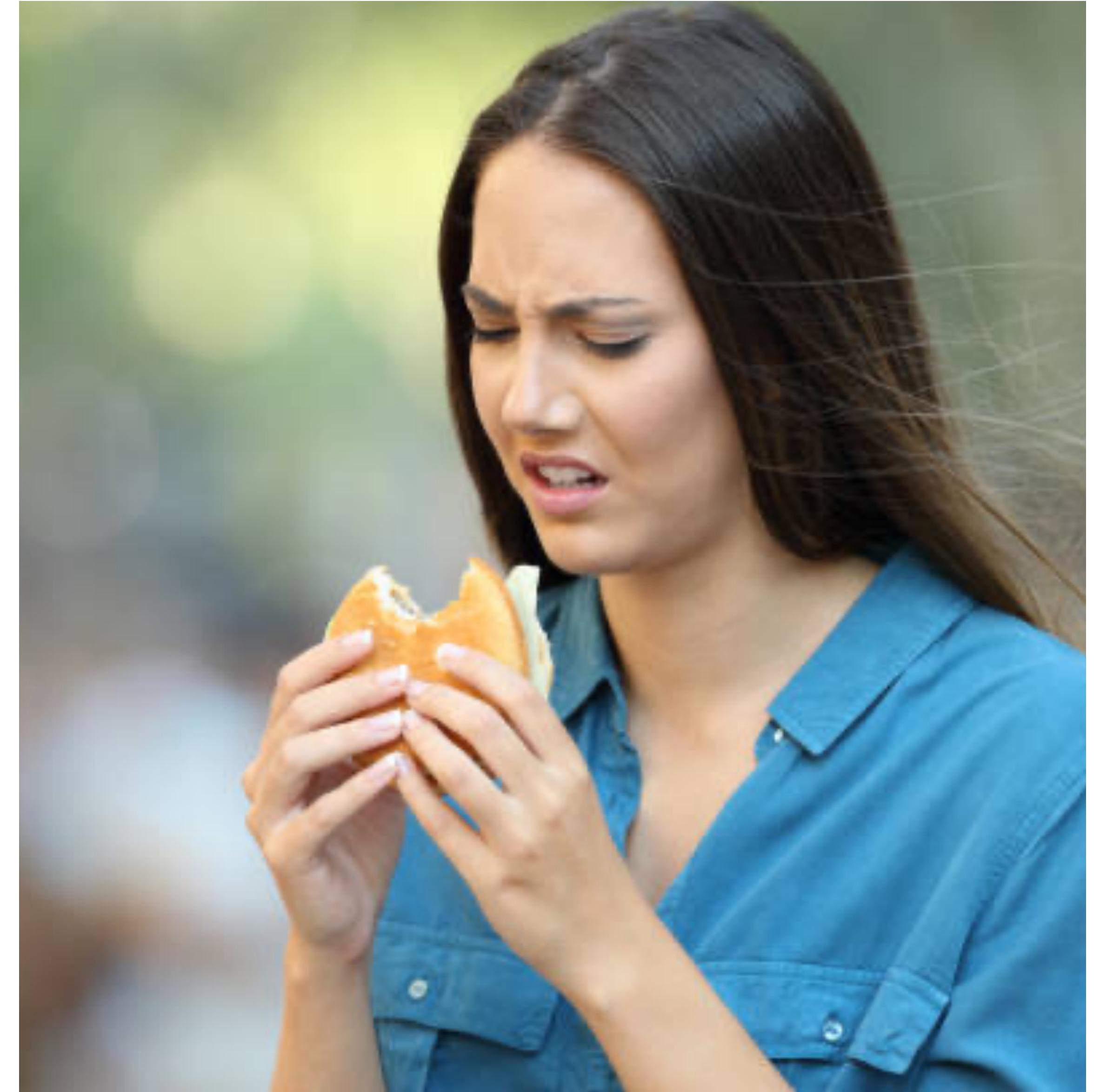


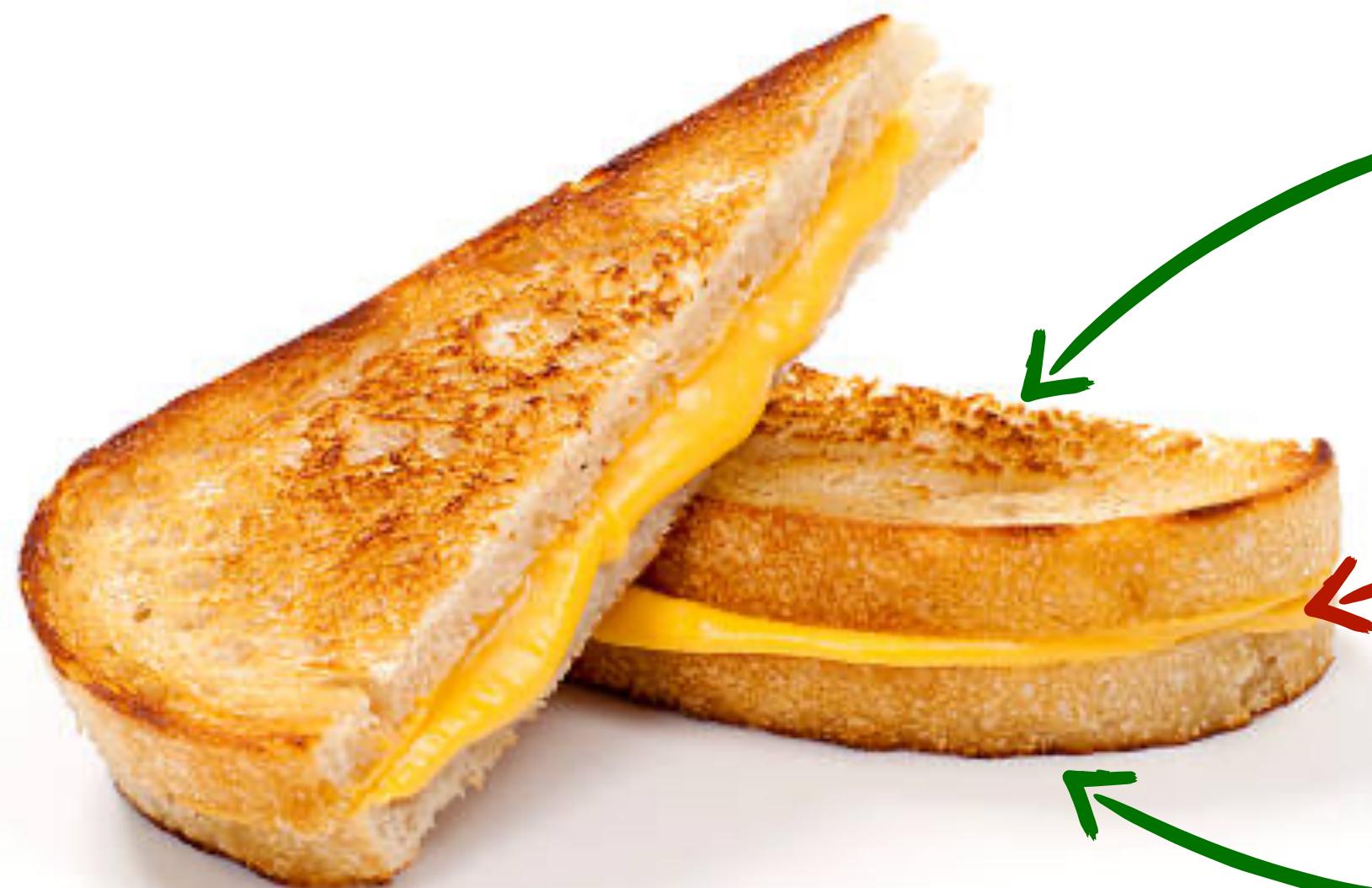
# **Ditch the Compliment Sandwich**

## **Give Feedback that works**

**Matt Burke - <https://mattburke.dev>**

I don't like the  
compliment  
sandwich





Compliment

(Critical) Feedback

Compliment

I'm really happy with the way that you speak with customers. Your tone is always friendly and I think your customers enjoy speaking with you.

I do have some concerns with your emails to customers though. Sometimes the tone of your emails can be quite abrupt and this means that customers may see you as being rude.

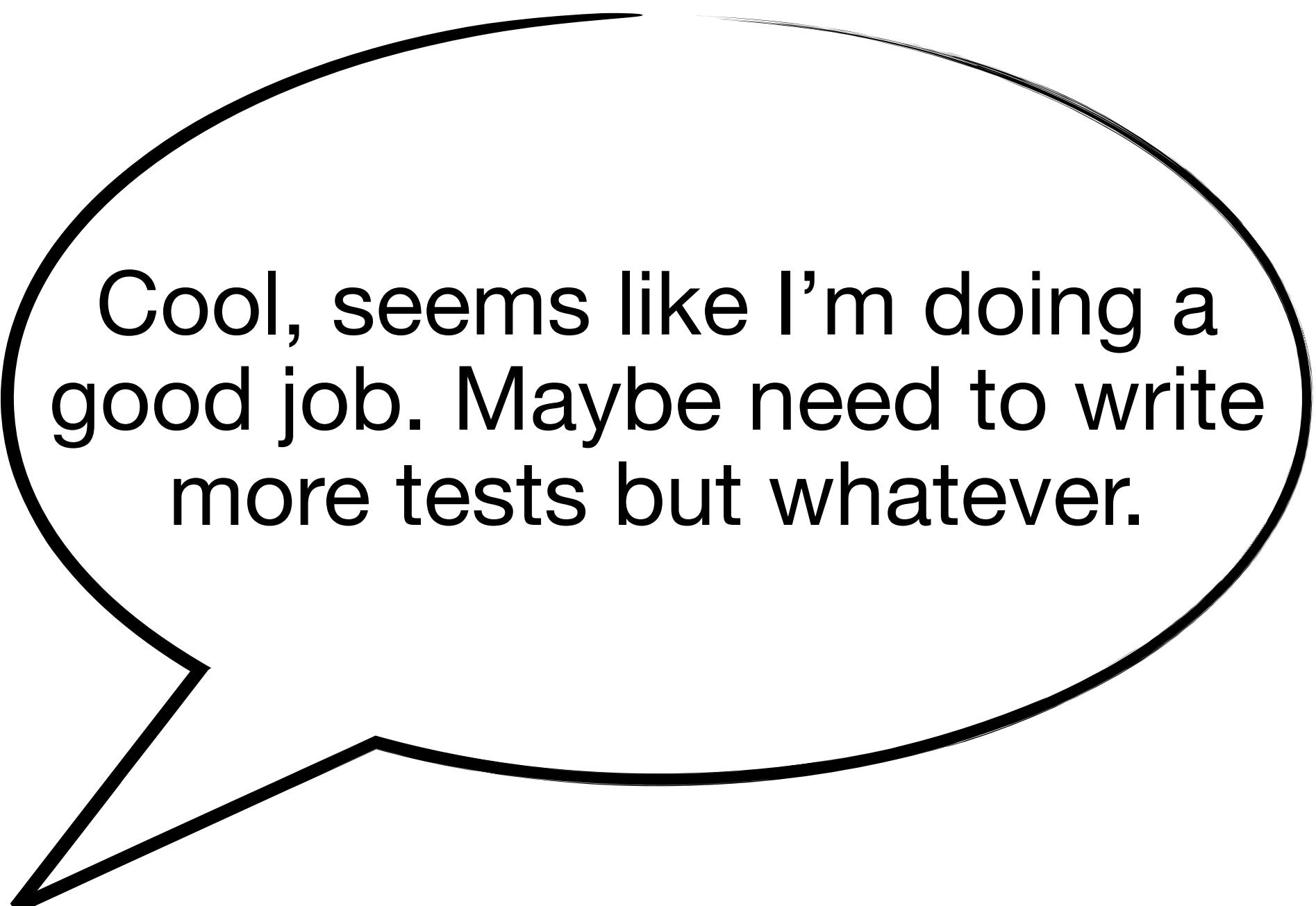
You are a really important part of the team though. Your colleagues seem to like you and respect the work that you do and I'd like to you keep this up.

# Problem 1: Lost in the noise

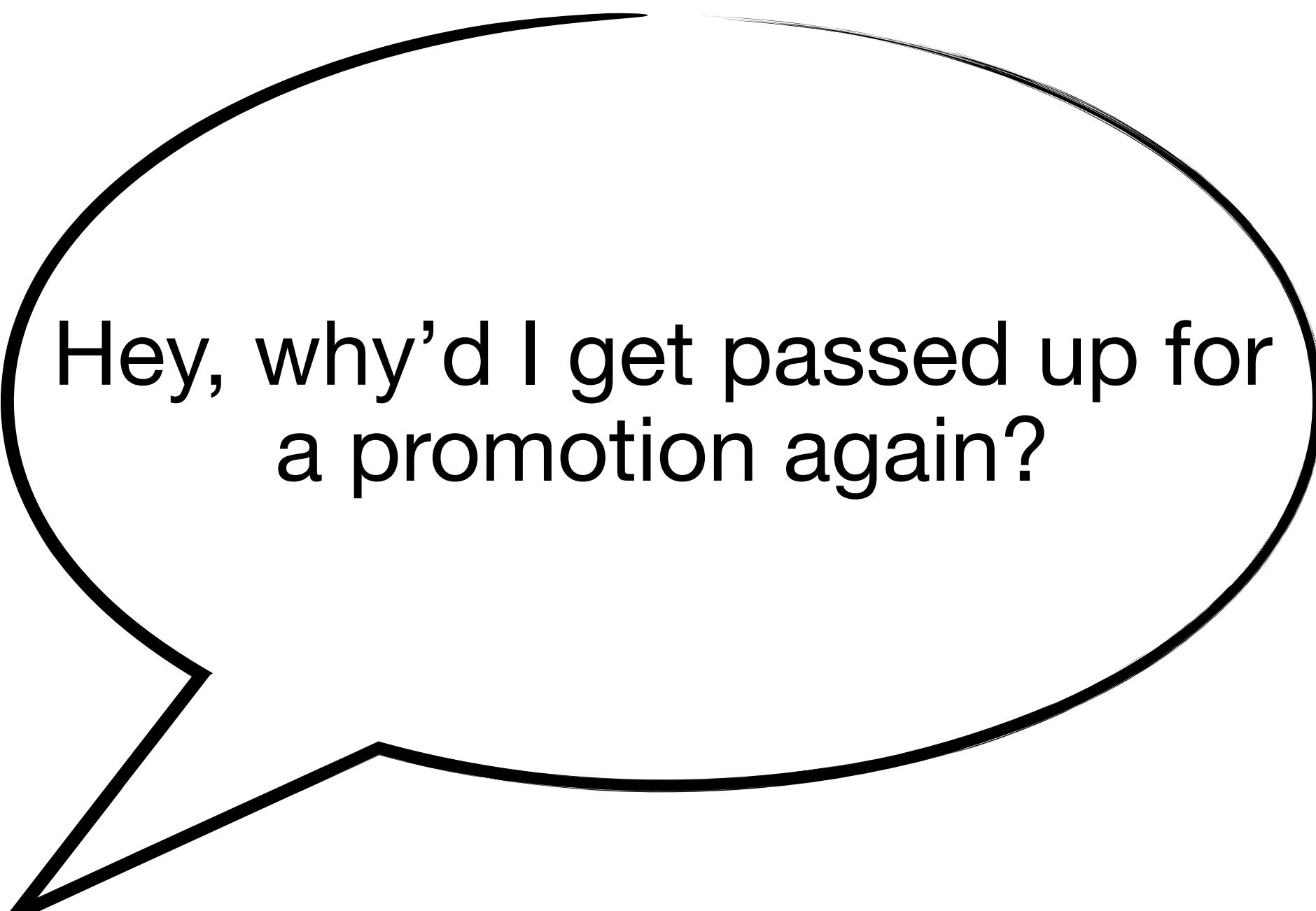
The request for change is buried, especially  
when delivered nervously

hey man, love having you on the team, you're a great teammate and I value your skills a lot. Last week you knocked out a huge task in record time! **Sometimes I think your pull requests aren't well tested.** But I know how busy you are and you work really hard and its hard keeping up with the changing requirements and anyway i think you're really smart and our team learns a ton from you. We'd be lost without you. Thanks for always being willing to help me out of a jam. Kthxbai

**What do you think they took away from this conversation?**



Cool, seems like I'm doing a  
good job. Maybe need to write  
more tests but whatever.

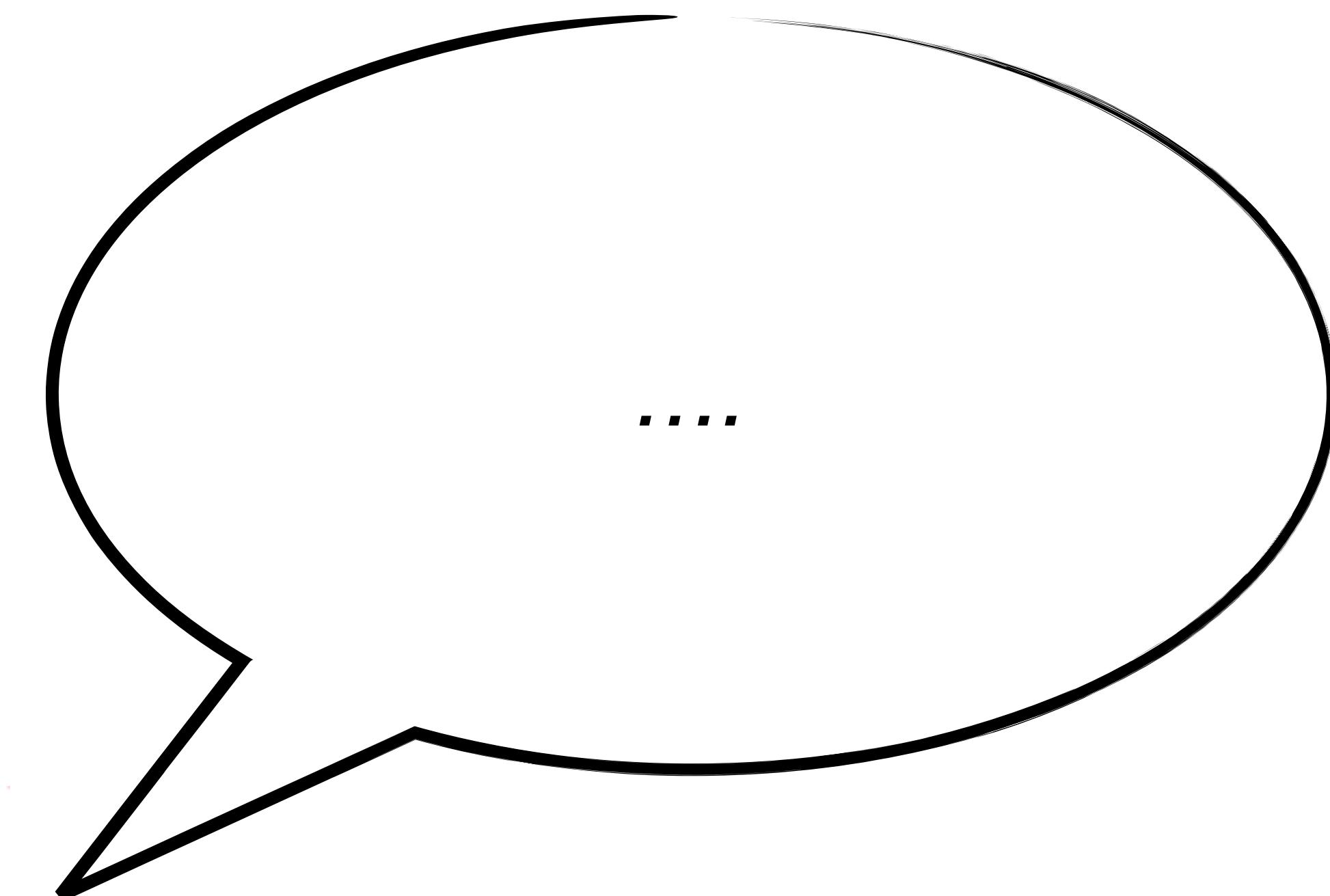


Six Months Later

# Problem 2: Insincere Compliments

It's obvious when the criticism is the main point  
and the compliments are meaningless

Bob, thank you for always being on time. Anyway, please stop calling your teammates “morons” in brainstorming meetings. Also I love that you always put your coffee mug in the dishwasher.



# Problem 3: Expecting Hammer to Drop

A sincere compliment or praise now overshadowed by  
fear of potential criticism

Its good to have a model

# Reduce Anxiety

Should minimize conflict so we're not afraid to deliver it

# **“Clear is kind”**

**Brene Brown - Dare to Lead**

# Behaviors.

Point out behaviors not feelings or intentions.

# **Focused on the future.**

Positive or negative, goal is encouraging future effective behavior

# Short

Shorter feedback -> frequent feedback



**Can I give you some feedback?**

**When you \_\_\_\_\_, here's what happens: \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Can you work on that?**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**“Can I say something?”**

**Ask.** Behavior. Impact. Request.

**“Can I give some advice?”**

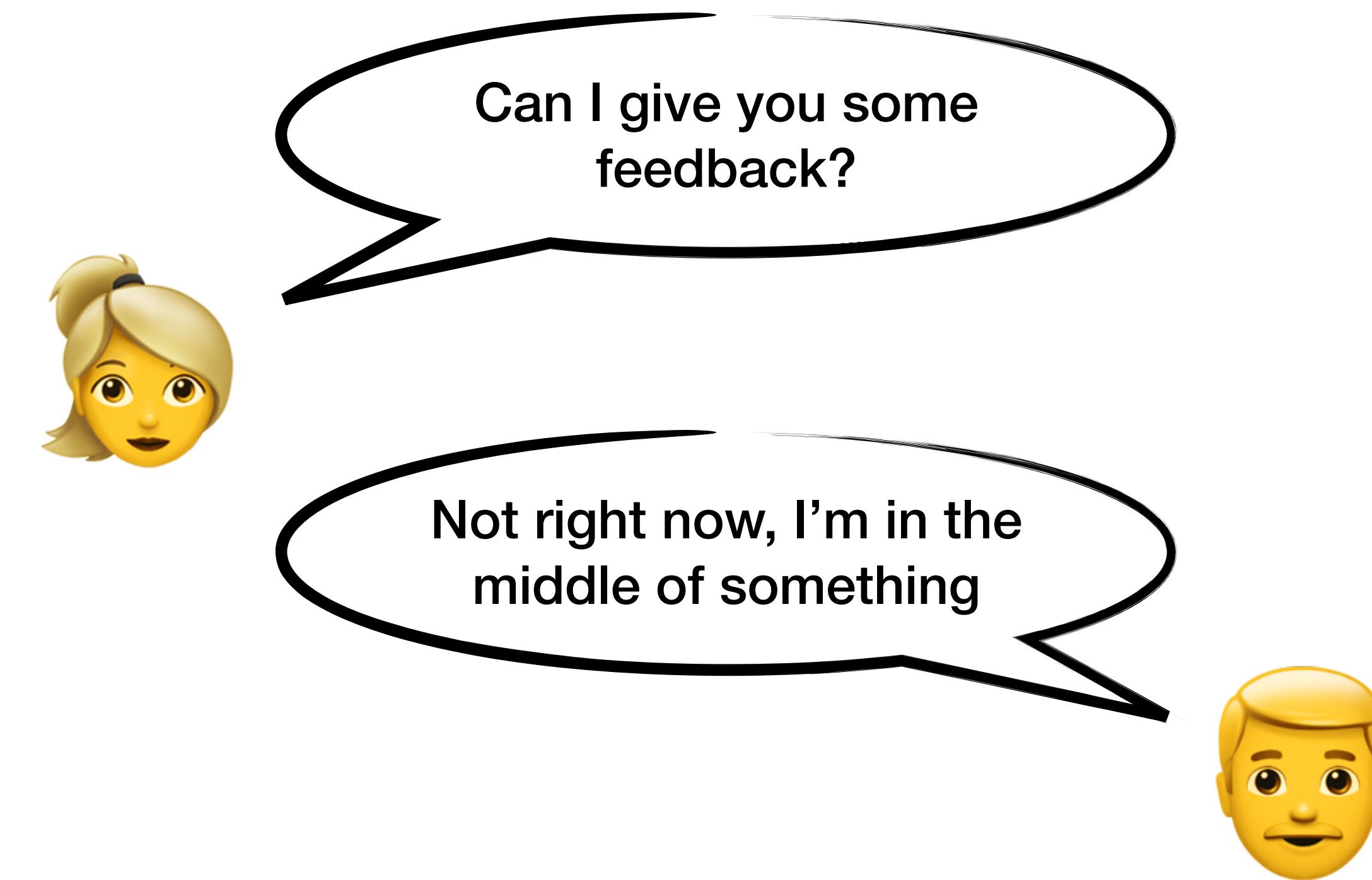
**Ask.** Behavior. Impact. Request.

**“Can I make an observation?”**

**Ask.** Behavior. Impact. Request.

**“Can I give you a tip?”**

**Ask.** Behavior. Impact. Request.



**Ask.** Behavior. Impact. Request.



Can I give you some feedback?

Not right now, I'm in the middle of something



Sounds good, we'll pick this up later

# Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.

“When you \_\_\_\_\_,”

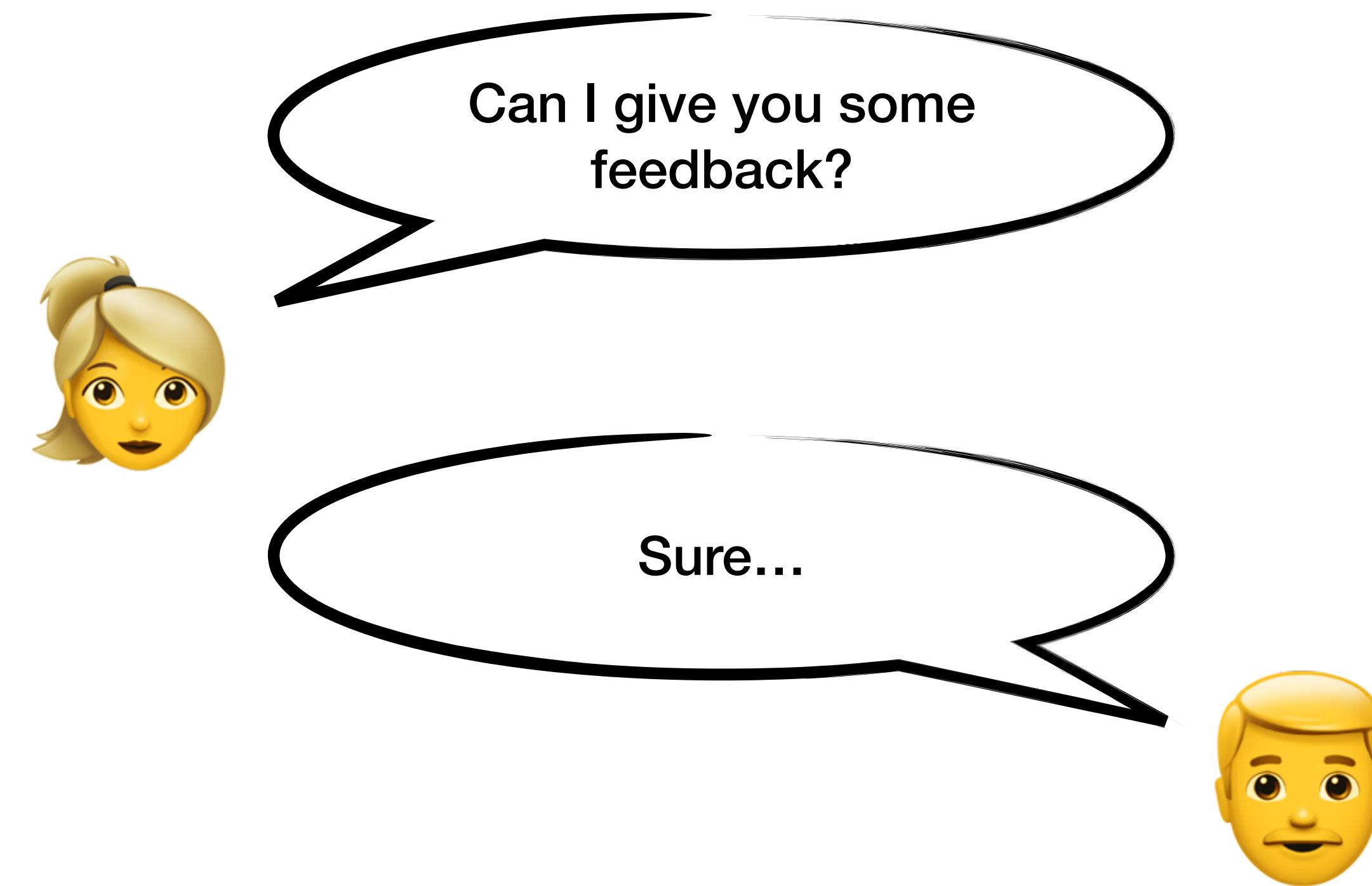
Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.

“I noticed \_\_\_\_\_”

Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.

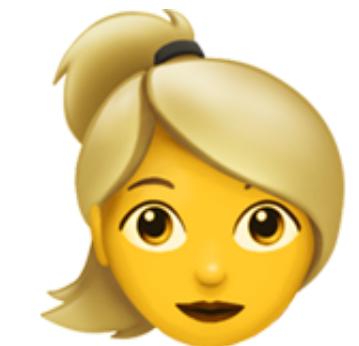
**Specific behaviors or actions, not  
feelings or attitudes**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**



**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

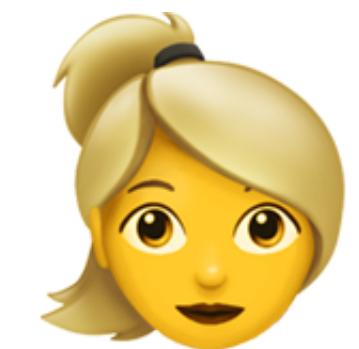
Can I give you some  
feedback?



Sure...



When you're angry with a  
client....



**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**



Sure...



When you're angry with a  
client....



I WASN'T ANGRY!!

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

Sure...



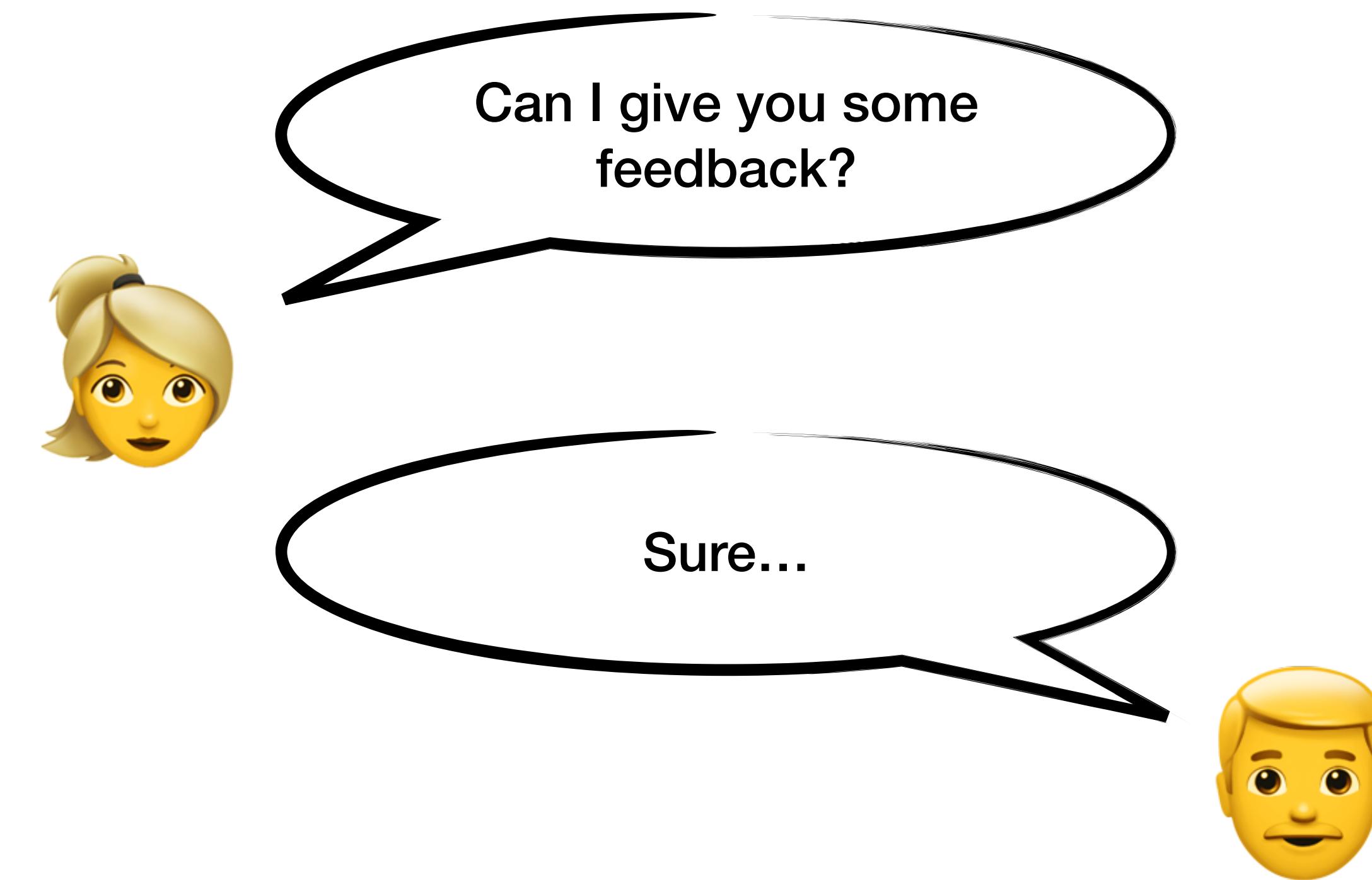
When you're angry with a  
client....



I WASN'T ANGRY!!

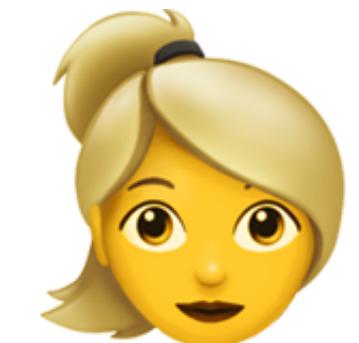


**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**



**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

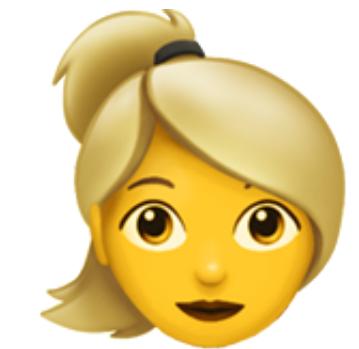
Can I give you some  
feedback?



Sure...



When you rolled your  
eyes at a client request...



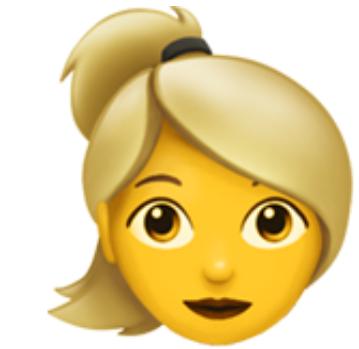
**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

Sure...



When you rolled your  
eyes at a client request...

They get upset and it  
breaks our trust.



**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

Can I say something? When you submit pull requests with logic errors, I get the impression that you didn't test locally. This slows down the process and makes it harder for me to trust you with bigger features. Can you work on that?

Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.

Can I give you some feedback? You've kept the README updated **which made it really smooth to onboard Kate last week.** Really appreciate it, well done

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

Can I give you some feedback? You've kept the README updated which made it really smooth to onboard Kate last week. **Really appreciate it, well done**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

Can I give you some feedback? You've kept the README updated which made it really smooth to onboard Kate last week. **Thank you!**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

Can I give you some feedback? You've kept the README updated which made it really smooth to onboard Kate last week. **Keep it up!**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**“Can you fix that?”**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**“Can you try something else?”**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**“Can you do better next time?”**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

# **Open Ended Requests**

Owning the solution is stickier

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**Scenario: Kate noticed in the morning that an automated email did not arrive and located and fixed the bug**

**“Can I give you some feedback? When you proactively noticed and fixed that issue with the daily digest email, you showed the client we care about their product and that builds trust. Thank you!”**

**Ask.** Behavior. Impact. Request.

**“Can I give you some feedback? When you proactively noticed and fixed that issue with the daily digest email, you showed the client we care about their product and that builds trust. Thank you!”**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**“Can I give you some feedback? When you proactively noticed and fixed that issue with the daily digest email, you showed the client we care about their product and that builds trust. Thank you!”**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

“Can I give you some feedback? When you proactively noticed and fixed that issue with the daily digest email, you showed the client we care about their product and that builds trust. **Thank you!**”

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**Scenario: Kevin is consistently the last one to client facing standup**

**“Can I give you a tip? When you’re late for standup it delays everyone, and the client loses confidence in us. Can you work on that?”**

**Ask.** Behavior. Impact. Request.

**“Can I give you a tip? When you’re late for standup it delays everyone, and the client loses confidence in us. Can you work on that?”**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**“Can I give you a tip? When you’re late for standup it delays everyone, and the client loses confidence in us. Can you work on that?”**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

“Can I give you a tip? When you’re late for standup it delays everyone, and the client loses confidence in us. **Can you work on that?**”

Ask. Behavior. Impact. **Request.**

# **Scenario: Pattern of broken pull requests**

**“Can I make an observation? You’ve had some recent PRs with logic errors. These slow down the process and make it harder for me to trust you with larger features in the future. Can you focus on improving that?”**

**Ask.** Behavior. Impact. Request.

**“Can I make an observation? You’ve had some recent PRs with logic errors. These slow down the process and make it harder for me to trust you with larger features in the future. Can you focus on improving that?”**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**“Can I make an observation? You’ve had some recent PRs with logic errors. These slow down the process and make it harder for me to trust you with larger features in the future. Can you focus on improving that?”**

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

“Can I make an observation? You’ve had some recent PRs with logic errors. These slow down the process and make it harder for me to trust you with larger features in the future. **Can you focus on improving that?**”

**Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.**

**Practice: Jon frequently forgets to update the JIIRA status**

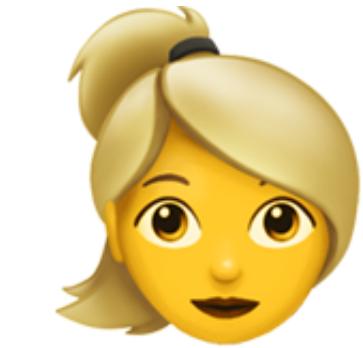
**Practice: Alice had a client demo go wrong**

**Practice: Robert overheard a question and volunteered the solution**

**Practice: Lara always adds good tests**

# FAQ: What if they push back?

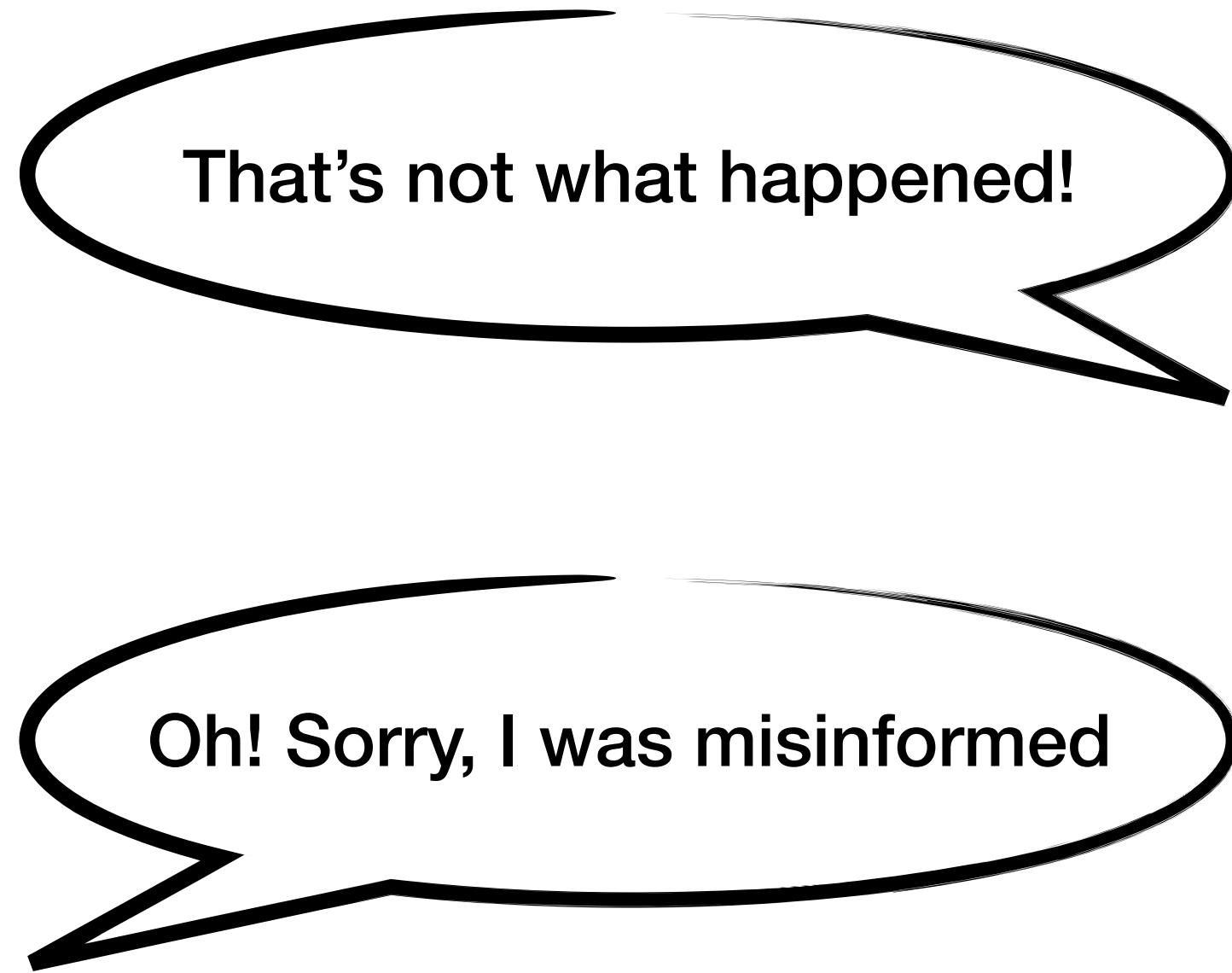
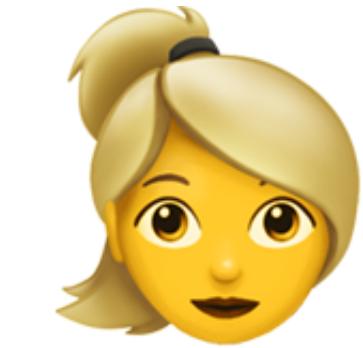
**No point in litigating the past**



That's not what happened!

Oh! Sorry, I misunderstood







I had a ton going on that day, its not my fault



Thats OK, I get it. Next time!

**Good Outcome:  
They're on notice of expectations**

**FAQ: What if they don't improve?**

# Stick with it

Same feedback, same model

*Text vs call vs video vs in-person*

**“What can you do differently?”**

Switch up the call to action to solicit concrete ideas

# Brainstorm concrete changes

At this point, time to get more involved in directing behavior

**FAQ: How long should I wait before delivering feedback on something I noticed?**

# Recency Bias

More recent = more effective

**Be in the right headspace**

**Feedback is not for venting**

OK to let it go

They seem to have self-corrected

**FAQ: I've been asked to deliver feedback on something I didn't witness. How?**

# Same model

No need to do anything different

# Not going to litigate

Don't need to gather evidence

**Sorry, I was misinformed!**

They're still on notice of what you expected

**FAQ: What is worth feed  
backing?**

**“If you’re not embarrassed by your first offer, its not low enough.”**

**My Uncle John, on buying a car**

# FAQ: Feedbacking a peer?

**Drop the closing request**  
You're not their boss!

```
69     +         else if (OperatingSystem.IsMacOS())
70     +         {
71     +             // TODO: document this and search other versions
72     +             return NativeLibrary.Load("/opt/homebrew/Cellar/libheif/1.18.2/lib/libheif.dylib",
73     +             assembly, 0);
```



## Add a comment on line R72

Using a hard coded path will make it difficult to port this to other systems.  
Is there a more reliable technique to find this library?



 Paste, drop, or click to add files

Cancel

## Comment

```
73     +      }  
74     +      else
```

```
50 +  
51 +         var sb = new StringBuilder("http://maps.googleapis.com/maps/api/distancematrix/xml?");  
52 +         sb.Append("sensor=false&units=imperial&");  
53 +         TutorDataSet.PlacesRow place = tutorDataSet.Places.FindByPlaceID(r.FromPlace);  
54 +  
55 +         sb.AppendFormat("origins={0}+{1}+{2}&",


```



## Add a comment on line R55

Building a URL with string interpolation will 404 or error out if the user enters different illegal characters. Can we use the URI library?



Paste, drop, or click to add files

Cancel

## Comment

```
56     + place.Address.Replace(' ', '+'),
```

# FAQ: Feedbacking a boss?

