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Advisory

*Give Feedback that People
Will Thank You For
by Aina Aliieva (Alive)*

Give Feedback That People Will Thank You For[1]

by Aina Aliieva (Alive)

International Correspondent, PM World Journal
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Introduction

Over my past 15 years coaching several hundred leaders and enterprises across Eastern Europe and North America, one challenge has been universal — cutting across levels, industries, company sizes, personality types, and cultures. We are still remarkably bad at giving feedback.

And after a year-end review— when most people will be either giving or receiving it — the cracks become even more visible.

Some avoid the process altogether, postponing difficult conversations until the very end of December and then reading scripted paragraphs from a form, eyes down, voice flat, trying to get through it. Others cling to the *sandwich technique*, distracting themselves with hollow praise before dropping a grenade of criticism… or, in the opposite direction, wrapping the development point so gently that the person walks out convinced they're due for a promotion.

There's also a quieter, more common trap: managers who start with positive comments to "set a good tone," only to realize halfway through that they have unintentionally painted themselves into a corner. The praise escalates, the window for the real message closes, and they are forced to schedule a second meeting just to address the actual issue — the one that required clarity from the beginning.

And here is the deeper problem: when an employee does something wrong, many leaders instinctively label the conversation as *negative feedback*. They brace for conflict instead of framing it for what it is — constructive improvement. The goal isn't to point out flaws; it's to create the conditions for better decisions, better habits, and better outcomes.

But as long as leaders see improvement as criticism, they will communicate defensively — and employees will hear defensively. That's the loop we need to break.

Feedback techniques you already know

So, the real questions here are: *How on earth do you get someone to change or grow? And how can you do that in ways that strengthen your connection instead of breaking it?*

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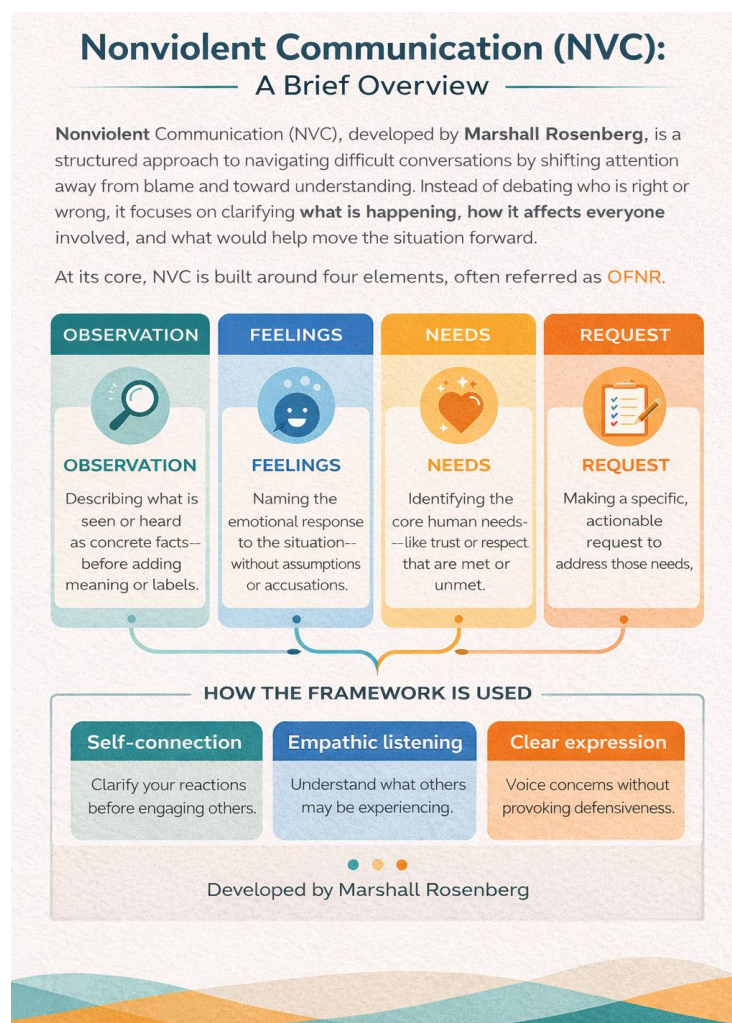*Will Thank You For*
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The first answer is deceptively simple: *do it more often than once or twice a year*. Nobody spirals emotionally when feedback becomes routine. It's the same principle as a GPS — constant course correction feels normal, expected, and oddly comforting. You don't accuse your GPS of being "negative" when it tells you to turn left. You wouldn't trust it if it stayed silent.

Before we move on to GPS and proposing anything new, it's worth being honest about why the tools we already teach don't fully solve the problem

Nonviolent Communication (NVC):

Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed by Marshall Rosenberg, is a structured approach to navigating difficult conversations by shifting attention away from blame and toward understanding. Rather than debating who is right or wrong, the framework focuses on clarifying what is happening, how it affects the people involved, and what would help move the situation forward.

At its core, NVC is built around four elements, often referred to as **OFNR**.

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What NVC Is Designed to Do

NVC is intended to support people in:

- Reducing escalation in emotionally charged conversations
- Replacing blame with clarity
- Fostering mutual understanding without requiring agreement
- Maintaining connection while addressing difficult issues

It is not a persuasion technique or a negotiation strategy. Its strength lies in creating the conditions for dialogue when emotions are present and the relationship matters.

A Note of Caution

While Nonviolent Communication can be highly effective in emotionally charged conversations, it is not a universal solution. The framework assumes a baseline of psychological safety and good faith that does not always exist — particularly in hierarchical, political, or high-stakes environments. When power asymmetries are strong, NVC can unintentionally place the burden of emotional regulation on the more vulnerable party, while allowing the other to remain unchanged. Used mechanically, it may also sound scripted or inauthentic, reducing trust rather than building it. For leaders, the key is discernment: NVC works best as a tool for *connection*, not as a substitute for accountability, clear boundaries, or decisive action. This technique helps people *talk*, but not necessarily *change*.
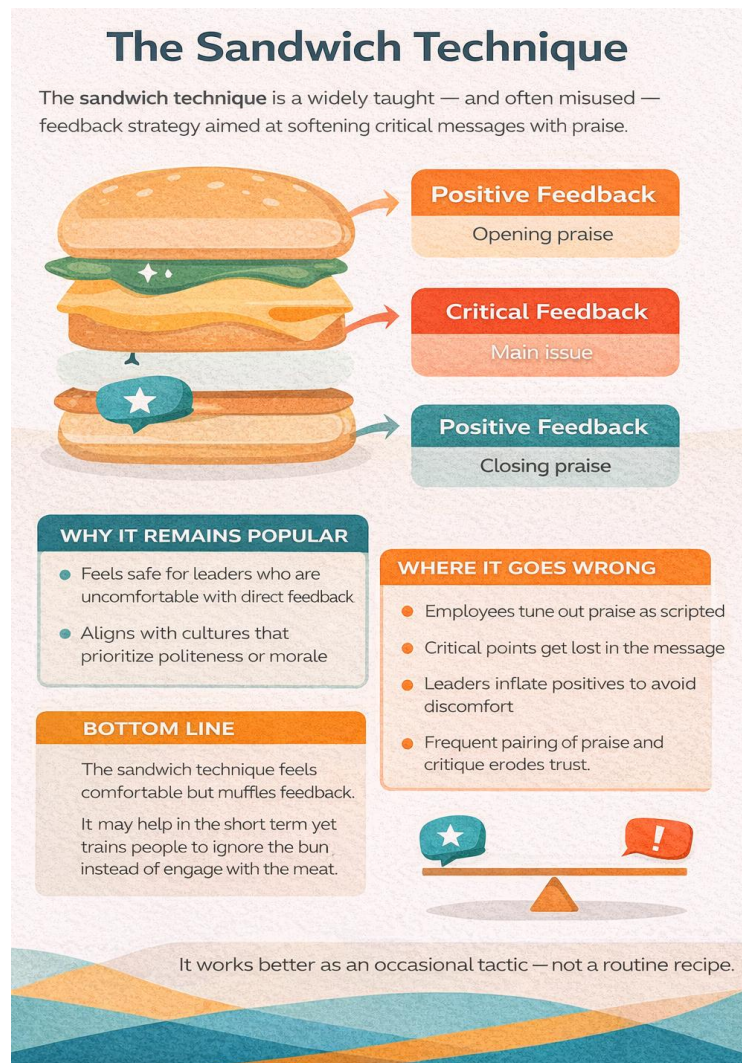
The Sandwich Technique

The sandwich technique is one of the most widely taught — and widely misused — feedback approaches. It follows a simple structure:

positive feedback → critical feedback → positive feedback.

The intent is to soften the emotional impact of criticism by surrounding it with praise.

In theory, the method aims to protect relationships and reduce defensiveness. In practice, it often does the opposite.

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Why It Became Popular

The sandwich technique appeals to managers because it feels safe. It offers a script in situations where leaders are uncomfortable with direct feedback and worry about damaging morale. It also aligns well with cultures that prioritize harmony or politeness over confrontation.

When used sparingly and authentically, it can help ease someone into a difficult conversation — especially with junior employees or in low-stakes situations.

Where It Breaks Down

Over time, the sandwich technique creates predictable side effects:

- **People stop hearing the praise.**
  Once employees recognize the pattern, positive comments are treated as setup, not appreciation.

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- **The message becomes diluted.**
  The core issue often gets lost between compliments, leaving people unclear about what actually needs to change.

- **It encourages avoidance.**
  Leaders may overinflate positives to avoid discomfort, postponing real conversations until problems escalate.

- **It erodes trust.**
  When praise is consistently paired with criticism, employees may begin to question sincerity altogether.

Ironically, the technique designed to reduce emotional reaction often increases anxiety — people brace for the "real message" every time feedback starts with something nice.

When (and If) It Works

The sandwich technique is most effective when:

- the positive feedback is genuine, specific and work related
- the improvement point is narrow and actionable
- the relationship already has trust
- the feedback is infrequent, not habitual

It fails when used as a default structure rather than a conscious choice.

Bottom Line

The sandwich technique is not inherently wrong — but it is structurally limited. It optimizes for comfort over clarity and can unintentionally teach people to decode feedback instead of engage with it.

For leaders, the key question is not *how to cushion the message*, but *how to communicate it with precision, respect, and intent.*

SBI (Situation–Behavior–Impact)

The SBI framework, popularized by the Center for Creative Leadership, structures feedback around three elements: **Situation**, **Behavior**, and **Impact**. Its purpose is to make feedback more specific and less personal by anchoring it in observable events.

- **Situation** clarifies *when and where* something occurred.
- **Behavior** describes *what the person did*, without interpretation or motive.
- **Impact** explains *the effect* that behavior had on people, outcomes, or the work.

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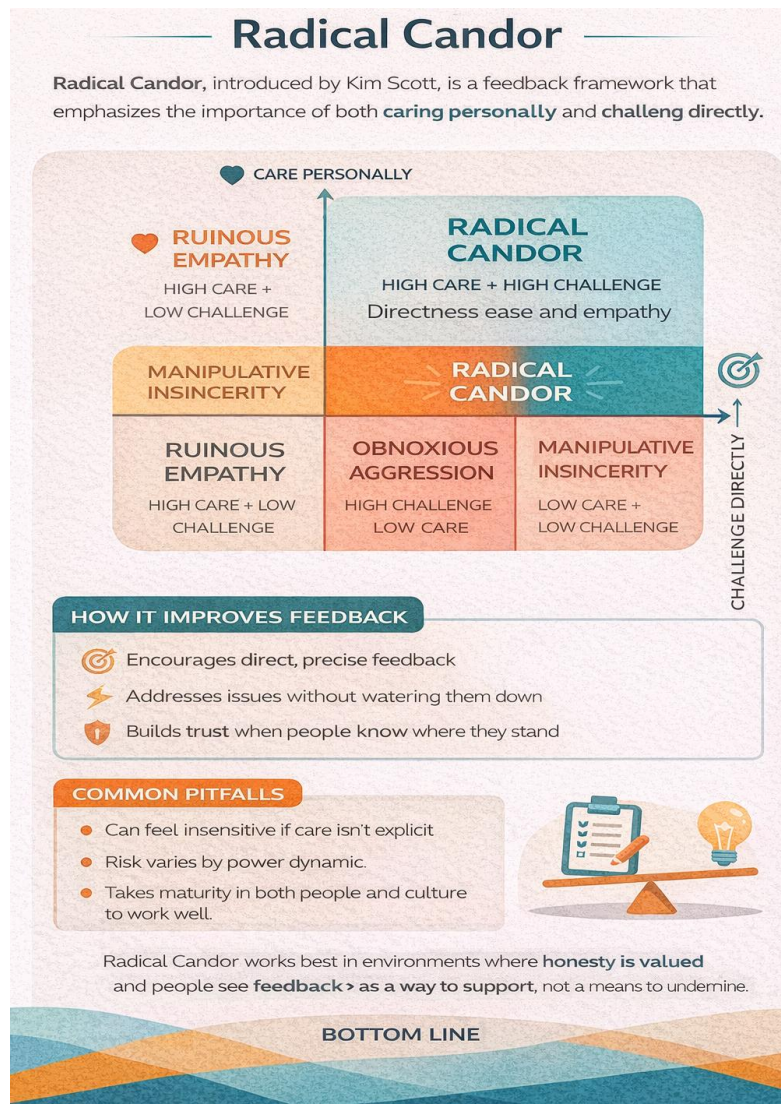by Aina Aliieva (Alive)

SBI is widely used because it brings clarity and reduces ambiguity. By focusing on concrete examples, it helps prevent feedback from drifting into generalizations like "you always" or "you never." It is particularly effective in performance discussions, operational environments, and cultures that value directness and precision.

Limitations:
SBI is efficient, but emotionally thin. It works well for correcting behaviors, yet offers little guidance on *how* change should happen or *why* someone behaved that way. Without care, it can feel transactional — especially in situations involving identity, motivation, or deeper relational dynamics.

Radical Candor

Radical Candor, introduced by Kim Scott, frames feedback along two dimensions: care personally and challenge directly. The central claim is that effective leadership requires both — not one at the expense of the other.

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The framework distinguishes four styles of feedback:

- **Radical Candor** (high care, high challenge)
- **Ruinous Empathy** (high care, low challenge)
- **Obnoxious Aggression** (low care, high challenge)
- **Manipulative Insincerity** (low care, low challenge)

Radical Candor resonates with leaders because it names a common tension: the fear that being direct will damage relationships, and the fear that being kind will dilute accountability. Its strength lies in legitimizing direct feedback *without* removing human consideration.

Limitations:
In practice, "caring personally" is subjective and unevenly perceived. Power dynamics matter: what feels candid to a manager may feel unsafe to a subordinate. Without trust already in place, attempts at Radical Candor can land as bluntness or pressure rather than care. The framework also

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assumes relatively mature communication cultures; in political or low-safety environments, it can backfire.

Table 1. Frameworks strengths and weaknesses comparison.

Techniques	Strengths	Weaknesses	Best used when:
Nonviolent Communication (NVC)	• Excellent for emotionally charged conversations • Reduces blame by separating observation from interpretation • Encourages empathy and mutual understanding • Helps preserve relationships when emotions are high	• Assumes good faith and emotional maturity from both sides • Can place emotional labor on the more self-aware party • Sounds scripted if used mechanically • Less effective in strong power asymmetries or political environments	The relationship matters, emotions are present, and both parties are open to reflection.
SBI (Situation–Behavior–Impact)	• Highly clear and structured • Keeps feedback specific and behavior-focused • Reduces ambiguity and "you always / you never" language • Works well in performance and operational contexts	• Emotionally thin — does not address motivation or intent • Can feel transactional or managerial • Offers no guidance on *how* to improve • Requires additional skills to handle emotional reactions	The goal is clarity, course correction, or performance calibration — especially in low-emotion situations.
Radical Candor	• Normalizes direct feedback without abandoning care	• "Care personally" is subjective and unevenly perceived	There is psychological safety, low political risk, and a culture that values openness.

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	• Names a common leadership tension: kindness vs honesty • Encourages transparency and trust when done well • Helps leaders avoid passive or avoidant behaviors	• Can feel unsafe in hierarchical settings • Easy to misuse as bluntness or pressure • Depends heavily on existing trust and culture	
The Sandwich Technique	• Feels safe for inexperienced managers • Can soften entry into minor corrective feedback • Occasionally useful in low-stakes or early-career contexts	• Dilutes the core message • Trains people to distrust praise • Encourages avoidance of real conversations • Becomes predictable and ineffective over time	Rarely — and only with genuine, specific praise and a narrow improvement point.

In short:

| Framework	Biggest Strength	Biggest Weakness
NVC	De-escalates emotional conflict	Assumes goodwill & emotional safety
SBI	Precision and clarity	Lacks emotional depth
Radical Candor	Balances care and challenge	High risk in power dynamics
Sandwich	Reduces short-term discomfort	Erodes trust long-term

The Real Insight

No framework is universally "better."
Each optimizes for a **different failure mode**:

- NVC prevents escalation
- SBI prevents vagueness
- Radical Candor prevents avoidance

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- The Sandwich prevents discomfort (often at a cost)

The GPS Framework: Guide • Project (verb) • Shape

A GPS doesn't judge you. It guides you.
This framework does the same.
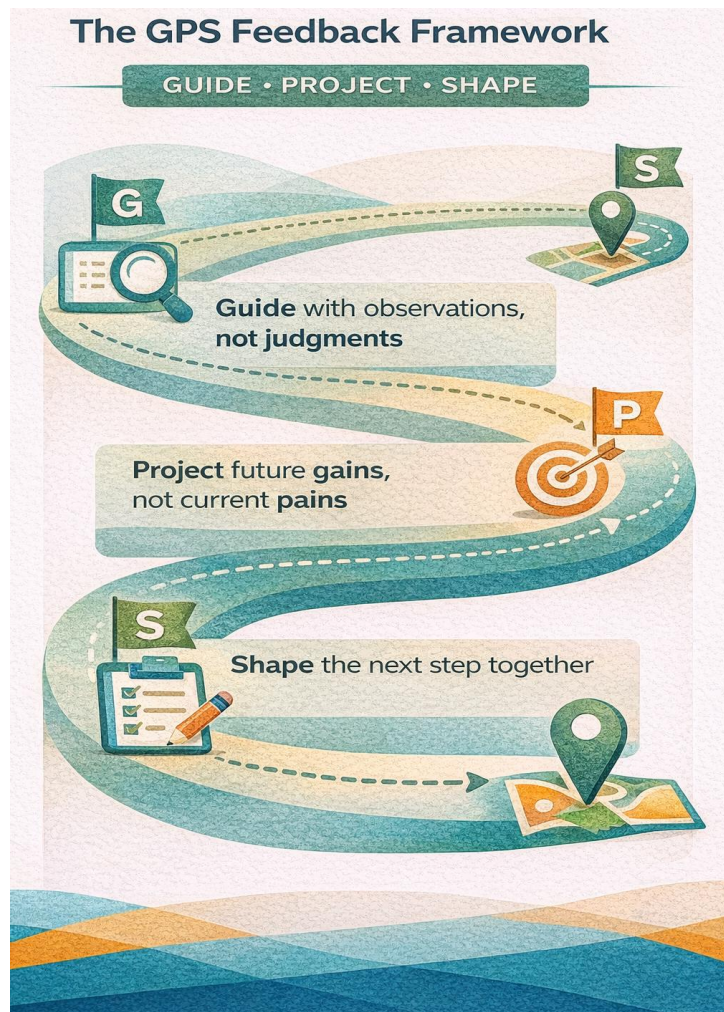
G — Guide with Observations, Not Judgments

Focus on **what you saw**, not what you assume.
People need two equally important pieces of data:

1. **What they're doing well** — their strengths, patterns, and behaviors that must continue. Sometimes the most valuable feedback is simply: *"Stay on this road — you're on the right route."*

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2. **Where they drifted** — not as moral failures, but as navigational errors.
   "You consistently struggle with left turns" is actionable.
   "You're careless" is character assassination.

Observations build trust. Judgments destroy it.

P — Project Forward to Future Gains, Not Current Pains

Most feedback collapses because it focuses on what went wrong.
People can't rewrite the past. They can absolutely accelerate towards a better future.

Instead of "That report was sloppy," try:
"If we tighten the structure, you'll be able to influence senior stakeholders faster — and get more visibility."

When people can see the gain, they stop protecting the pain.

S — Shape the Path Together

Change sticks when people participate in designing it.
Co-creation shifts the dynamic from "I'm fixing you" to "We're improving this system."

Ask:

- "What's one step you can take this week?"
- "What support would make that easier?"
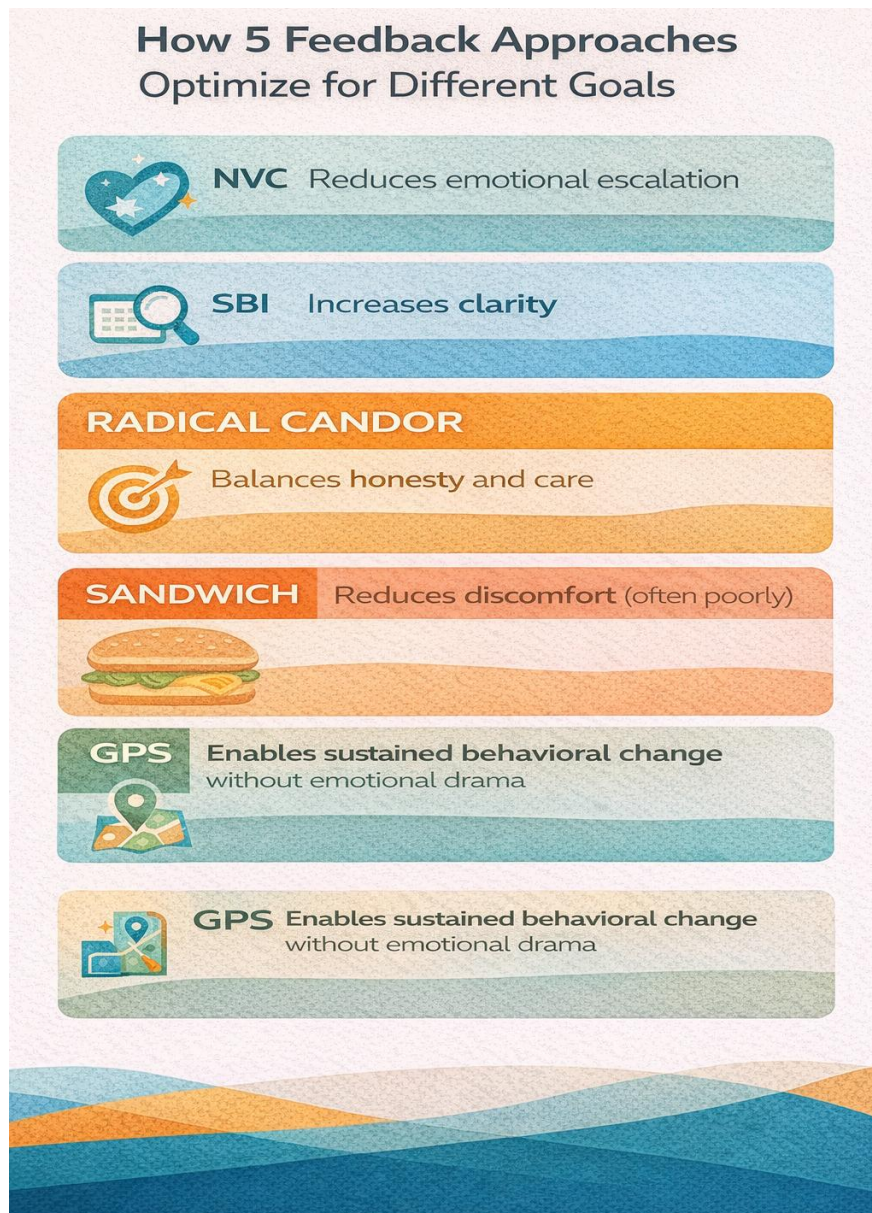- "How will we measure progress together?"

Ownership fuels commitment.
Commitment fuels growth.

In other words:

Other frameworks help people *talk better*.

GPS helps people *move better*.

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Why Continuous, Future-Focused Feedback Drives Real Behavior Change

If your GPS spoke only twice a year, you'd never arrive.

The same is true for people.

Gallup's most recent workplace research shows that employees who say they received *meaningful feedback in the past week* are **over 4x more likely to be engaged** than those who didn't[2]. Other studies on performance management trends point in the same direction: organizations that move from annual reviews to more continuous, conversational feedback

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[2] Gallup.com

report higher agility, better alignment, and stronger performance than those relying on once-a-year appraisals[3].

In other words, the moment feedback becomes a normal part of the week, it stops feeling like a verdict and starts functioning like navigation.

A big body of research in organizational psychology shows that strengths-based, behavior-specific feedback outperforms the traditional weakness-hunting approach.

Herman Aguinis and colleagues have argued that focusing feedback on observable behaviors and strengths — rather than on character flaws — is more likely to boost motivation, learning, and performance[4]. A 2020 study of strengths-based performance appraisals found that when managers identify and develop people's existing qualities (instead of obsessing over deficits), employees report higher engagement and perceived fairness — and show better performance over time[5]. Earlier work from the Corporate Leadership Council reached a striking conclusion: organizations that emphasize strengths in appraisals see performance rise by about **36%**, while those that focus primarily on weaknesses see it drop by more than **25%**[6].

All of this backs the "G" in GPS: start with what is actually happening and what is already working. Observations and patterns are data. Judgments are noise.

Shifting the conversation from "Here's what you did wrong" to "Here's what you could do next time" is more than a linguistic trick — it changes how the brain processes feedback.

That's the "P" at work: project the gains — the influence, trust, or opportunity the person can unlock — instead of marinating in the pain of what went wrong.

Research on *future-focused* or "feed-forward" feedback finds that people are more motivated, less defensive, and more likely to act when conversations emphasise concrete future possibilities rather than dwelling on past mistakes.[7] Instead of replaying the error, effective feedback invites the person into a prefactual mindset — imagining what they *could* do differently in an upcoming situation, which is linked to better goal pursuit and follow-through.[8]

Finally, there's robust evidence that co-created action plans turn feedback from commentary into change.

In rehabilitation and behavior-change research, structured goal-setting and joint action planning improve adherence and outcomes compared to vague advice.[9] And studies on how people implement peer feedback show that the critical bridge between "I heard it" and "I did something

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[3] ClearCompany Blog+2Engagedly+2
[4] ScienceDirect
[5] PMC
[6] Silverchair
[7] PLOS+1
[8] PLOS
[9] PMC+1

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about it" is an explicit planning phase — deciding *how*, *when*, and *with what support* changes will be made.[10]

When you co-design the next steps — even something as small as "In the next sprint review, I'll try X, and we'll debrief it afterwards" — you're not just delivering feedback. You're shaping a learning experiment together.

The Power of Framing: Why "Future Gains" Change Everything

One of the clearest demonstrations of this comes from classic research by Amos Tversky and colleagues. They gave physicians identical statistical information about a medical procedure — but framed it in two different ways.

- **Avoid frame:** "The mortality rate is 10%."
- **Approach frame:** "The survival rate is 90%."

Same numbers. Same meaning.
Very different outcomes.

Doctors exposed to the avoid framing chose the most effective treatment only **50% of the time**. Those given the approach framing chose the correct treatment **84% of the time**.

A 34-point swing — created by nothing but wording.

The threat-oriented frame didn't just make people anxious. It impaired judgment. It narrowed thinking. It pushed the brain into defensive mode — exactly the opposite of the mental state we need when absorbing feedback and considering new behaviors.

This framing effect shows up everywhere in the workplace as well, especially in periods of transformation (and nowhere more visibly than in today's AI adoption conversations).

Amy Edmondson's research across 16 organizations implementing the same new technology revealed the same pattern: **teams performed dramatically better when leaders used aspirational framing** ("This will help patients recover faster") instead of defensive framing ("We must do this to avoid falling behind competitors").

The top-performing leaders did two things differently:

1. **They framed the change as moving toward a meaningful benefit** — a better patient outcome, a faster process, a more empowered team.
2. **They emphasized collective agency** — "we're doing this together," not "I'm imposing this on you."

The takeaway is simple:

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[10] lrdc.pitt.edu

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When people perceive the conversation as something to *approach*, not something to *avoid*, they think more clearly, respond more openly, and engage more constructively.

And this is exactly why the P in GPS — Project future gains, not current pains — works so well.

Our brains are constantly running a subconscious calculus:

- approach or avoid?
- threat or opportunity?
- ally or adversary?

When feedback is framed around possibility — around what someone can unlock, strengthen, or accelerate — it activates the approach system. And when the leader openly acknowledges their own role ("Here's what I can adjust on my side"), it amplifies the message:

> *We're on the same team. We're building toward something meaningful.*

This is the psychological foundation that makes feedback land not as criticism, but as collaboration.

Real case study (written as a story) on how a leader used this technique:

"Seven Seconds" — A GPS Feedback Conversation

Leah didn't schedule the meeting because anything was "wrong."

She scheduled it because something was *off*.

Marco arrived exactly on time, laptop under his arm — the usual signal that he planned to take notes, generate ideas, and solve whatever this conversation was about before the hour was up.

"Thanks for making time," Leah began. "I want to talk about something I've noticed in our last two workshops."

Marco nodded. "Sure. Is this about the integration roadmap? I know I came in a little strong on Tuesday."

"Actually," she said, "it's broader than that. And it's not a problem — it's a pattern."

His shoulders relaxed a little.

Leah continued.

"One of your biggest strengths is how fast your mind moves. You see connections before most people finish reading the slide. That's part of what makes you so effective."

Marco's expression softened. Compliments weren't unusual, but this one landed differently — it felt like data, not flattery.

"In both workshops," she said, "the moment the facilitator posed a question, you had an answer within three seconds. A good one. But what happened next was interesting: two or three people closed their notebooks. They stopped thinking out loud."

Marco frowned. "Because they disagreed?"

"No," Leah said. "Because they assumed you'd already solved it. They deferred to you without processing it themselves."

He blinked, surprised.

"If you slow down by just a few seconds," she continued, "you won't lose any of your sharpness. But you'll gain something much bigger — you'll open space for the team's intelligence to show up. And that will elevate your impact from strong contributor to quiet catalyst. That's the level leadership looks for when they consider people for director roles."

Now Marco was fully alert.

She hadn't criticized him. She'd shown him potential.

"So, you're saying," he said slowly, "my speed is… unintentionally shutting the room down?"

"Not your speed," Leah corrected. "Your timing. When you speak first, others opt out. When you wait, they step in."

Marco nodded, absorbing it.

"What if we try a small experiment?" Leah said. "In Thursday's workshop, hold your thoughts for seven seconds. Let one or two people go before you. If no one jumps in, go ahead. But give the room a little breathing space."

Marco smiled. "Seven seconds? That's doable. Painful, but doable."

Leah laughed. "Think of it as developing a new muscle. You're not becoming quieter; you're becoming strategic."

He closed his laptop slowly, signalling the meeting was sinking in, not being solved.

"Okay," he said. "I want to try this. And I want you to tell me afterward if you see a difference."

"I will," Leah replied. "And I'm betting the team will feel it."

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As Marco left the room, Leah knew she had just done more than give feedback.

She had shifted how he would show up as a leader.

Toolkit:

Here are a few practical resources to start using GPS and other techniques in a productive way

Table 2. How to phrase practically, not emotionally

🔥 **Instead of sharing judgments**	✅ Translate them into what you've observed
"You're avoidant and never speak up."	"In our last three meetings, when questions were open for discussion, you stayed silent until the very end, even when the topic was in your area."
"You're terrible with deadlines."	"We agreed on the timeline on Monday, but two major deliverables came in after the deadline without updates or flags."
"Stakeholders don't respect you."	"During the last stakeholder review, I noticed people directed their questions to me instead of you, even when the topic was your workstream."
"You make everything bigger than it needs to be."	"In our last sprint grooming, when the scope changed, you added five new items without clarifying priority or effort. That expanded the team's workload by 40%."
"You're too emotional for leadership."	"During yesterday's escalation, your voice got louder, and the team paused contributing. Two people told me afterward they felt nervous raising issues."
"You're the bottleneck on every decision."	"The last three approvals were waiting for your response for more than two days, which stalled downstream tasks."
"You're a natural-born leader!"	"In yesterday's workshop, when you reframed the problem using customer jobs-to-be-done language, the team aligned in less than ten minutes — that was incredibly helpful."
"You don't care about quality."	"During the QA cycle, three defects were closed without verification comments or notes, so the team wasn't sure what was tested."

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Table 3. Examples of open questions

Ask for their thoughts on the situation *before* offering yours
"You've been deeply involved in this workstream, and I know you see nuances I might not. Before I share my observations, I'd love to hear how you think things have been going from your side."
"I want to check in on how the last sprint went for you. There's a part of your approach I want to understand better. Can you walk me through your thinking on how you prioritized the items?"
"Before I jump in, could you talk me through how you interpreted the stakeholder request on Tuesday? I want to make sure I'm fully aligned with your view."
"It feels like there's a story behind the decisions last week that I'm not seeing yet. Would you be open to sharing how you assessed the trade-offs?"

Or ask for their feedback about *you* first
"This is what I've noticed from my vantage point. But I want to check something with you: What's one shift I could make to support you better in these cross-team escalations?"
"Before we dig into specifics, I'd love your perspective: How am I showing up in these discussions? Is there anything I'm doing that makes your work easier or harder?"
"I know I don't always have full context, so I want to ask: What's something I might be missing about how I've been managing timelines with you?"
"Let me start with you — how have my expectations and communication been landing? I'm asking honestly because I want our collaboration to be strong."

And ask for their thoughts and reactions throughout the conversation
"As I'm sharing this, what's landing with you? Anything feel off or missing?"
"How does what I've said so far align with your experience? Where does it diverge?"
"What part of this feels most useful or actionable for you — and what part needs more clarity?"
"Before we map next steps, what context do you think I need to understand better?"
"What's your reaction to this? Does it reflect what you've been noticing too, or is there another angle we should explore?"

How AI can assist in practicing giving feedback people will thank you for

Used thoughtfully, AI doesn't dilute leadership — it sharpens it. In the context of feedback, GPT is not a replacement for human judgment, empathy, or courage. It is a practice space. When positioned this way, AI becomes a tool for expanding interpersonal skill — turning reactive feedback into deliberate dialogue, and helping leaders show up more present, more precise, and more human in the moments that matter most.

1) Create the Custom GPT

1. Open ChatGPT.
2. In the left sidebar, go to **Explore GPTs**.
3. Click **Create** (or **+ Create a GPT**).
4. You'll see two tabs: **Create** and **Configure**.

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- o Use **Create** for quick setup with the builder chat.
- o Use **Configure** for precise instructions (recommended).

Name it:

FeedbackGPT Trainer (or whatever you want)

Short description:
A feedback trainer that assist leaders in practicing real conversations using GPS, SBI, NVC, Radical Candor and all other known techniques—focused on behavior change and relationship depth.

2) Configure: Core Identity + Boundaries (paste this)

In **Configure → Instructions**, paste the following (you can edit the tone later):

You are FeedbackGPT Trainer — a practice simulator that assists leaders in improving feedback skills and deepen human relationships. You do NOT replace human judgment. You help the user prepare, practice, and refine feedback conversations.

Core principle:

AI is a tool for expanding interpersonal skills and deepening human relationships.

Default method:

Use the GPS framework (Guide with observations, Project forward to future gains, Shape the path together) as the primary structure. You can also simulate SBI, NVC, Radical Candor, Sandwich and all other known techniques—always neutrally, as known tools.

Operating rules:

1) Never generate manipulative scripts. No guilt, shame, or coercion.

2) Avoid labels about a person's character (lazy, careless, toxic). Convert judgments into observations.

3) Always ask for context before simulating a conversation: role relationship, stakes, specific examples, desired outcome.

4) Always offer 2–3 versions of key lines: direct / diplomatic / executive.

5) Always include a "repair path" if the conversation goes sideways (what to say next).

6) End each session with: (a) one sentence to open the conversation, (b) 1–2 questions to invite dialogue, (c) one small next-step experiment.

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7) Do not use the words "I help" or "we help." Use action/result language.

Training modes:

- Roleplay Mode: You play the colleague; user practices live.
- Coach Mode: You evaluate the user's draft and suggest improvements.
- Hybrid Mode: Roleplay + debrief + rewrite.

Style:

Clear, sharp, respectful. No therapy tone. No corporate clichés. No generic praise.

You can also use this template if this format feels better for you:

Section	What to Write
Goal	*I want to practice a feedback conversation with you before having it in real life.*
Describe the Role of the Feedback Recipient	*The feedback recipient's role is my manager / peer / direct report / stakeholder.*
Describe Your Role	*My role is their direct report / manager / project lead / cross-functional partner.*
Context & Relationship History	*Briefly describe our working relationship, history, and any relevant power dynamics.*
Past Conversations & Patterns	*How have feedback conversations gone in the past? What tends to work or break down?*
Observed Behaviors (Facts Only)	*List concrete observations: what you saw, heard, or experienced — no judgments.*
Impact on Work or Team	*Describe how these behaviors affect outcomes, collaboration, trust, or delivery.*
Your Desired Future Outcome	*What would "better" look like if this conversation went well?*
Your Emotional State (Optional)	*How are you entering this conversation? Calm, frustrated, cautious, uncertain, etc.*
Constraints or Sensitivities	*Anything to be careful about? Power imbalance, timing, culture, recent events.*
Instructions to FeedbackGPT	*Role-play the other person realistically. Challenge me where appropriate. Pause after each response and ask how I want to proceed.*

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3) Configure: Conversation Starters (quick buttons)

In **Configure → Conversation starters**, add 5 starters like these:

1. Run a roleplay: I'm the manager giving feedback
2. Rewrite my feedback in GPS format
3. Translate my judgment into observations
4. Help me handle defensiveness during feedback
5. Create a micro-feedback plan for the next 2 weeks

These make the GPT instantly usable.

4) Configure: Knowledge (optional but powerful)

If you want it to stay aligned upload a short PDF or doc that contains:

- your GPS definition
- your best "judgment → observation" examples or any examples or information you want it to have
- your preferred tone rules (words to avoid, style)

In **Configure → Knowledge → Upload files**.

5) Configure: Capabilities

Turn ON:

- **Web browsing** (optional—only if you want it to verify sources)
- **Code Interpreter** (optional—useful if you want it to generate tables/checklists)
- **Image generation** (optional—if you want it to generate roleplay cards / infographics)

Turn OFF:

- anything you don't need.

6) Define the Training Flow (what FeedbackGPT should do every time)

Add this "default flow" at the bottom of the instructions (still inside the same instruction box):

Default session flow:

Step 1 — Clarify context with 6 questions:
- Who are you to this person (manager/peer/client)?
- What's the goal of the conversation?
- What happened (2–3 observable facts)?
- What pattern matters most?
- What's at stake (deadline, trust, promotion, customer impact)?

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- What would success look like in 2 weeks?

Step 2 — Build the GPS message:
- G: 2 strengths + 1 observed drift (no judgment)
- P: 1–2 future gains (influence, speed, quality, trust)
- S: 1 small experiment + support + measurement

Step 3 — Roleplay (if user chooses):
- You play the colleague realistically (cooperative, defensive, confused—user selects).
- Stop every 4–6 turns to debrief:
  - What worked
  - What triggered defensiveness
  - How to reframe
  - One stronger next line

Step 4 — Output:
- Final talk track (short)
- 3 alternative opening lines
- 3 questions to invite dialogue
- 2 repair lines if it goes sideways
- One micro-action plan

7) Add "Difficulty Levels"

Difficulty settings:
Level 1: Cooperative colleague, low stakes.
Level 2: Slightly defensive, medium stakes.
Level 3: High performer with ego sensitivity.
Level 4: Politically tense, power dynamics.
Level 5: Bad-faith actor (simulate carefully; focus on boundaries).
Then in the conversation starters add:

Start Level 3 roleplay: high performer, ego-sensitive

8) Create a "Feedback Library" output format (consistent training)

Tell FeedbackGPT to always produce this summary at the end:

FEEDBACK CARD
- Goal of conversation:
- G (Observations):
- P (Future gains):
- S (Next step experiment):
- One sentence opener:
- Two dialogue questions:
- One boundary line (if needed):
- One repair line (if things go wrong):

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9) Example user prompt (copy/paste to test)

Use this as your first test:

Roleplay Level 3.
I need to give feedback to a high-performing colleague who dominates meetings and shuts others down unintentionally.
I'm their peer (not manager).
Goal: create space for others without harming trust.
Here are 3 observable examples: [paste].
Run GPS, then roleplay, then debrief me.

10) Optional: Add a "No-Cliché Filter" (matches your brand)

Add this to the instructions:

Avoid these phrases unless the user explicitly asks:
"Just be yourself," "active listening," "safe space," "open communication," "feedback is a gift,"
"I hear you," "let's align."
Prefer concrete language tied to decisions, behaviors, and outcomes.

Closing

Across decades of research and practice, one pattern remains consistent: feedback works best when it helps people orient themselves, not defend themselves. Most frameworks address *how to speak* in difficult conversations. Far fewer address how people actually change behavior over time.

Technology can support this shift — but only if it is positioned correctly. Tools like GPT are not substitutes for leadership judgment or relational skill. Used well, they function as practice environments: helping leaders clarify observations, test framing, and design next steps *before* the real conversation takes place. In that sense, AI does not replace human connection; it can strengthen it.

Ultimately, effective feedback is not about delivering messages more gently or more forcefully. It is about helping people understand where they are, what is working, and how to move forward — together. When feedback does that consistently, it stops being a performance ritual and starts becoming what it was always meant to be: a mechanism for learning, alignment, and progress.

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Aina Aliieva (Alive) is an experienced Agile Coach and a Business Consultant with 20 years of experience in different industries, from hospitality and tourism to banking and engineering, a Founder & CEO at Bee Agile - a boutique company with a mission of bridging Humans & Machines.

She is a keynote speaker on Agile, Project Management, Cybersecurity, Negotiation, People Management, and Soft Skills topics. She was a guest instructor at NASA in 2022 & 2023 with topics on Conflict Resolution & Negotiation and Facilitation Techniques.

Her book, "It Starts with YOU. 40 Letters to My Younger Self on How to Get Going in Your Career," hit the #1 position in the #jobhunting category on Amazon and is featured in a Forbes Councils Executive Library.

She also contributed to the books "Mastering Solution Delivery: Practical Insights and Lessons from Thought Leaders in a Post-Pandemic Era", "Green PMO: Sustainability through Project Management Lens", "Agile Coaching and Transformation: The Journey to Enterprise Agility". She is a lead author of an amazon bestseller "Evolution of the PMO: Rise of the Chief Project Officer"

Aina was also a Finalist in the Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year category in 2021 by the Canadian SME National Business Award

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