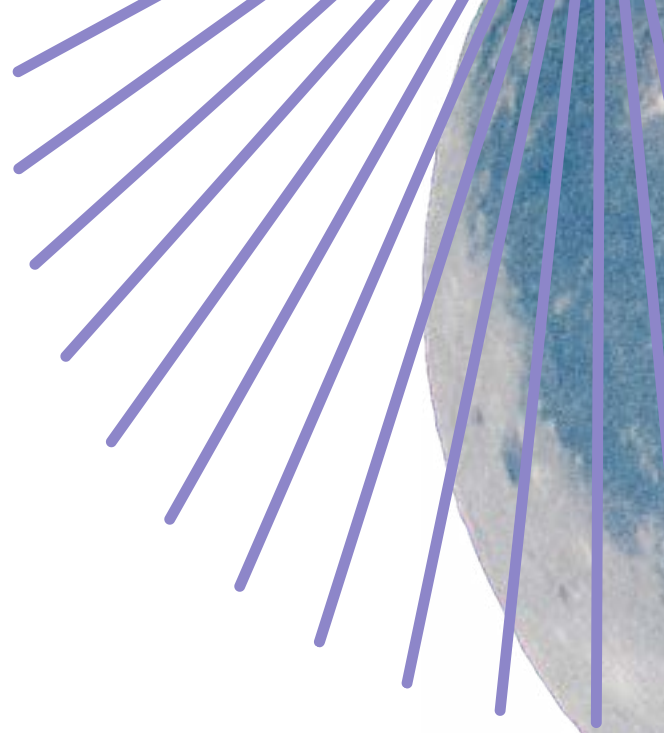
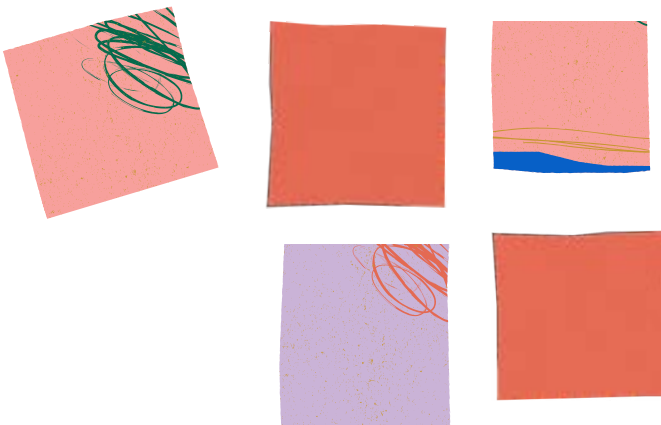




Support in Practice

Tools for Everyday Connection



Three Patterns That Create Friction

When support breaks down, it usually follows one of three patterns:

Assumptions over clarity Acting on what we think someone needs rather than what they've expressed.

Unspoken expectations Holding standards we haven't communicated — and feeling let down when they aren't met.

Withdrawal after tension Pulling back when something feels off instead of moving toward clarification.

These aren't failures. They're default responses — and they can be interrupted and improved.

Quick Check: Where Do You See Yourself?

Which of these patterns shows up most in your work?



Assumptions over clarity



Unspoken expectations



Withdrawal after tension



The Framework

A Tool for Everyday Interactions



Notice Pay attention to shifts — in tone, responsiveness, energy, or engagement. Something has changed.



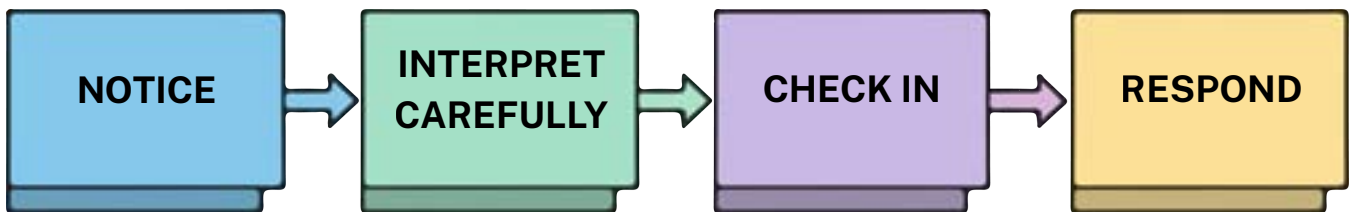
Interpret carefully Pause before drawing conclusions. Behavior is often shaped by underlying experiences, pressures, or needs that are not immediately visible.



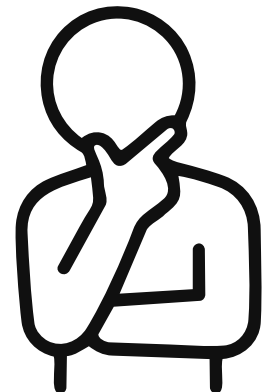
Check in directly Ask rather than assume. Use language that opens a conversation, not one that closes it.



Respond with intention Choose a response based on what's actually happening — not what you initially assumed.



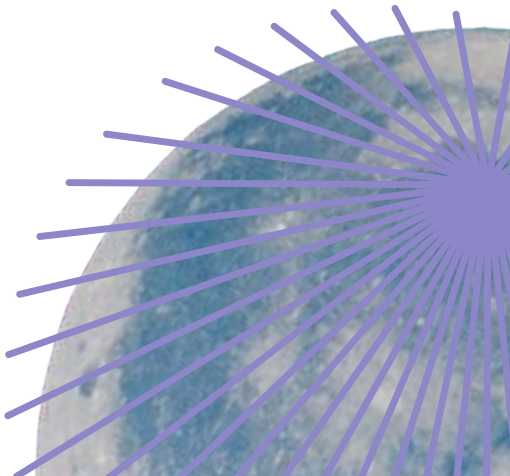
LET'S SEE THIS FRAMEWORK IN ACTION!



SCENARIO A | THE DELIVERABLE THAT MISSED THE MARK

You asked a colleague to put together a summary document for a cross-departmental meeting. You gave them the key points to cover, a deadline, and an example of a similar document from last quarter. When the draft lands in your inbox the night before the meeting, it's structured completely differently from what you expected — the tone is off, several points are missing, and it includes information you didn't ask for. You spent time setting this up and now you're going to have to redo significant portions of it yourself. You're frustrated and starting to question whether you can rely on this person for future tasks.

Step	Application
Notice	The document doesn't match what was expected. It arrived the night before the meeting, compressing your window to respond. Internally, frustration is building and a story is already forming about this colleague's reliability. The first step is noticing both what happened and how you're reacting to it.
Interpret carefully	The default interpretation is usually about the colleague's competence or effort: "They didn't take this seriously" or "I can't count on them." But the same set of facts supports other explanations. They may have interpreted the brief differently than you intended. The example document may have confused rather than clarified. They may have had competing priorities and made judgment calls about what to include. They may have intentionally restructured the document based on their understanding of the audience. The frustration is real — but the interpretation is a choice.



Step	Application
Check in	Most people in this situation would either redo the document silently and harbor resentment, or send a frustrated message: "This isn't what I asked for." Both responses skip the check-in entirely. A constructive alternative opens the conversation rather than closing it.
Respond	The response depends on what the check-in reveals. If there was a misunderstanding, the response involves co-editing and clarifying expectations for next time. If they made deliberate choices you disagree with, the response involves a direct conversation about approach. The key discipline: don't decide what to do before you've had the conversation.

SCENARIO A | LANGUAGE THAT OPENS VS. LANGUAGE THAT CLOSES

Language that opens a conversation:

"Thanks for getting this over. I want to walk through it together because it landed differently than I expected — I want to make sure we were on the same page about the direction."

"I'm looking at the draft and I think we may have been working from different understandings of what this needed to be. Can we talk through it?"

"Before I start making edits, I want to understand your thinking — what was your approach to the structure?"

Language that closes a conversation:

"This isn't what I asked for."

"Did you even look at the example I sent?"

"I'm going to need to redo this."

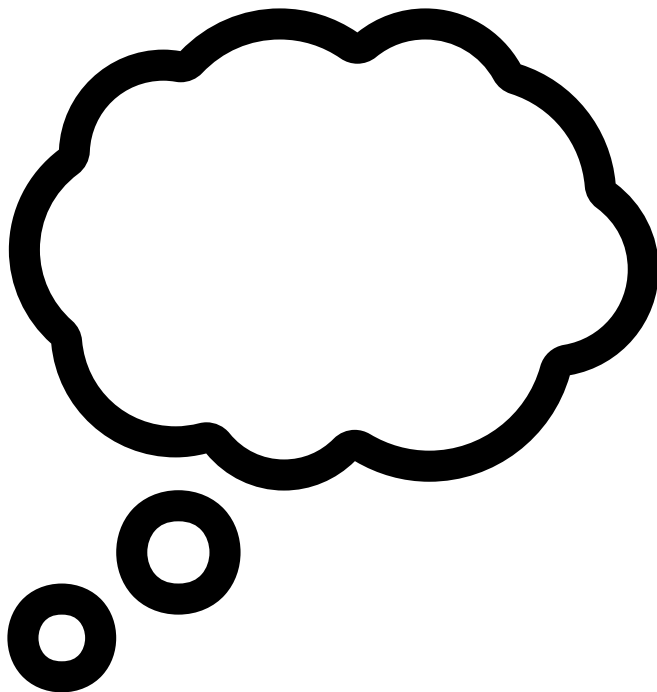
Notice the difference: the first set assumes good faith and seeks understanding. The second set assumes negligence and seeks compliance. Both address the same problem — but only one leads to a productive conversation.

Key Takeaways:

Clarity is a two-way responsibility. Giving instructions that feel clear to you doesn't guarantee they were received the way you intended. The gap between "I told them" and "they understood" is where most delegation breakdowns live.

Frustration is a signal to slow down, not speed up. The urgency of the situation creates pressure to skip the check-in and go straight to fixing. That solves the immediate problem but erodes the relationship and guarantees the pattern repeats.

The check-in isn't about being nice — it's about being accurate. You're not softening your feedback. You're gathering information you need to respond effectively. Skipping it means you're acting on incomplete data. Small process adjustments prevent repeat breakdowns. If this scenario is familiar, the strategic response isn't "be more careful next time" — it's building in a mid-point check-in for future deliverables.



SCENARIO B | THE COMMENT THAT CHANGED THE ROOM

During a team meeting, a manager is discussing an upcoming process change that will affect everyone's workflow. A colleague raises a concern about how the change might create more work for people who are already stretched thin. The manager responds with something like, "I understand it's a lot, but we all need to be flexible — that's just part of working here." Their tone isn't hostile, but you can feel the energy shift. The colleague who raised the concern goes quiet for the rest of the meeting. A couple of other people visibly disengage — cameras stay on but participation drops. After the meeting, you hear from a teammate that several people are frustrated but no one wants to say anything because "it won't change anything." A week later, the tension hasn't been addressed and the silence is starting to feel permanent.

Step	Application
Notice	In the meeting: the colleague goes quiet, cameras stay on but participation drops, the energy flattens. In the days that follow: shorter emails, side conversations, a teammate tells you people are frustrated. These slower signals are easy to dismiss individually but form a clear pattern. Also notice your own position — you're not the manager and you're not the person who raised the concern. You're someone who witnessed something land poorly and is watching the ripple effects.
Interpret carefully	First interpretations tend to split depending on whom you identify with. If you identify with the colleague: "Leadership doesn't want feedback. It's not safe to speak up." If you identify with the manager: "People are being too sensitive. It was an honest response under pressure." Both are interpretations, not facts. The manager may not have realized how the comment landed. They may be under pressure from their own leadership. The team's withdrawal may not be about this single moment — it may be a response to a longer pattern of concerns being dismissed.

Step	Application
Check in	This scenario is more complex because there are multiple people you could check in with — and each conversation serves a different purpose. (See the guide on the next page.)
Respond	The response depends on whom you checked in with and what you learned. It might mean offering to co-raise the issue, suggesting the manager reopen the topic, or naming the pattern in the next meeting yourself. The key insight: the bystander position doesn't mean neutrality. Noticing a pattern and choosing not to act is itself a response — and it contributes to the silence the team is already stuck in.

SCENARIO B | WHO DO YOU CHECK IN WITH?

This scenario doesn't have a single "right" check-in. Your choice of whom to approach shapes what becomes possible.

Checking in with the colleague who raised the concern:

"I wanted to follow up on what you raised in the meeting. I thought it was an important point, and I noticed things got quiet after the response. How are you feeling about it?"

What this does: Validates their experience and breaks the isolation of being the only person who spoke up. You don't have to agree with the concern — just acknowledge that it mattered.

Checking in with the manager:

"I wanted to flag something from the meeting. When the concern was raised about workload, I think the response may have landed differently than you intended. A few people seemed to pull back after that. I'm not sure if you noticed."

What this does: Gives the manager honest, low-confrontation feedback and a chance to self-correct. This is harder because it involves communicating across a power differential — but that's exactly the skill that prevents small moments from becoming lasting ruptures.

Checking in with the teammate who mentioned the frustration:

"You mentioned people are frustrated. I've been sensing that too. I don't want this to just sit. What do you think the right move is — and is it something we should raise together?"

What this does: Moves the dynamic from "someone should do something" to "what can we do?" Shared responsibility is easier to act on than individual courage.

Key Takeaways:

The original comment is rarely the real problem. What turns a single awkward moment into a lasting rupture is everything that doesn't happen afterward — the silence, the avoidance, the growing sense that speaking up has consequences but staying quiet is safe. Intervening early, even imperfectly, disrupts that pattern.

Bystanders have more power than they think. A peer checking in with the affected colleague, or giving the manager honest feedback, can shift dynamics that the two primary parties can't shift on their own.

Checking in across a power differential is a skill, not a personality trait. People who are comfortable giving feedback to managers aren't wired differently — they've practiced it. The discomfort is the gap this toolkit is designed to help you close.

Shared accountability means someone has to go first. The teammate who says "it won't change anything" is expressing a reasonable conclusion based on past experience. The framework doesn't ask you to be naive — it asks you to make an intentional choice about whether to accept the pattern or interrupt it.

ONE SHIFT THIS WEEK

What's one thing you're going to try differently based on the information in this toolkit?

