



Asking for and receiving feedback

Supporting Workbook





Ask what people need

Insight one





'In my one-to-ones with my team members, I started to ask them about my leadership and what worked for them. How does it feel to be on the receiving end of me? How can I help you to be your best at work?'



Good intentions don't tell you how your leadership actually feels to someone else. A behaviour you see as helpful may motivate one colleague, unsettle another, or simply fail to give them what they need.

Louise's questions shift the emphasis from 'This is how I lead' to 'What helps you do your best work?' That's a meaningful change. It recognises that leadership is experienced by other people and that their experience matters.

Making space for this conversation can reveal small adjustments with a real effect on confidence, working relationships, and the quality of what a team delivers. You don't have to guess what people need if you're prepared to ask.



Try this in practice

- Ask a colleague, 'What do I do that helps you work at your best?'
- Follow with, 'Is there anything you need me to do differently?' and give them time to think before filling the silence.
- Explore individual needs in regular conversations instead of waiting for a problem or formal review.
- Check whether your preferred way of leading is genuinely useful to the person receiving it.
- Choose one realistic adjustment from the feedback and make it visible through your behaviour.
- Return to the conversation later to find out whether the change has helped.



Quick reflection

Do you know how your leadership feels to other people?

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark blue uniform, is looking down at a pair of hands being held in front of her. She has two name tags on her chest: a yellow one that says "Louise" and a purple one that says "Simply Better Care". The background is a solid teal color with a large, stylized white quotation mark graphic on the right side.

Make feedback easier to give

Insight two



'We all need feedback. We all have development points. It enables my team to see that I'm comfortable to receive feedback, and so they can be comfortable to give feedback to me. And they can then go on and be comfortable to receive feedback themselves.'



Feedback can feel personal precisely because people care about their work. Yet avoiding it doesn't protect relationships. It can leave unhelpful behaviour untouched and make honest conversations feel increasingly risky.

A leader who actively invites feedback changes the conditions around it. Colleagues no longer have to decide whether they're 'allowed' to say something difficult because the invitation has already been made. Responding with curiosity also demonstrates that feedback is something people can use, not something they must defend themselves against.

That response travels. When colleagues see feedback being received without blame or embarrassment, they may become more willing to offer it, ask for it, and learn from it themselves. Over time, conversations that once felt threatening can become part of how the team improves its work.



Try this in practice

- Invite feedback routinely, including when nothing has gone wrong, so it doesn't become associated only with difficult moments.
- Use a prompt such as, 'What could I change that would make working with me easier?'
- Resist explaining your intention immediately. First, make sure you understand the effect the other person experienced.
- Thank them for being candid, especially when the feedback is uncomfortable to hear.
- Say what you'll do with the feedback, even if you need time to consider it.
- Show that receiving feedback leads to reflection and action, not consequences for the person who spoke.



Quick reflection

What makes it safe for someone to give you honest feedback?



Let people see the difficulty

Insight three



'You're always really calm. It's great that you're calm, but actually that makes me feel inadequate at times because I might be really flustered about something, and I might be stressed and not know how to deal with something. But then I don't feel good at my job because you seem really calm about it.'



Not everyone will experience calm leadership in this way. For many people, a steady presence is exactly what helps when work becomes pressured. Louise's experience reveals a subtle nuance: composure can sometimes be mistaken for finding the situation easy.

If you're struggling while somebody else appears untroubled, it's easy to turn that contrast into a judgement about ability. Equally, if you're naturally calm, you may not realise that this comparison is being made.

The lesson isn't to abandon the steadiness others value. It's to stay curious about how your response is being interpreted. A simple acknowledgement such as 'This is quite difficult, isn't it?' can show that calmness doesn't mean the challenge has gone unnoticed.

For those on the other side, another person's composure isn't proof that you're coping badly. People show pressure differently. Naming what you're finding difficult can open an honest conversation rather than leaving you alone with the comparison.



Try this in practice

- Name the difficulty when a situation is demanding, even if you appear composed.
- Ask a trusted colleague how your response under pressure comes across, recognising that people may experience it differently.
- Pair steadiness with a simple check-in, such as 'This feels difficult today. Are you all right?'
- Share how you're finding the situation, whether you're the person appearing calm or the one feeling less composed. This can prevent unspoken comparisons from becoming judgements about someone's ability.



Quick reflection

Could your composure be hiding how difficult the work really is?



Be visible without taking over

Insight four





'Me always being the one to be out there and linking in with teams could be seen as treading on other people's toes from a leadership perspective.'

'Sometimes it's just [...] navigating your style so that people on the ground know that they can trust and contact you [...], but recognising the structure that's in place and allowing our leaders at different levels of the organisation to do what they do best and do the roles that they want to do as well.'



Being visible and accessible can build trust. It can also, without intending to, occupy space that another person needs to lead.

The challenge isn't choosing between being present and stepping back. It's learning when each is useful. Colleagues should know that they can contact you and that you'll show up when needed. At the same time, other leaders need genuine room to build relationships, make decisions, and fulfil their responsibilities.

Before stepping in, consider whether your presence will add something necessary or unintentionally signal that somebody else's leadership isn't enough. Sometimes the most supportive choice is to remain available without becoming the centre of the situation.



Try this in practice

- Clarify with colleagues where your visibility is helpful and where it risks cutting across their responsibilities.
- Make your availability clear without expecting to be involved in everything.
- Direct people back to the appropriate colleague when stepping in would weaken an established relationship.
- Step forward when your contribution is needed, then make space again once it isn't.



Quick reflection

Where might your helpful presence be limiting someone else's leadership?



Drop your position, keep the goal

Insight five



'We're all [...] guilty of thinking that either you know the right way to do something, your thoughts on a scenario are right, or your way of doing something is right. [...] If we remain too positional, we really close off other people's perspectives of what might be true.'

'One of the ways that I like to look at things is actually trying to drop whatever my thoughts are on a particular scenario and focusing on: what are we trying to do, what are we trying to get to, and how do we get there? [...] There might be more than one version of the truth, and you can have different views on how you get somewhere. But as long as you've got that one goal, that one vision, then there are different ways of getting there.'



Holding too tightly to your preferred answer can close down information that might change your understanding of the situation. The conversation then becomes a contest between positions rather than a shared effort to reach the right outcome.

Returning to the goal creates room for different views without losing direction. People can disagree about the route while remaining committed to the same destination. That makes it easier to examine what each person can see, test assumptions, and find an approach that draws on more than one person's experience.

This isn't about having no view. It's about loosening your grip on being right long enough to hear what else might be true.



Try this in practice

- State the shared outcome before debating how to achieve it.
- Ask, 'What are you seeing that I might not be seeing?'
- Listen for information that challenges your first interpretation of the situation.
- Bring a stuck discussion back to what everyone is trying to accomplish.
- Allow a different approach when it supports the agreed goal and can be followed through responsibly.



Quick reflection

When did your preferred answer last stop you hearing another perspective?

■ If you try one thing

Ask someone you work with, 'How does it feel to be on the receiving end of my leadership?'

Listen without defending your intentions, then agree one small change that would help them do their best work.

That single conversation can reveal effects you couldn't see for yourself, make future feedback easier, and strengthen how you work together.

