

How to handle feedback that stings

Receiving feedback that stings isn't easy - especially when it's about how you lead. But responding well is one of the fastest ways to build trust with your team.

Here's a practical guide to help you handle difficult feedback constructively.

1

Before the conversation (if possible)



Take a breath. Feedback might feel personal, but it's almost always about behaviour, not identity.



Remember: feedback is a chance to grow and show your team you listen.

2

During the conversation- use this simple flow:

1. Acknowledge



"Thanks for sharing that - I appreciate your honesty."

2. Clarify (if needed)



"Could you give me a bit more detail or an example, so I can better understand?"

3. Reflect



"That's helpful - I hadn't seen it that way. I can see how that might have impacted you."

4. Respond calmly



"I'll take some time to reflect on that and think about how I can approach it differently."

5. Follow up - later that week



"I've thought more about what you said - here's what I've taken away and what I'm going to do differently."



Tip: Keep your body language open, make eye contact, and don't interrupt. The way you listen matters as much as what you say.

3

Want to feel more confident handling feedback conversations?

Our [blog shares even more practical tips to help you respond to feedback as a manager](#). And if you want to keep those conversations going, Breathe's performance tools can help make regular check-ins easier - for you and your team.



See how Breathe supports performance conversations