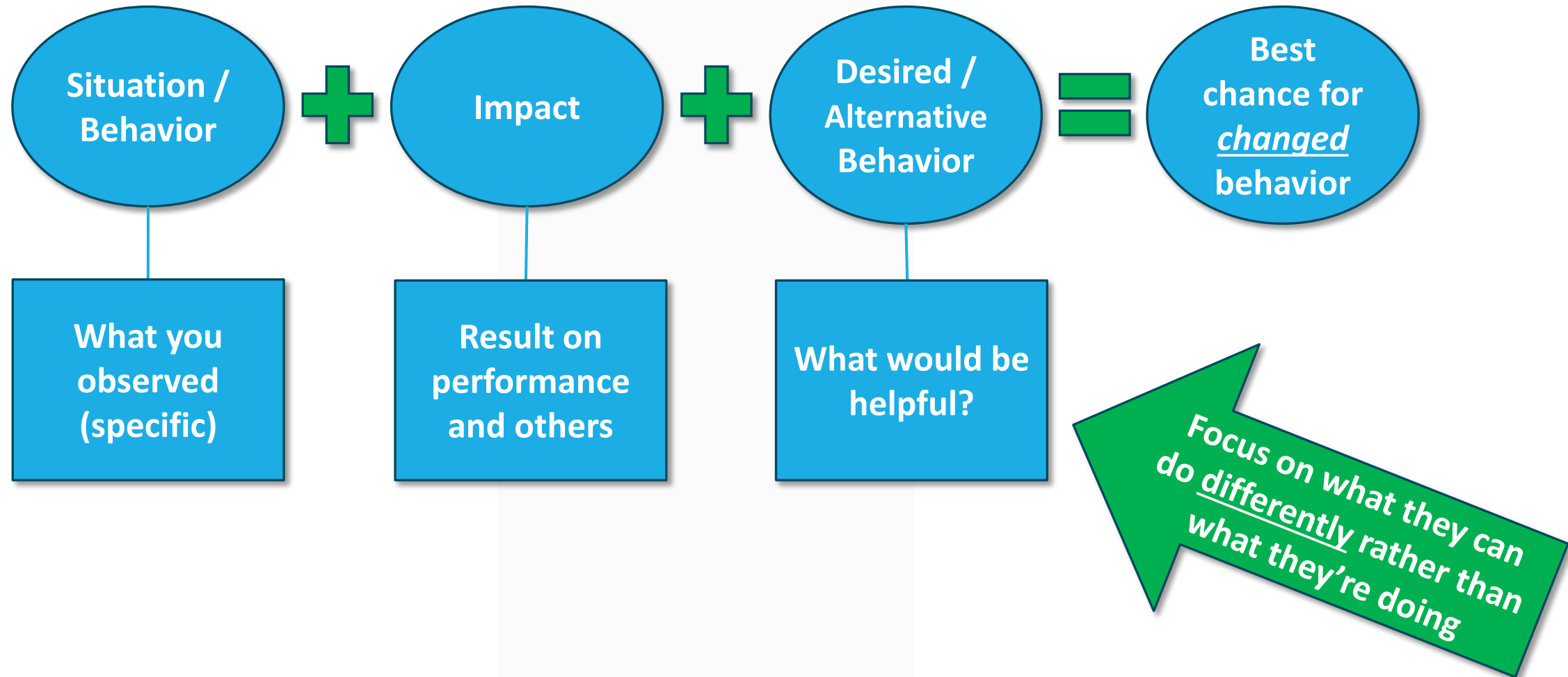


## Positive Feedback Example

- **Situation:** I enjoyed partnering with you on resolution of that time sensitive reimbursement issue last week.
- **Behavior:** You acknowledged the urgency of my request for help and immediately made time available to resolve. You helped us prioritize what information was needed, from whom, by when, and in which formats. You then offered to partner further with me on next steps.
- **Impact:** The issue was resolved swiftly and correctly. Our client expressed appreciation for treating their issue as a priority. I am confident that I have a trusted, problem-solving partnership with you moving forward.

# Giving and Receiving Feedback

## Formula: Constructive





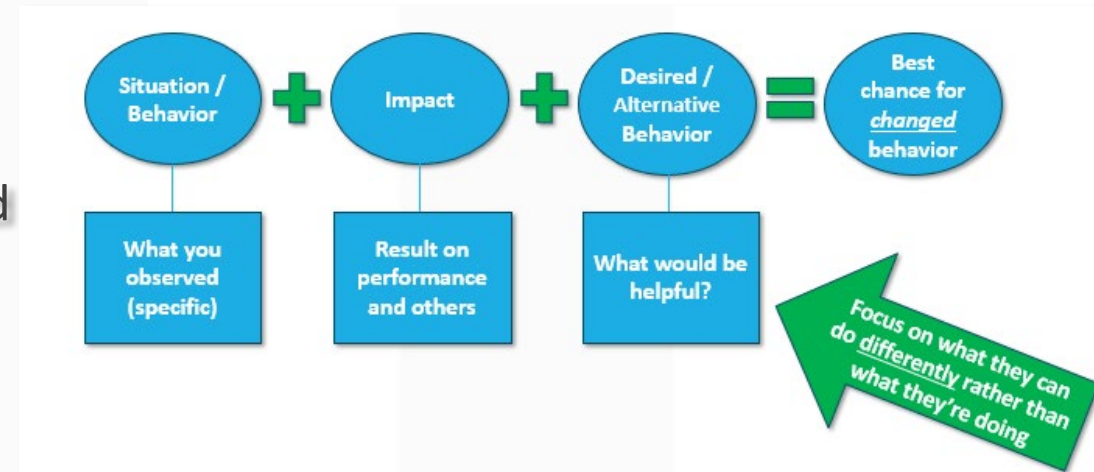
# Constructive Feedback Example



- **Situation / Behavior:** A reimbursement deadline was missed due to time lost reconciling incomplete work that was initially submitted.
- **Impact:** The department incurred late fees which put them over budget. The client expressed dissatisfaction about this. Others had to pitch in last minute to help resolve this which led to delayed completion of their other work.
- **Desired Behavior (Questions to Explore and Gather Insights):**
  - What was this experience like for you?
  - What could be done differently in the future to ensure completed work is submitted?
  - What additional guidance or tools could be utilized to get a better outcome?
  - How can we partner more effectively on this going forward?

# Exercise: Constructive Feedback

- **Scenario:** Think of a when you had to deliver constructive feedback and it didn't go as well as you would have liked.
- **Exercise:** Random groupings in rooms (**10 minutes**).
  - Deliverer: Describe 1) situation, 2) how they handled it, 3) why it didn't go as well as they'd have liked.
  - Listeners: Provide feedback using the Constructive Feedback Model as reference.
  - Deliverer: Given the feedback, discuss briefly what they might do differently in the future.
  - Swap roles and repeat the exercise halfway through.
- **Return (5 minutes):** Bring group back, how did it go?



# Meaningful Conversations: 2025

- Process Same as Last Year
- Instructions for Completing the Development Conversation Form
- Additional Thoughts
- Questions?





# Key Takeaways



- Seek regular opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations and receive feedback.
- Maintaining a growth mindset helps you receive and successfully apply feedback.
- Seek to understand, actively listen, and frame back understanding.
- Focus on situations, behaviors, impact, and ways forward.
- Open-ended questions help us understand what is happening and needed (e.g., different mindsets and behaviors) to increase satisfaction and productivity within our roles.
- Giving and receiving feedback can be practiced peer to peer, as well as between managers and direct reports.



***\*Italicized resources were used as reference in creation of this deck***

# Supporting Resources

## Live Courses:

- [\*Giving and Receiving Feedback \(CWD\)\\*\*](#)
- [\*Navigating Difficult Conversations \(CWD\)\*](#)

## Videos:

- [\*High Impact Development Conversations\\*\*](#)
- [\*Performance and Feedback Conversation\\*\*](#)
- [\*Practical Tips for Coaching Conversations\\*\*](#)
- [\*Giving and Receiving Feedback\*](#)
- [\*When Performance Conversations are Challenging\\*\*](#)

## Reference Guides, Articles, and Books:

- [\*Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most\*](#)
- [\*Giving and Receiving Effective Feedback\\*\*](#)
- [\*Giving Feedback Guide Sheet\\*\*](#)
- [\*How to Have Difficult Conversations\\*\*](#)

## SEAS Performance Page:

- [\*FY25 Year-end Performance and Development Conversations\*](#)



**Q&A**



**Thank you!**