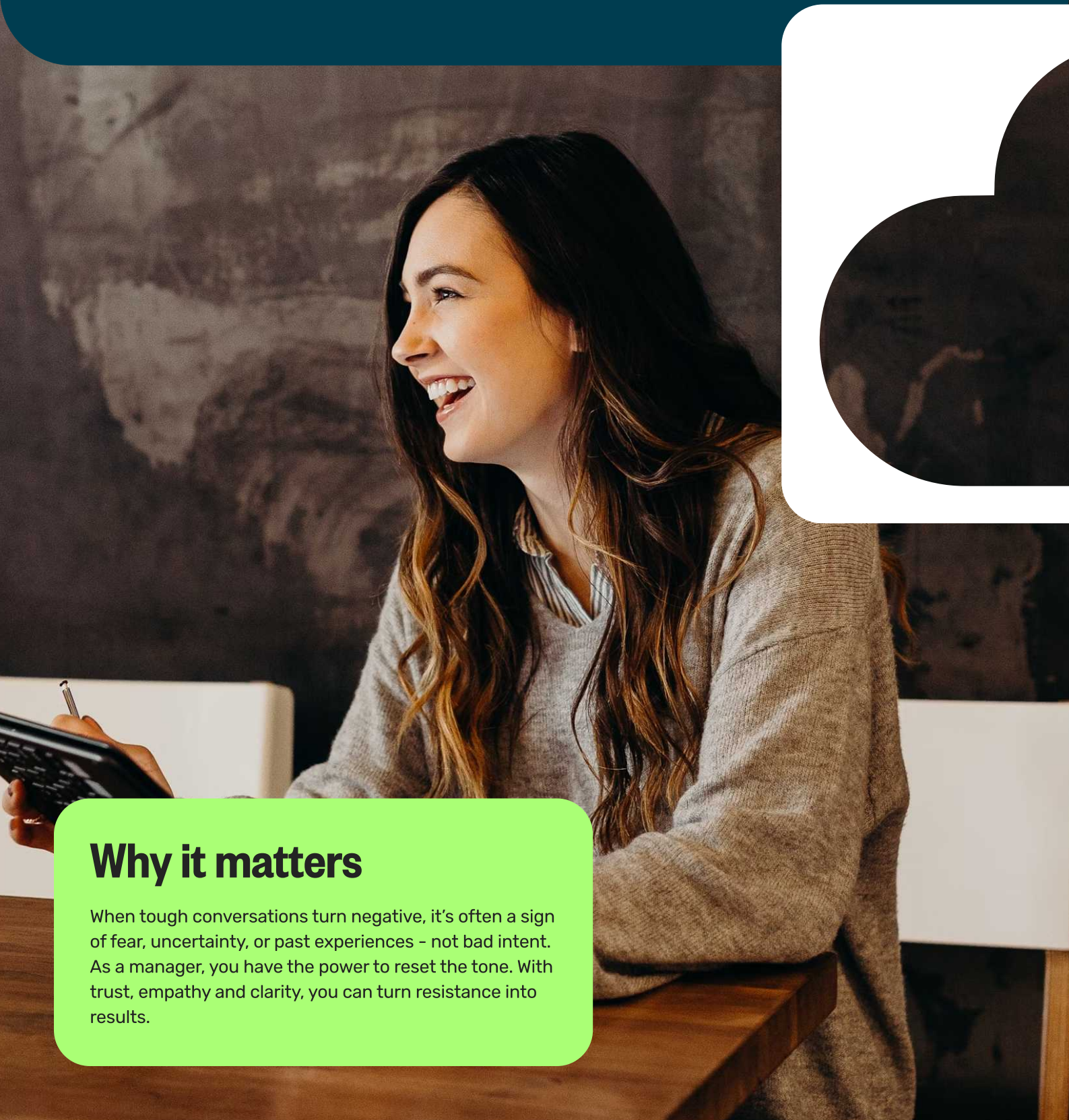




From **resistance** to **results**: Managing **negative** mindsets

A playbook for line managers



Why it matters

When tough conversations turn negative, it's often a sign of fear, uncertainty, or past experiences - not bad intent. As a manager, you have the power to reset the tone. With trust, empathy and clarity, you can turn resistance into results.

Spot the signals

- Look out for signs that a mindset may be slipping into negativity:
 - Frequent “yes, but...” responses
 - Crossed arms, closed body language, avoiding eye contact
 - References to the past (“we’ve always done it this way”)
 - Low energy, dismissive or deflated comments

Spotting these early gives you a chance to step in with empathy before things spiral.

3 steps to reset the tone

Pause

Take a breath, avoid reacting defensively

Probe

Ask open questions to uncover the real concern

Pivot

Bring the conversation back to shared goals and outcomes

👉 Repeatable, simple, and effective in almost any situation.

Common scenarios and how to respond

1. The resistant colleague

💬 “We’ve always done it this way – why change now?”

Your move:

- Acknowledge: “I get that change can feel unsettling.”
- Reframe: “Here’s how this shift will make things easier for you and the team.”

2. The deflated team member

💬 “What’s the point? It won’t work anyway.”

Your move:

- Explore: “What makes you feel it won’t work?”
- Reconnect: “Let’s test this step together and see what we learn.”

3. The defensive reaction

💬 “Why are you picking on me?”

Your move:

- Lower tension: “I’m not here to criticise – I want us to solve this together.”
- Refocus: “We both want this project to succeed – let’s look at how we can get there.”

4. The defensive reaction

💬 [Crossed arms, short replies]

Your move:

- Gently probe: “I’ve noticed you’re quiet – what’s on your mind?”
- Invite openness: “Your perspective matters – let’s work through this together.”

Manager's reset phrase bank

- **Keep these in your toolkit when negativity appears:**
 - "Help me understand what's worrying you."
 - "Let's take this one step at a time."
 - "I hear your concern - here's what we can control right now."
 - "We're on the same team here."
 - "What would make this feel more workable for you?"

Quick win

Before you go in, write down the result you want from the conversation - not just what you plan to say.

Next step

Keep the momentum going by recording the outcomes of your conversations in **Breathe's performance management tools**.

See how Breathe supports performance conversations

- ✓ Track discussions and actions in one place
- ✓ Spot patterns early
- ✓ Build a record of progress over time



[Log your next conversation in Breathe](#)

