



# The Power of Honest Conversations

WACUBO Business Management Institute

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# Three Key Questions

1

When is kindness cruel?

2

What makes us reluctant to have honest conversations?

3

How can we deliver performance feedback in a respectful, action-oriented way?

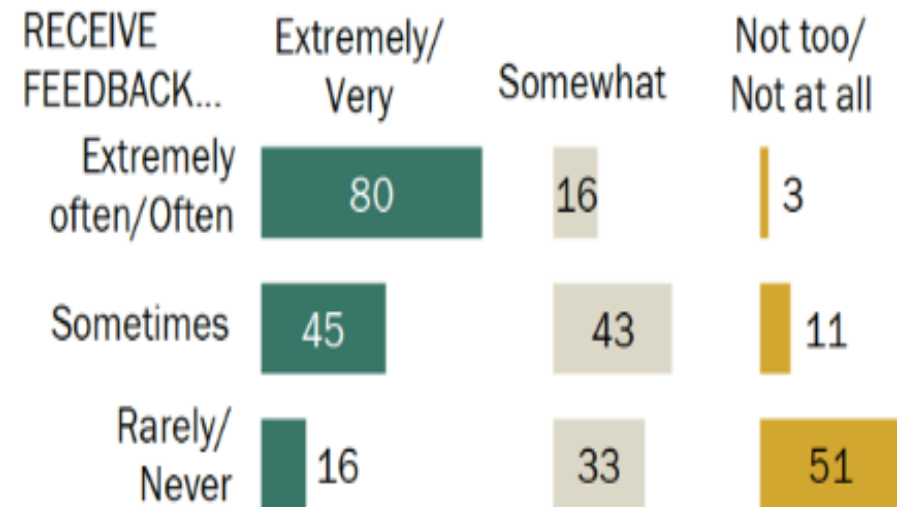
# Employees Want More Feedback

## About one-in-four workers say they rarely or never get feedback from their manager

*% of employed adults saying they receive feedback on how they're doing their job from their manager or supervisor ...*



*% of employed adults saying they are \_\_\_ satisfied with the amount of feedback they receive based on how often they receive feedback*



# Question

**What comes to mind when you think about giving feedback?**

# Question

## **When it comes to giving feedback, I:**

- Am almost always comfortable being direct and specific
- Worry that I am not direct or timely enough

# Question

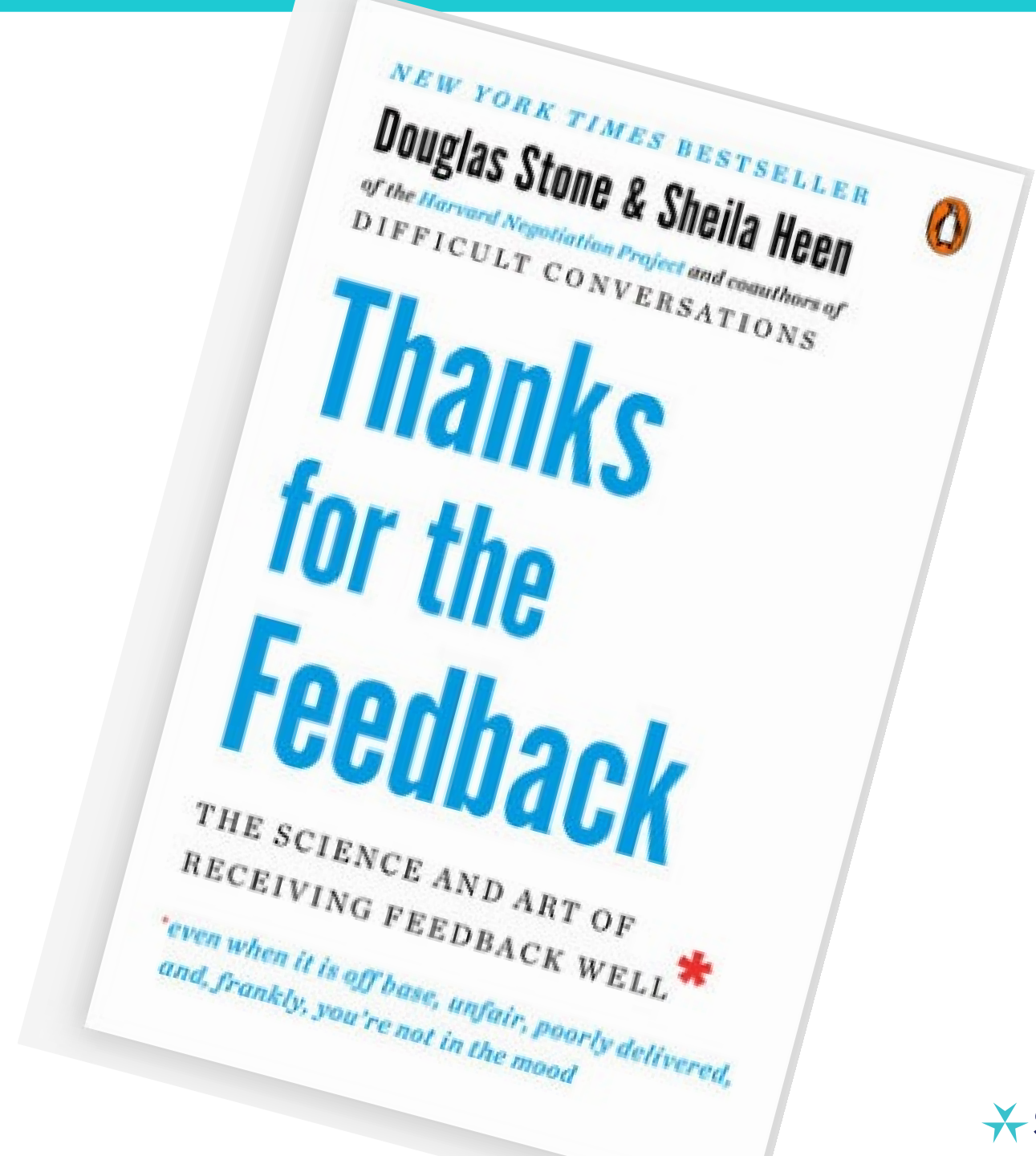
## **When it comes to giving feedback, I:**

- Sometimes receive feedback that I am too harsh
- Struggle to find the courage or right words

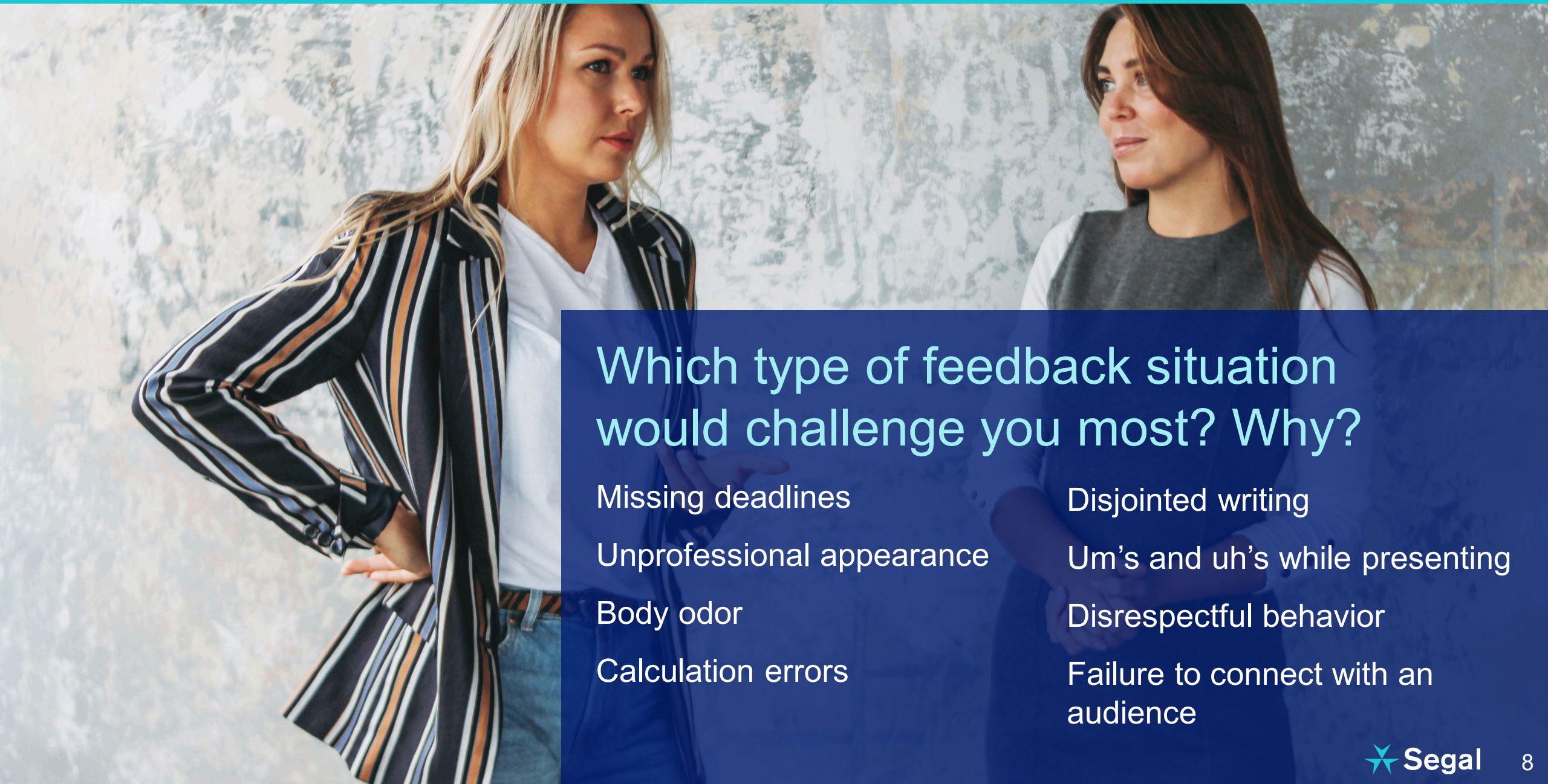
Appreciation

Coaching

Evaluation



# Conversation

A photograph of two women standing in front of a textured, light-colored wall. The woman on the left has blonde hair and is wearing a white shirt under a dark blazer with vertical stripes in blue, orange, and white. She has her hands on her hips and is looking towards the woman on the right. The woman on the right has long brown hair and is wearing a grey vest over a white long-sleeved shirt. She is looking back at the blonde woman.

Which type of feedback situation would challenge you most? Why?

Missing deadlines

Unprofessional appearance

Body odor

Calculation errors

Disjointed writing

Um's and uh's while presenting

Disrespectful behavior

Failure to connect with an audience



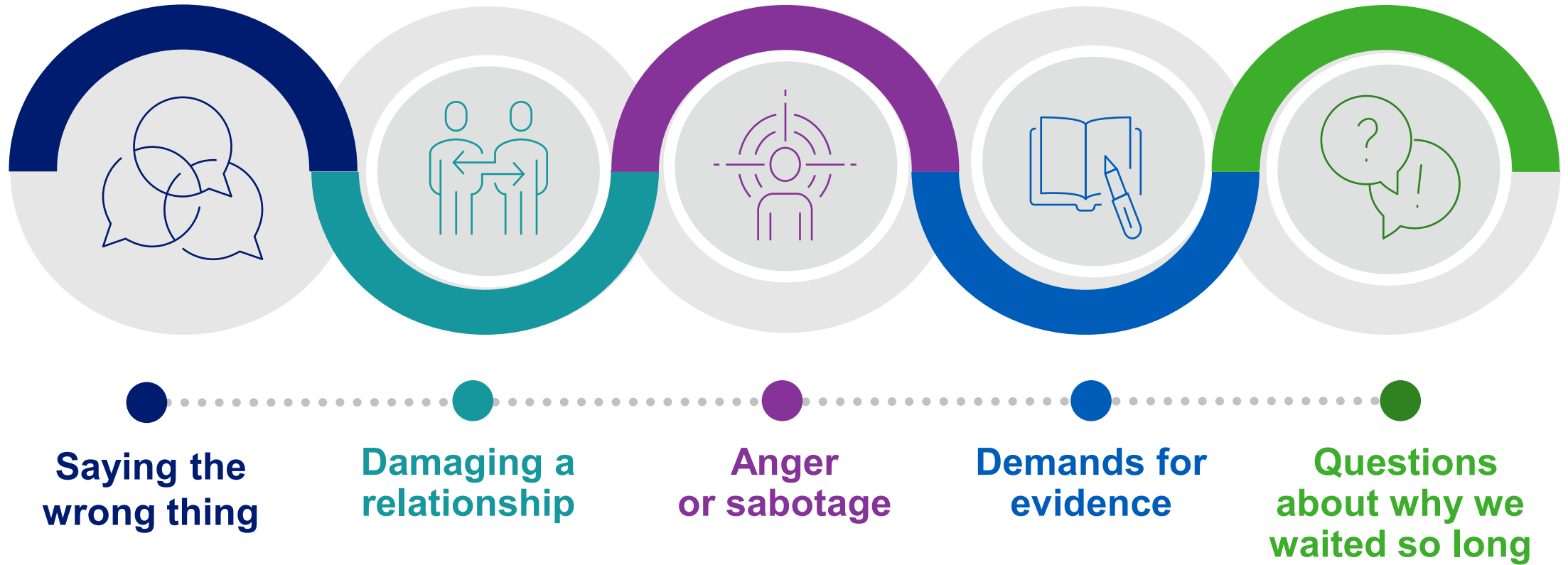
# Conversation



Why do we avoid honest conversations?

# Why Do We Avoid Honest Conversations?

We may fear:

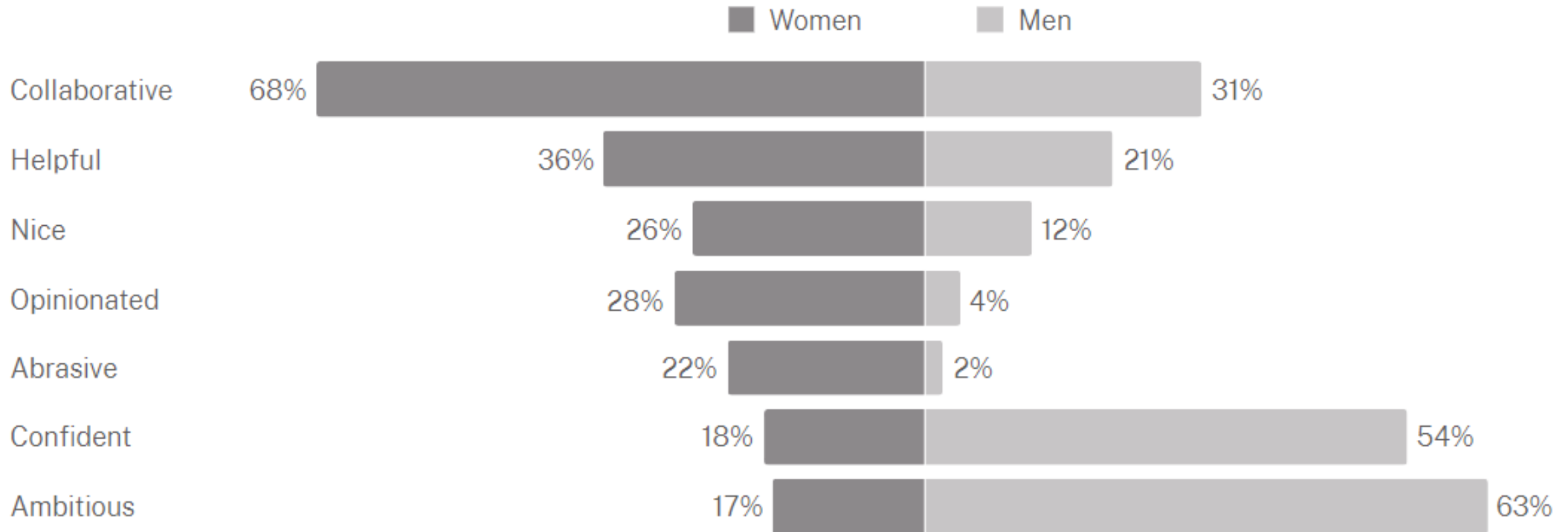


# Conversation



Have you ever received feedback that was both hard to hear and very valuable?  
Are you willing to share details?

# Personality feedback received, by gender

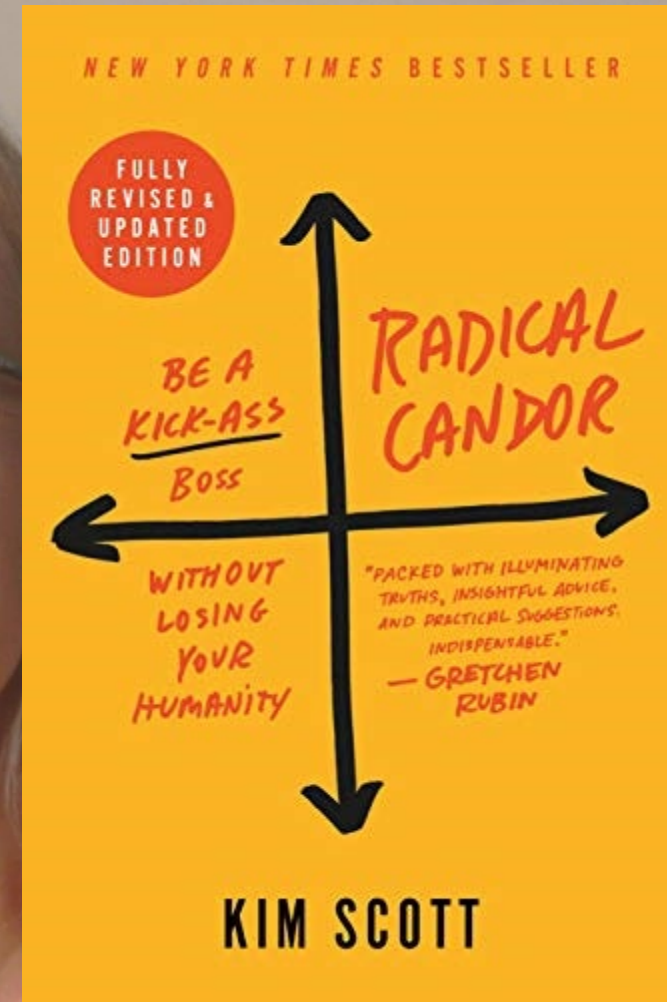
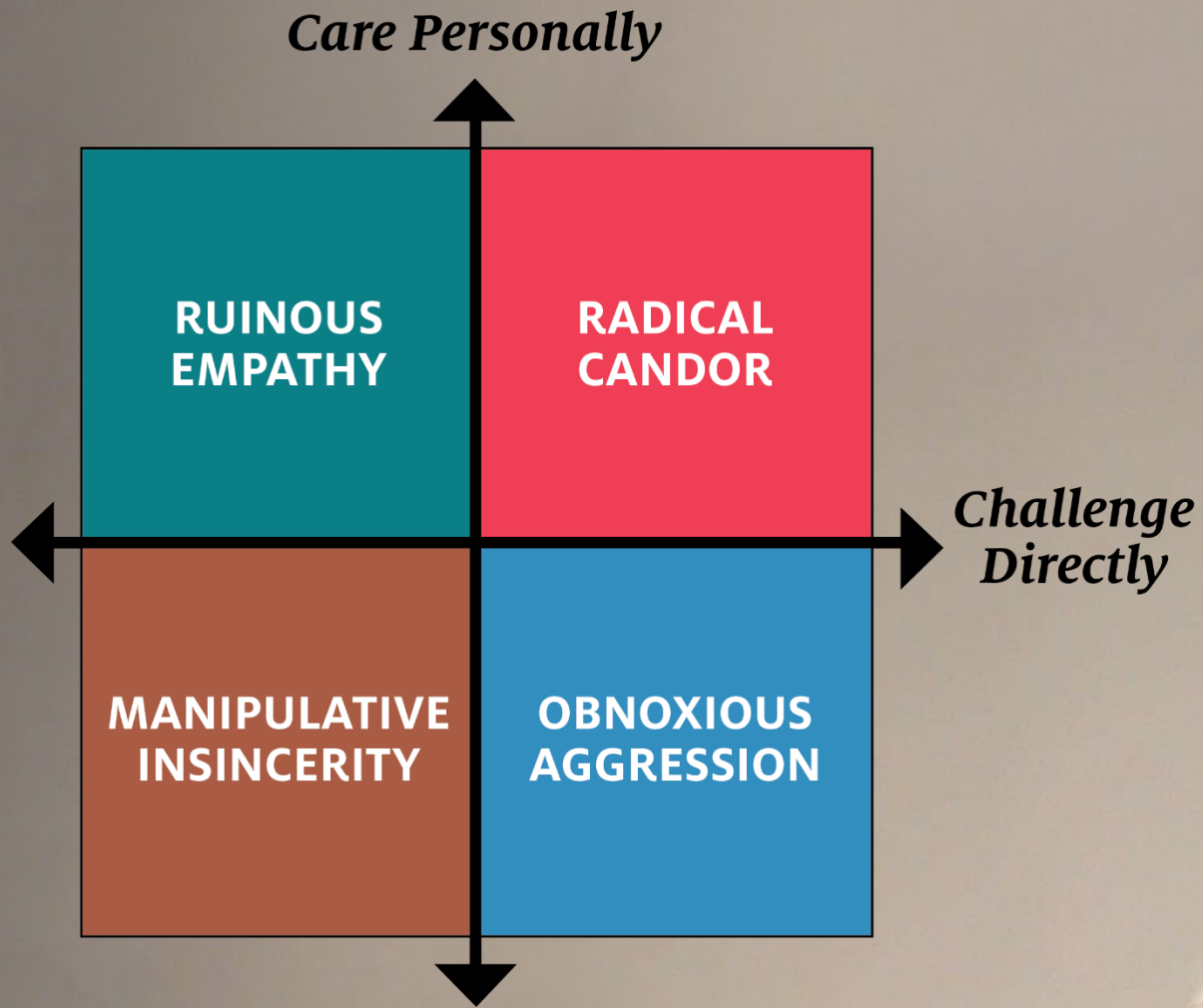


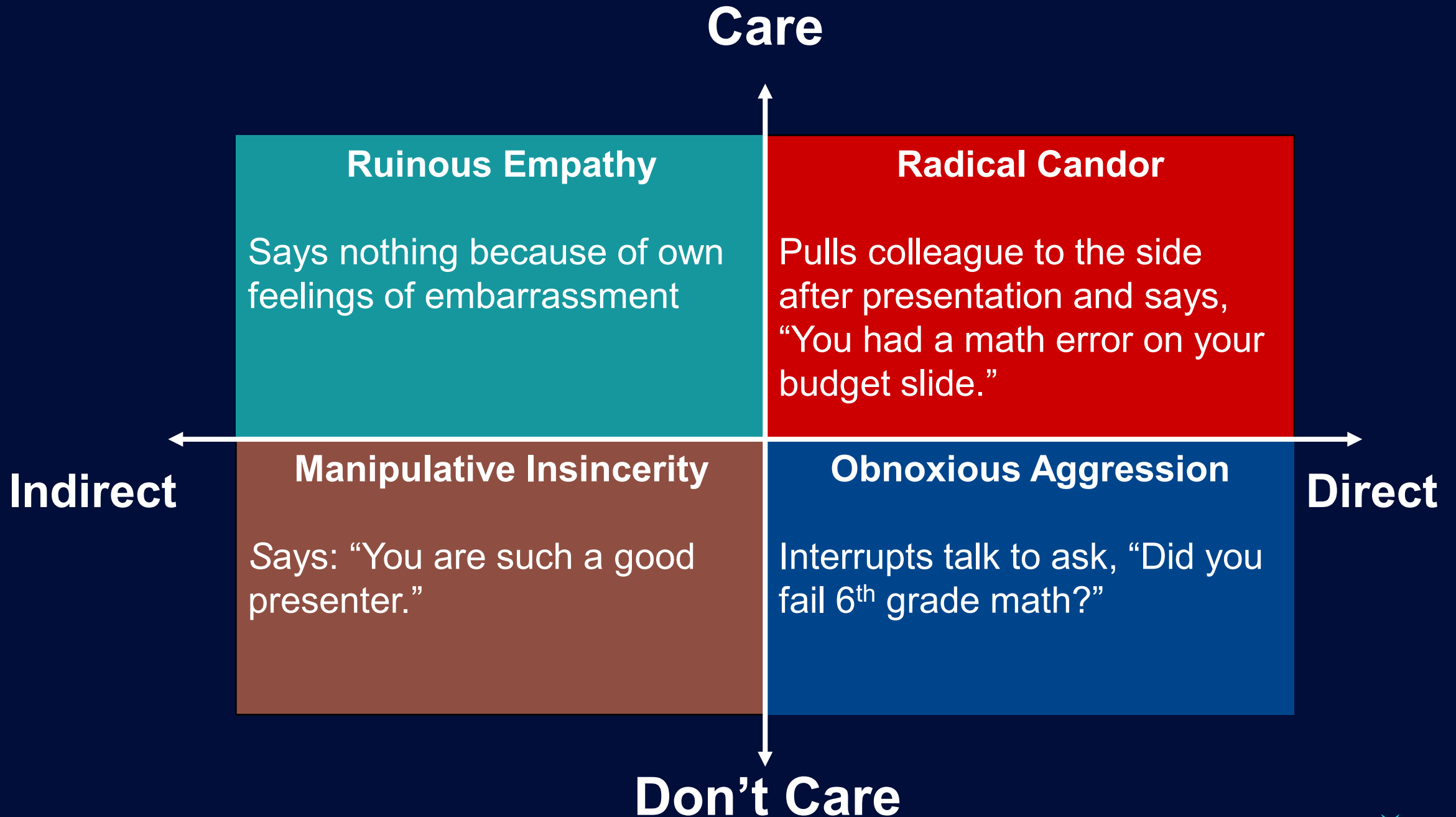
Source: 2022 Textio Language Bias in Performance Feedback report

# Men and Women Get Different Types of Feedback

<b>Development Feedback Area</b>	<b>Men are encouraged to:</b>	<b>Women are encouraged to:</b>
<b>Vision</b>	Set the vision	Focus on delivery
<b>Political Skills</b>	Leverage politics	Cope with politics
<b>Asserting Leadership</b>	Claim their space	Be cooperative
<b>Confidence</b>	Display more confidence	Be more confident

Source: <https://hbr.org/2021/02/research-men-get-more-actionable-feedback-than-women>





# The Nasty Email Conversation

You are the leader of a division of more than 100 people. One of your employees sent the following message to everyone in the division:

Dear Team,

Time is such an interesting concept. When I say timesheets are due on Friday at 5:00, I mean timesheets are due on Friday at 5:00. Many of you seem to think Friday at 5:00 means Friday at 6:00 or even the following Tuesday or Wednesday. Or maybe even never. Guess what? You are wrong and your lackadaisical attitude is not working for us.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Maxine

**Question:** Do you do anything? If so, what are the opening words to your conversation?



# What Is Your Conflict Style?





**Being responsive is important to you, but it seems less important to Pauline.**

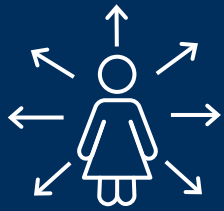
You repeatedly receive complaints that it takes Pauline up to 48 hours to respond inquiries.

The last time you confronted Pauline about this, she responded, “If I answer the phone every time someone calls, I’ll never be able to solve anyone’s problems. And don’t even get me started on keeping up with email or Teams...”.”

# Feedback Formula



**Context**



**Concern**



**Impact**



**Joint Problem Solving**



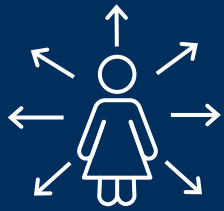
Mateo is a highly responsible new employee, but he asks questions constantly. You think he should be able to work more independently by now, but he asks for feedback and permission all the time.

**What are your options?**

# Feedback Formula



**Context**



**Concern**



**Impact**



**Joint Problem Solving**



Jericho is an eager new employee, and his work is outstanding. However, his work attire is odd. He shows up wearing three-piece suits or even tuxedos each day. He looks sharp but very out of place.

**What feedback would you provide?**



# Have You Established Clear Expectations?

Is it possible you have created the problem you are now facing?

# Be Clear about What You Want

Wait...what exactly DO you want?





# Be Clear about What You Want

Dress codes

The formality and tone of your communication with other departments

What needs to be reviewed before it goes out and what does not

Response times

Arrival times/Punctuality

Quality control protocols for things like data analysis and report writing

Autonomy



# Approaches to Avoid

The sandwich



# Approaches to Avoid

Caving in  
in response  
to emotion



# Approaches to Avoid

Overly forceful openings



# Approaches to Avoid

Saying you are unhappy, but not defining what you want



# Approaches to Avoid

Deciding on a solution without building an agreement



# Approaches to Avoid

Waiting until  
the annual review  
to share feedback



# Prepare to Give Feedback

What is your desired outcome?

What do you stand to gain and lose from having the conversation?

What are your emotions about this situation?

What worries you about having this conversation?

What reactions do you expect?

How might your emotions be affecting your evaluation and intentions?







Lewis has always run a tight ship. His people hit their deadlines and their work is consistently excellent.

You appreciated this until recently when you learned that Lewis routinely makes last-minute denials of approved vacations and prohibits staff from attending professional development programming so that they can be responsive to colleagues and community members.

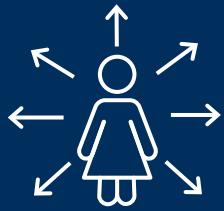
**You don't agree with his values, but you've routinely praised his group's work ethic.**

**Now what?**

# Feedback Formula



**Context**



**Concern**



**Impact**



**Joint Problem Solving**

# Words that Work



It **appears** to me ...

I want to **support** your success, so ...

I **feel** ...

Because I know you want to **advance** here ...

From my **perspective** ...

It has been **reported** to me ...

I'm **worried** about ...

I'm hoping you can help me **understand** ...

Could you **explain** ...

# Idea to remember

People want to be valued,  
respected, and **successful**



# Strategies to Improve Performance

Communicate the big picture

Establish exemplars

Regular, “digestible” feedback



What is one feedback  
commitment you will make  
going forward?

# Let's stay in touch

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