

Challenging reactions to feedback

What happens? Sometimes feedback touches on something important for the other person. Emotions take over and that's normal. It's a signal that the topic matters to them.

Examples of challenging reactions

Anger, sadness, defensiveness, going quiet, denial, cynicism, and more.

How to respond with maturity

- Zoom out → Take a step back and see the bigger picture (meta-position)
- Acknowledge the emotion → Let it be and describe what you notice
- Connect with the person → Show empathy and ask an open-ended question
- Only then → Return to the content or the goal of your conversation

Example phrases

"I notice you've gone quiet, what's on your mind?" "I can see this is having an impact on you. What's making you feel angry?" "I hear you bringing up John. I understand, and I'd like to stay focused on your part in this." "I hear you saying it's not a big deal, but I'd like to explain why this matters to me."

Always address the emotion first before returning to the topic.