

Feedback Conversations

Feedback conversations can be scheduled conversations that are part of a formal performance review process, monthly growth conversations, or they can be informal chats that happen in the moment or close to an event. The best conversations are planned and have **form and flow** that help us navigate priority topics and achieve specific outcomes. The two most impactful phases are Creative Alignment and Contracting — these are made richer by having higher levels of oxytocin than cortisol.



Oxytocin Unlocks Generosity in Conversations

Acting as a neurotransmitter, oxytocin is a powerful hormone released by the brain when we're having a really good conversation with someone. It promotes empathy and emotional connection and makes us more generous in those conversations. Where high levels of cortisol cause us to feel stressed, oxytocin counters those effects lowering our blood pressure and helping us to regulate our emotions better.

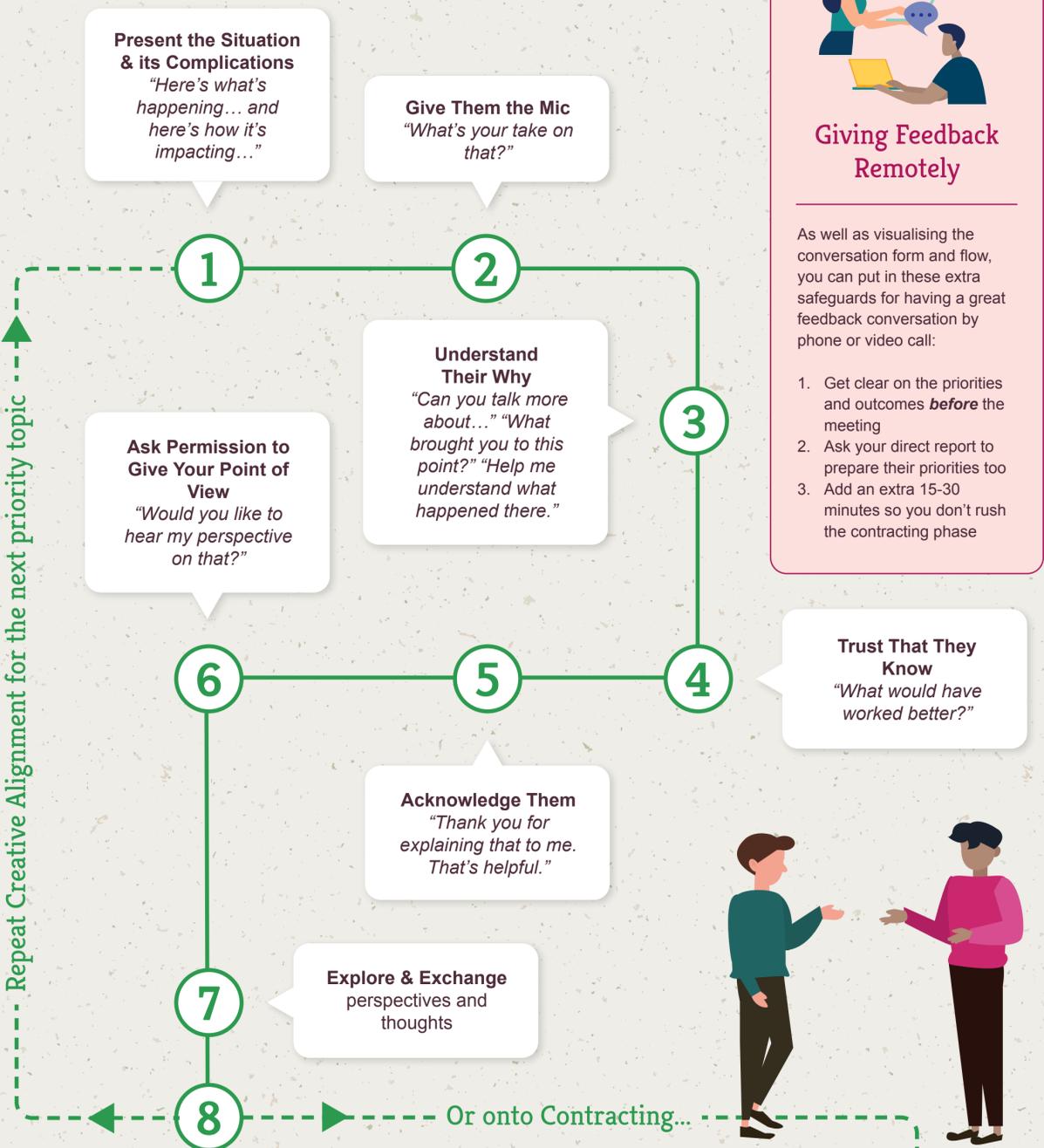
Take responsibility for making sure the other person wants to talk and listen to us because this means we're putting energy into building trust and creating an emotional connection.

Think about feedback as an exercise in creative alignment rather than "There's something I need to tell you" because this helps us keep our emotional charge in check by focusing on facts and results.

Encourage your direct report to come up with the solution because this increases their self-confidence, oxytocin levels and commitment to the actions that the solution needs.

CREATIVE ALIGNMENT

begins from here...



Giving Feedback Remotely

As well as visualising the conversation form and flow, you can put in these extra safeguards for having a great feedback conversation by phone or video call:

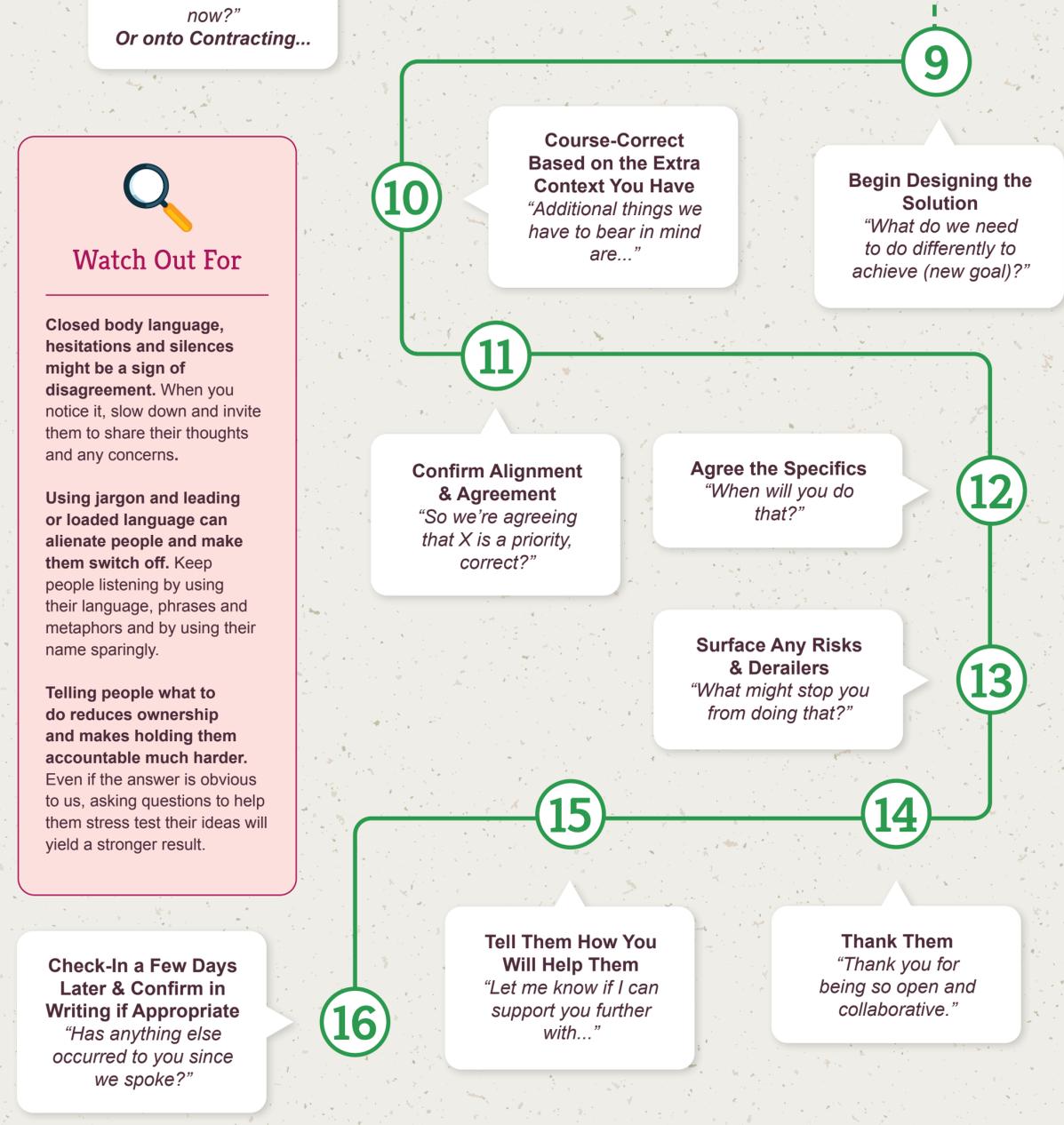
1. Get clear on the priorities and outcomes **before** the meeting
2. Ask your direct report to prepare their priorities too
3. Add an extra 15-30 minutes so you don't rush the contracting phase

Trust That They Know
"What would have worked better?"



CONTRACTING

begins from here...



Watch Out For

Closed body language, hesitations and silences might be a sign of disagreement. When you notice it, slow down and invite them to share their thoughts and any concerns.

Using jargon and leading or loaded language can alienate people and make them switch off. Keep people listening by using their language, phrases and metaphors and by using their name sparingly.

Telling people what to do reduces ownership and makes holding them accountable much harder. Even if the answer is obvious to us, asking questions to help them stress test their ideas will yield a stronger result.

Check-In a Few Days Later & Confirm in Writing if Appropriate
"Has anything else occurred to you since we spoke?"

MENTAL HEALTH

"Is it okay if we talk about...?"

Tread compassionately, ask permission to explore things and make it safe for your team member to talk and not feel judged.

CONFLICT & STRONG MISALIGNMENT

"I know this issue is a difficult one for us both but I really want us to work through this together so we can get things back on track. Where/How do you think we can start?"

Stick to the facts and make your intention clear from the start — this can go a long way in defusing the emotional charge between you.

TEAM MEETINGS & ONLINE GROUP CHATS

"How about we take this offline? Are you free after this meeting to work through that together?"

At the first sign of a heated exchange during a team meeting or on a group chat, agree to take the conversation out of the public forum and schedule time to talk when you've both

had time to cool off. Allowing a heated exchange to happen in a public setting makes people feel stressed, threatened and attacked. Cortisol goes up and oxytocin levels deplete very fast resulting in the conflict escalating, us losing control of the outcome, and unhealthy dynamics playing out among team members who witnessed the emotionally charged disagreement.



Spotlight On...

It's natural to feel anxious about raising a tricky or sensitive issue because we worry how the other person will react or because we feel so strongly about it.



From the leadership principles of Leaders Who Coach™

Online Course
★★★★★
Recommended



Explore the full curriculum and enrolment plans at LeadersWhoCoach.Today

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