

# FRICTION

## INTERPERSONAL

Set the Temperature  
with Your First Sentence

### The Experiment: The First-Sentence Rewrite Activity

**Duration:** One week

**Time required:** 2–3 minutes of preparation per conversation

**Goal:** Practice writing the first sentence of a hard conversation intentionally so you can try to set the emotional temperature at the outset.

For one week, run this micro-practice before any potentially tense conversation (feedback, conflict, performance, a tough email).

#### 1: Write your first sentence as you normally would.

Example: “I need to give you some brutally honest feedback.”

#### 2: Label what it might signal to the other person’s nervous system:

Threat? Shame? Belonging? Partnership? Ambush?

**3:** Rewrite the first sentence using this template:

"I'm going to be [clear/specific/direct], because I [care about your growth / want you to win / want us to work well together]."

Examples:

- "I'm going to be really specific, because I want you to have the impact you're capable of."
- "I have high expectations for this role, and I'm confident you can meet them. Can I share what would get you there faster?"
- "This might feel uncomfortable, and I'm bringing it up because I respect you and I don't want it to get in your way."

**4:** After the conversation, reflect on:

- What changed in their body language?

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- What changed in *my* body?

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- Did the message land faster?

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- Did trust go up, down, or stay the same?

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