

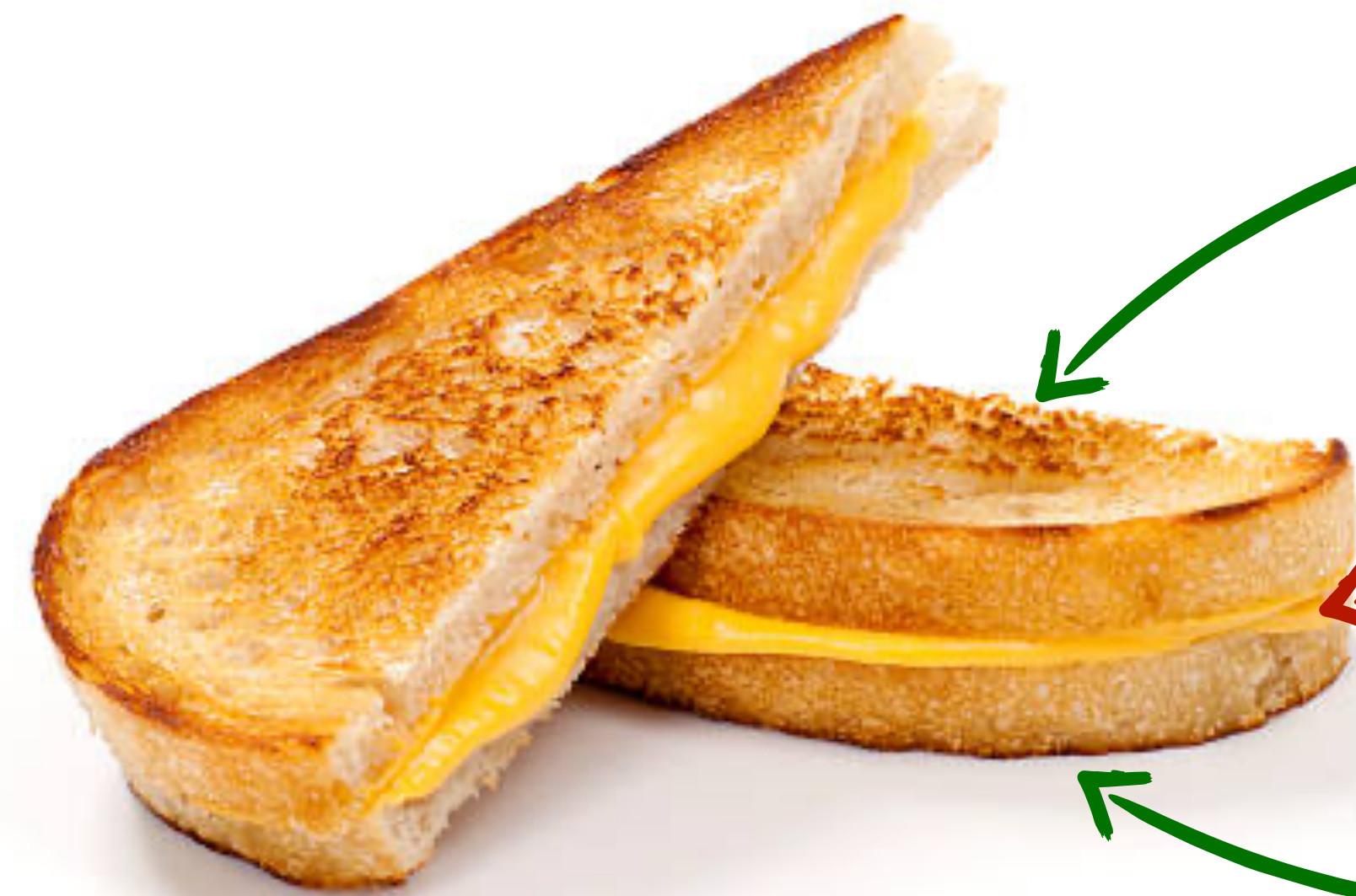
Ditch the Compliment Sandwich

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.



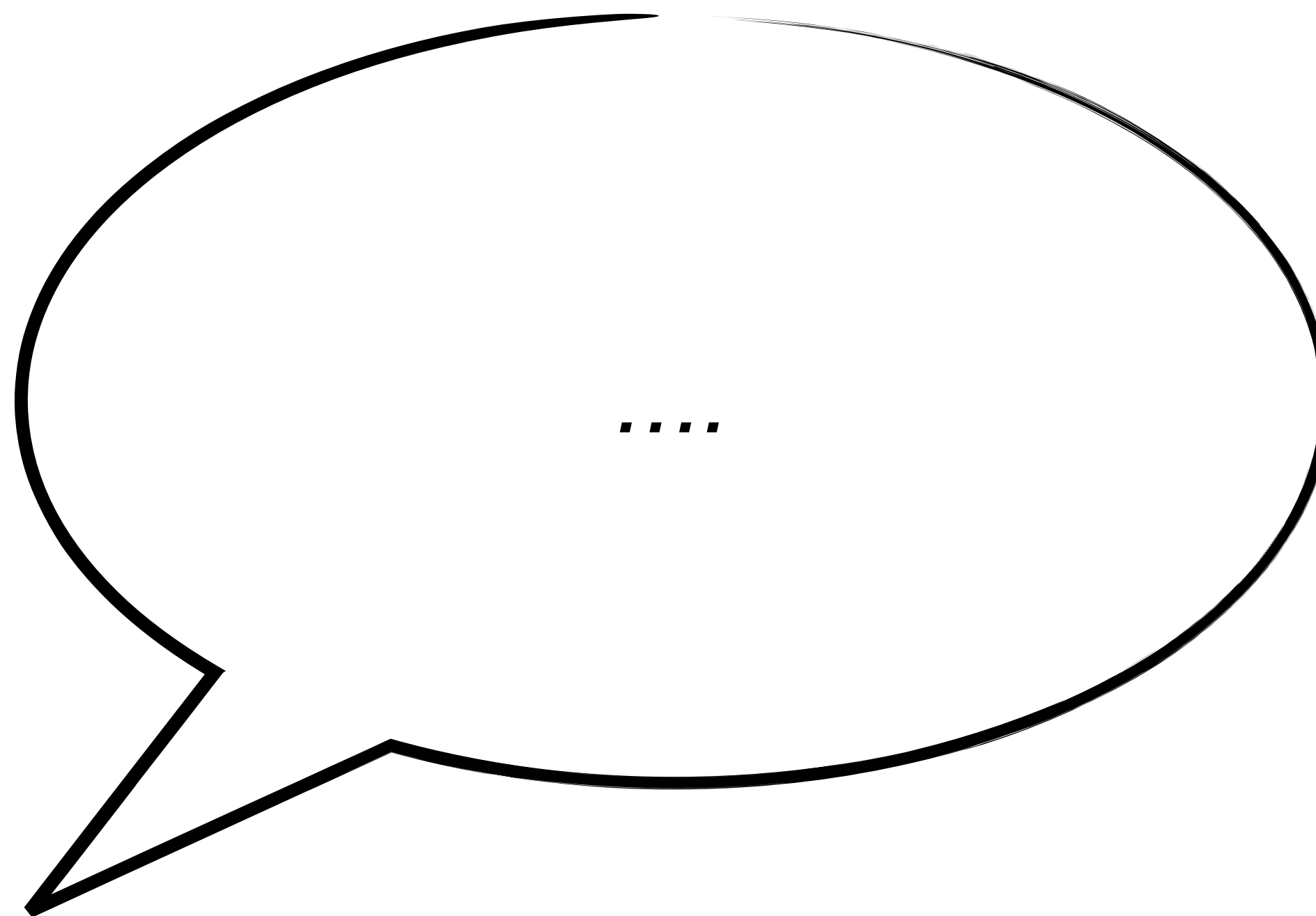
Hey, why'd I get passed up for
a promotion again?

Six Months Later

Problem 2: Insincere Compliments

**Its 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?”

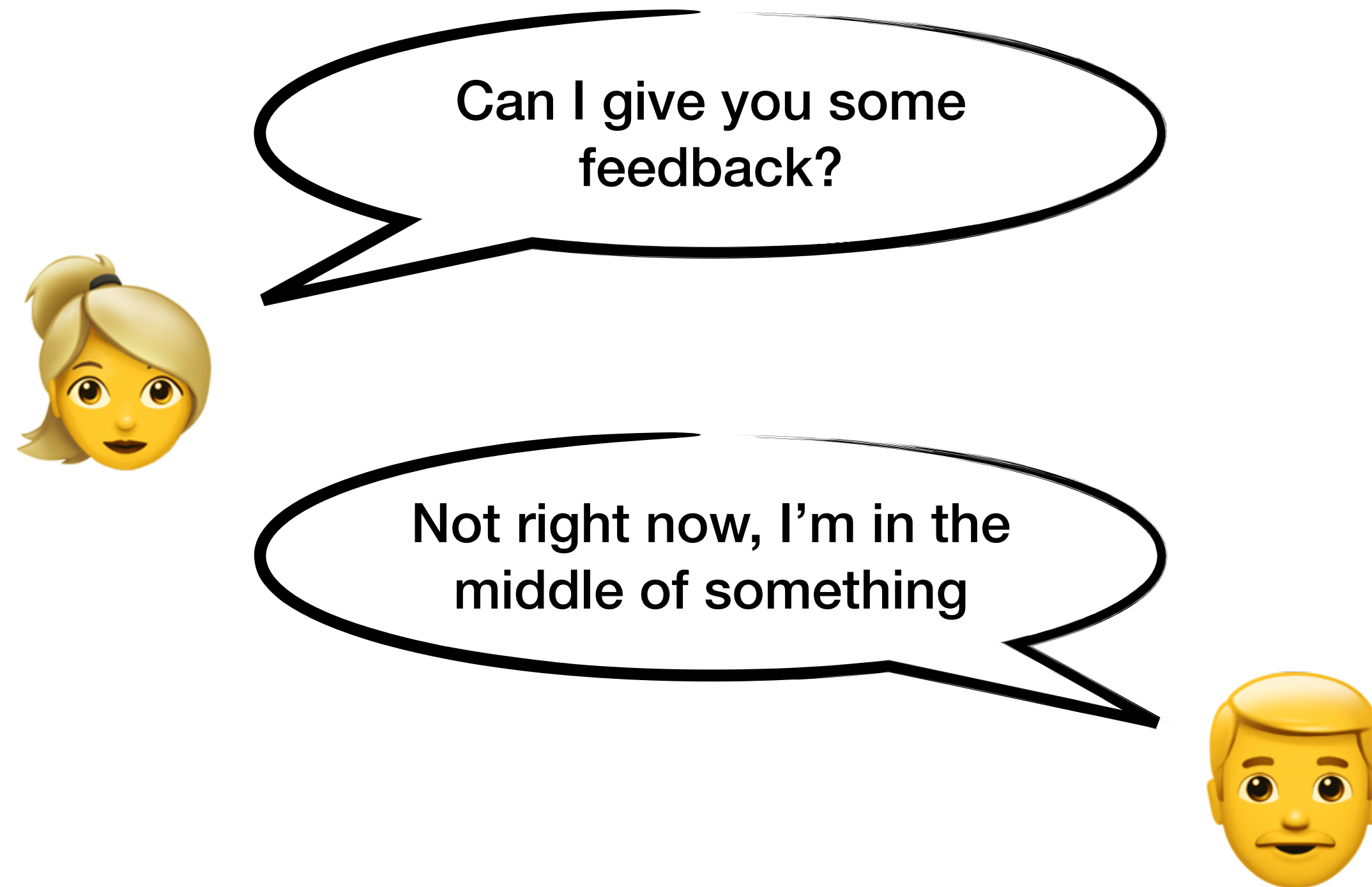
Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.

“Can I make an observation?”

Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.

“Can I give you a tip?”

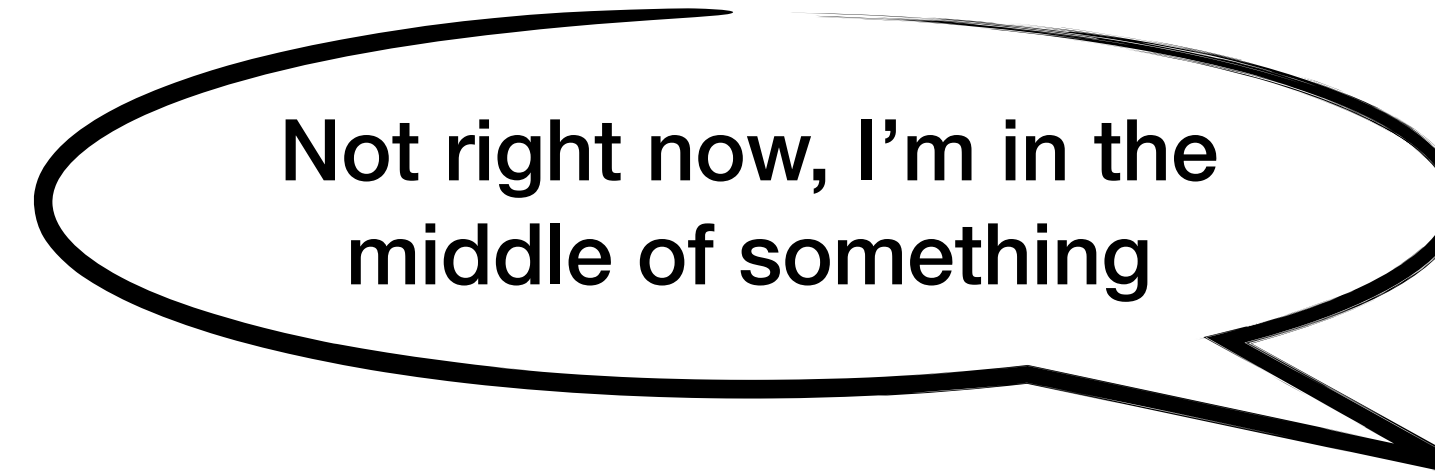
Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.



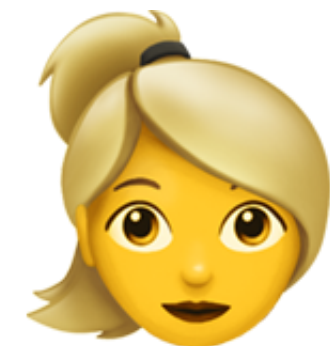
Ask. Behavior. Impact. Request.



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.

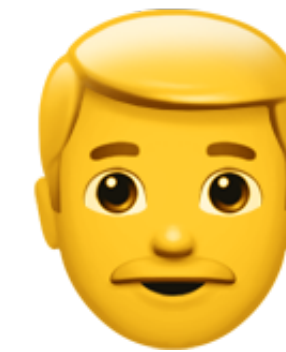


Ask. **Behavior.** Impact. Request.



Can I give you some
feedback?

Sure...



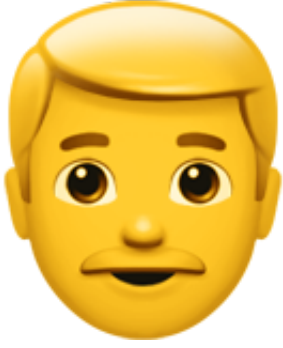
When you're angry with a
client....



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



Sure...



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



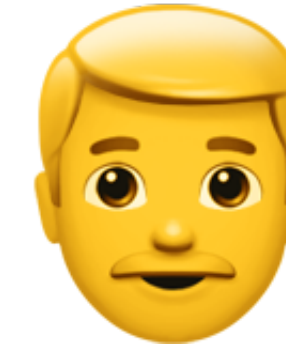
I WASN'T ANGRY!!



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 JIRA 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



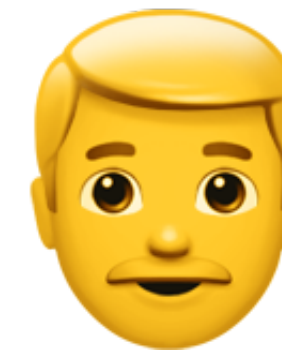
That's not what happened!



Oh! Sorry, I was misinformed



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",
assembly, 0);
```



Add a comment on line R72

Write

Preview

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↩️

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

Write

Preview

H B I | ☰ < > 🔗 | ☰ ☰ ☰ | @ ↗ ↶

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?

