## Understanding, recognising and managing emotional responses to feedback



A *reaction* is typically automatic and usually triggers an action before there is time for thought and therefore can create unintended consequences.

A *response* is considered action based on the awareness you have in the moment about what is required to achieve the best outcome.

Emotional reactions occur automatically. How you act, as a leader and manager, on your emotions will have direct consequences on those you lead and the team climate your create.

Leaders can react in ways that create positive energy in their teams. They can also react in ways that create unintended impacts that can disengage and limit the performance of the team.

Receiving feedback, such as open comments from the employee engagement survey or in face to face interactions, may present challenges for a leader. The feedback can sometimes be unclear, inaccurate, trigger us emotionally and in the case of open comments from a survey, is anonomous which makes gaining resolution difficult.

It is important as a leader to have a strategy that helps you choose how you respond and manage feedback in those situations which trigger strong emotions.

Below is a practical 4 step approach to support you in becoming more mindful and intentional in how you respond (and not react) to challenging feedback.



- Pay attention to your feelings/emotions and physical reactions
- Are you able to name your feeling in the moment?



- Pause before reacting
- Take a breath
- Be aware of your default leadership style and think about the leadership style that is required in this situation.



## Hold a learning mindset

- Assume the person/s intention is to be helpful (not hurtful)
- Remind yourself that feedback is a gift and potential opportunity to be a better leader





## Gain perspective and context

- Get on the balcony' to gain some objectivity
- Ask yourself is this feedback shared by many or only a few?
- Reminder: Feedback, no matter how well intentioned and genuine, doesn't make it automatically right...or wrong.



RESPOND

## Seek understanding and clarity

In face to face feedback situations:

- Use a question to understand the other person's view and to generate dialogue between you, OR
- Advise you need to take some time to think before providing a response

In written feedback situations:

 Talk to your manager, a peer or check-in directly with your team if you need additional clarity to support you in your understanding.