



***FORWARD
IN FOCUS***

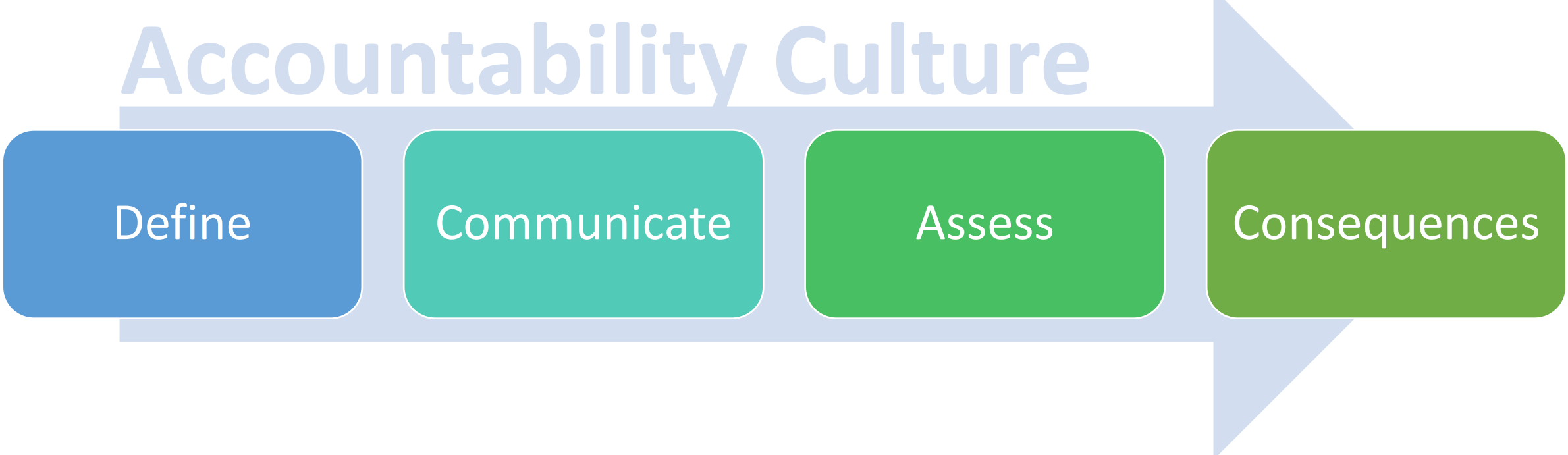
How to Have an Accountability Discussion

September 14, 2026 – 10:45 am

Shelley Row, P.E., CSP



Accountability Culture



Define

Communicate

Assess

Consequences

Define Clearly: What does success look like?

Assess Routinely: How/when will you review progress?

Communicate Effectively: How will you communicate your expectations and consequences?

Apply Consequences: How will you follow through?

ACCOUNTABILITY LADDER

Career Impact

Financial Impact

Cultural Pressure

Peer Pressure

No Pressure



Your Accountability Ladder

Positive	Negative
Career Impact	
Financial Impact	
Cultural Pressure	
Peer Pressure	
No Pressure	

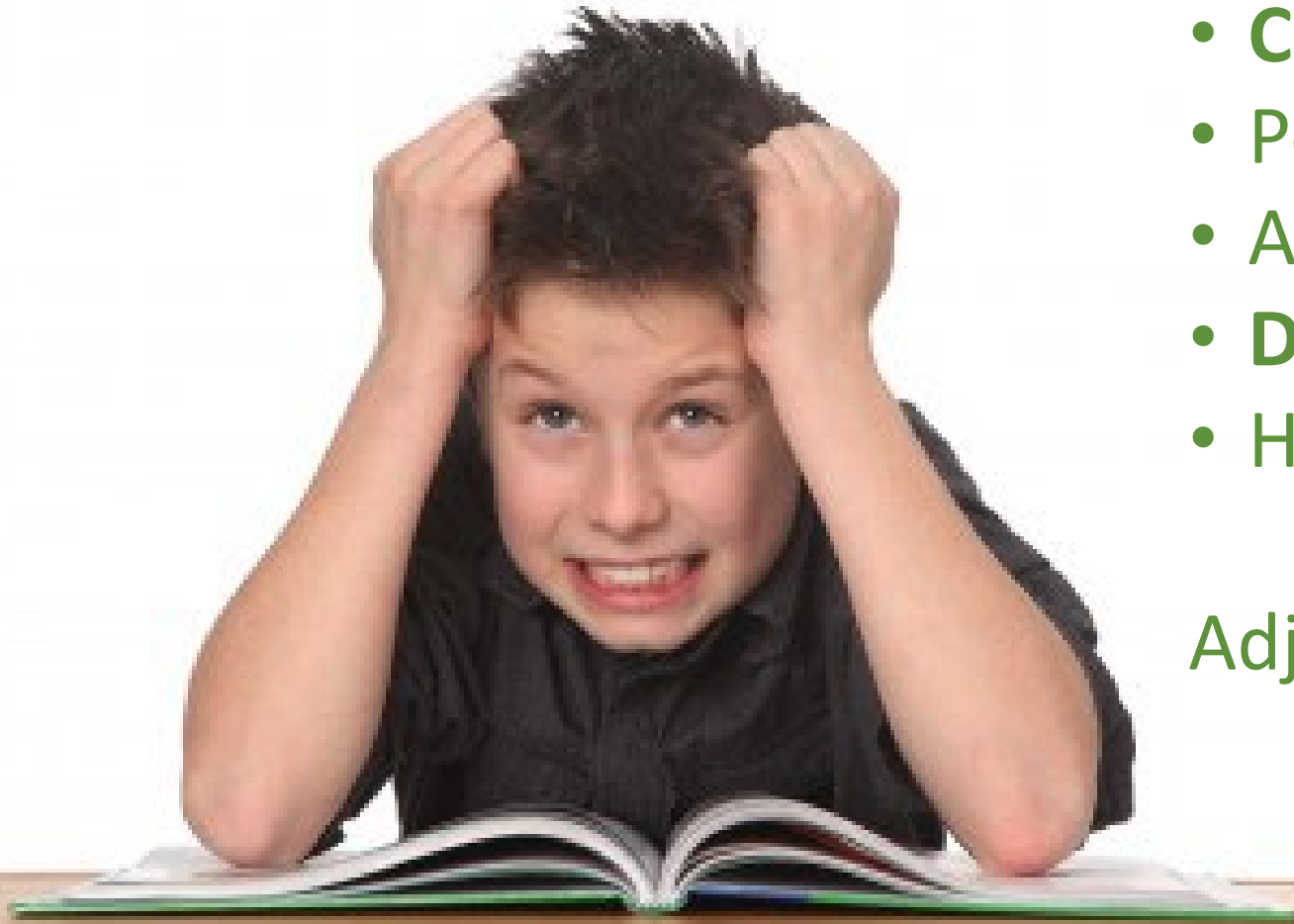
What are the consequences?

Going well:

- Feedback
- Pat on the back
- Group shoutout
- Party
- Reward
- Bonus
- Promotion



What are the consequences?



Not going well:

- Feedback
- **Coaching**
- **Correcting**
- Peer pressure
- Adjust the task
- **Discussion**
- HR action

Adjust consequences

What makes an
accountability discussion
difficult?



Why is it **important** to have
an accountability discussion?



Who pays the **price** for
not having an accountability
discussion?



**With whom is your
accountability
discussion?**







5-Step System

1. Be clear, calm, curious
2. Identify behavior
3. State perception
4. Engage in dialog
5. Define next steps

5-Step System

- 
1. **Be clear, calm, curious**
 2. Identify behavior
 3. State perception
 4. Engage in dialog
 5. Define next steps

Be clear about who's here

- Background
- History
- Strengths
- Personal situation
- Communication Style



A man with grey hair, wearing a light blue shirt and a dark striped tie, is sitting cross-legged in the center of a meeting. He has his eyes closed and a serene expression, with his hands raised in a meditative gesture. Around him, four other people (three men and one woman) are seated, looking at him with expressions of surprise and concern. The woman to his left is gesturing with her hand. The man to his right is holding a pen. The background is a large window with a view of a city. The text "Be calm" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Be calm



Be rested
Breathe deeply & exhale
Relax your face
Relax your body
Imagine a calm place
Count to 10

Be curious
Not certain





Certainty is the deadly enemy of tolerance.



5-Step System

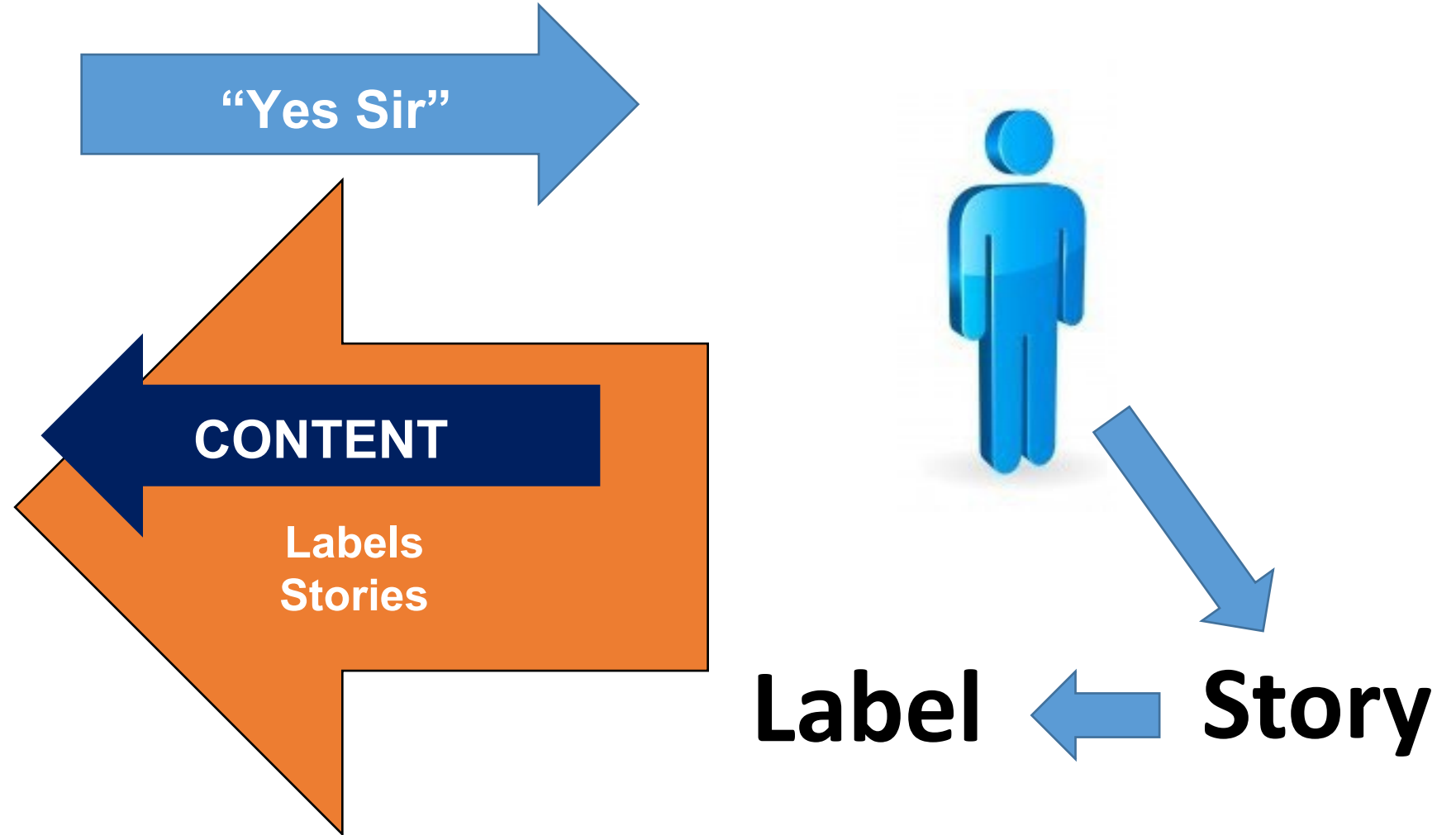
1. Be clear, calm, curious
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Behavior vs. Labels



Discussion

Me



Discussion

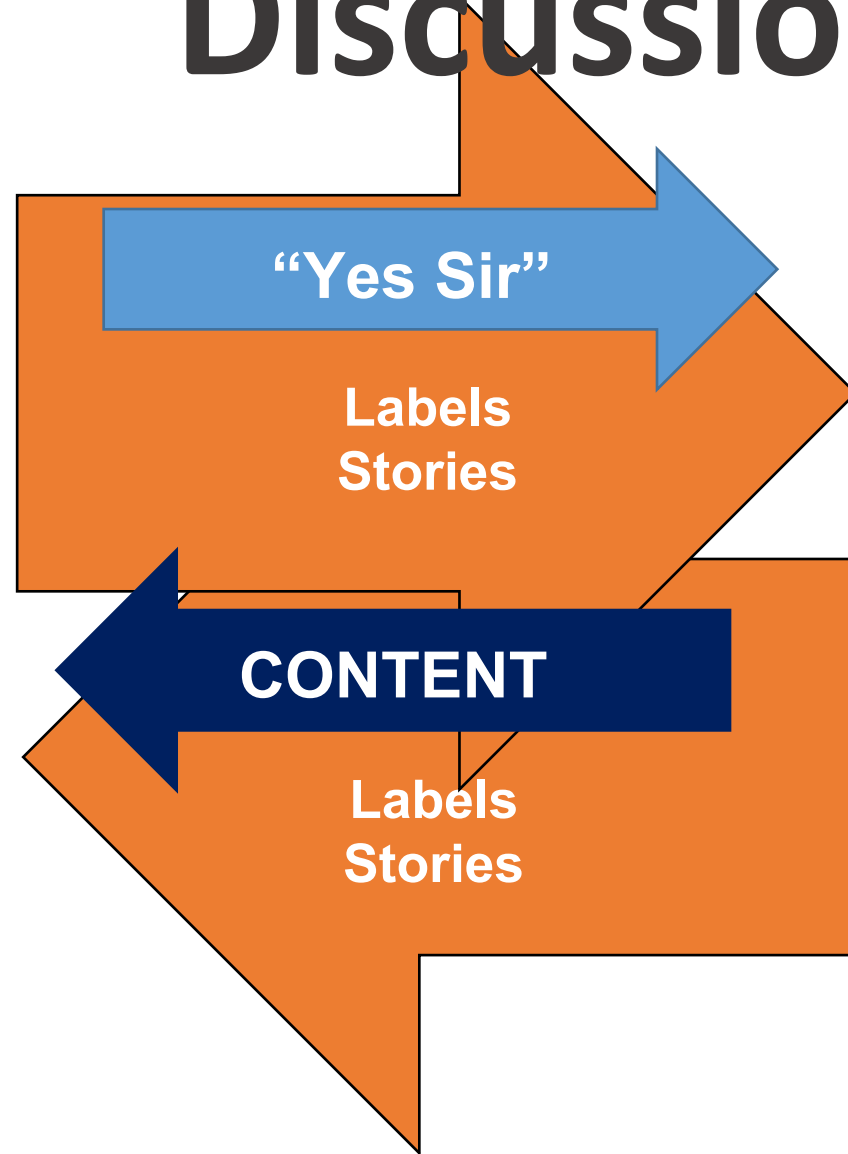
Me



Label ← Story

Discussion

Me



Choice



Story

Behavior	Labels
	Patronizing
	Disrespectful
	Undependable
	Jerk
	Difficult
	Unfocused

Behavior	Labels
"Yes, sir"	Patronizing
	Disrespectful
	Undependable
	Jerk
	Difficult
	Unfocused

Behavior	Labels
“Yes, sir”	Patronizing
Interrupts in meetings	Disrespectful
	Undependable
	Jerk
	Difficult
	Unfocused

Behavior	Labels
"Yes, sir"	Patronizing
Interrupts in meetings	Disrespectful
Work products are late	Undependable
	Jerk
	Difficult
	Unfocused

Behavior	Labels
"Yes, sir"	Patronizing
Interrupts in meetings	Disrespectful
Work products are late	Undependable
My contributions aren't acknowledged	Jerk
	Difficult
	Unfocused

Behavior	Labels
“Yes, sir”	Patronizing
Interrupts in meetings	Disrespectful
Work products are late	Undependable
My contributions aren’t acknowledged	Jerk
Debates every suggestion I make	Difficult
	Unfocused

Behavior	Labels
“Yes, sir”	Patronizing
Interrupts in meetings	Disrespectful
Work products are late	Undependable
My contributions aren’t acknowledged	Jerk
Debates every suggestion I make	Difficult
Jumps from one priority to another	Unfocused

**What's the
label?**



**What's the
behavior?**





5-Step System

1. Be clear, calm, curious
2. **Identify behavior**
3. State perception
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5-Step System

1. Be clear, calm, curious
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Discussion Template



When you do **(behavior)**

My perception is **(your story)**

What's your perception? **(curious)**

(Discuss openly)

I request **(desired behavior)**

Decide next steps together

Discussion Template



When you do **(behavior)**

*My perception is **(your story)***

*My interpretation is **(your story)***

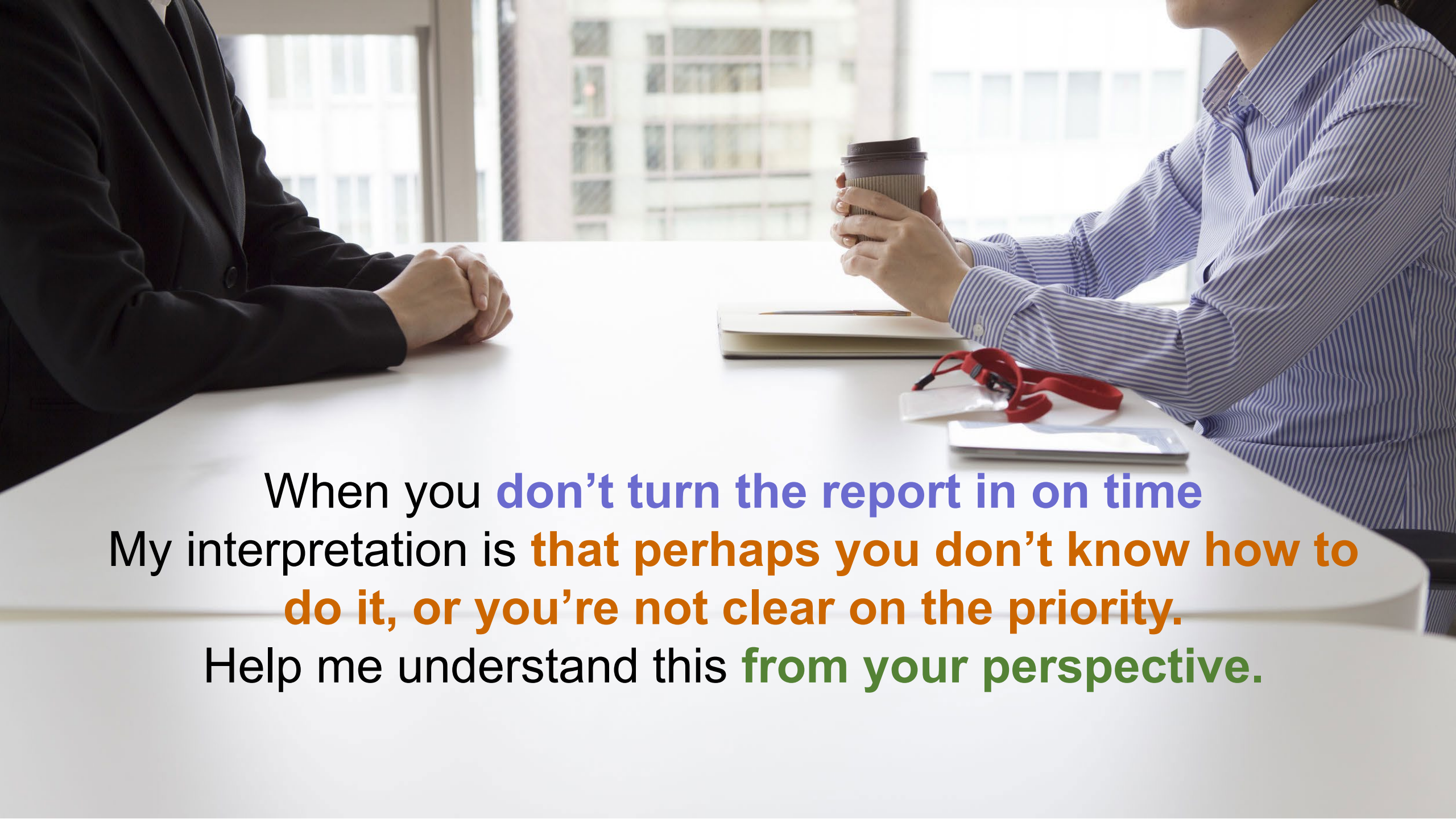
*My understanding is **(your interpretation)***

Discussion Template

When you do **(behavior)**
My perception is **(your story)**
What's your perception? (curious)
Help me understand your perspective (curious)
I'm curious to know your views (curious)
Tell me how you see it (curious)



When you **don't turn the report in on time**
My interpretation is **that perhaps you don't know how to
do it, or you're not clear on the priority.**



When you **don't turn the report in on time**
My interpretation is **that perhaps you don't know how to**
do it, or you're not clear on the priority.
Help me understand this **from your perspective.**



When you **don't come to work on time**

My perception is **that you're struggling to manage your time, or there's something outside of work getting in the way.**



When you **don't come to work on time**

My perception is **that you're struggling to manage your time, or there's something outside of work getting in the way.**

I'm curious to know **your perception.**

A photograph of two people sitting at a white table in an office. The person on the left is wearing a dark suit jacket and has their hands clasped. The person on the right is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and is holding a brown paper coffee cup. On the table, there is a notebook, a pen, and a red lanyard. The background shows a window with a view of a city building.

When you **repeatedly question my instructions**
I feel **that you don't respect my experience.**

A photograph of two people sitting at a white table in an office. The person on the left is wearing a dark suit jacket and has their hands clasped. The person on the right is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and is holding a brown paper coffee cup. On the table, there is a notebook, a pen, and a red lanyard. The background shows a window with a view of a city building.

When you repeatedly question my instructions
I feel that you don't respect my experience.
I'm interested to know how you see this.

A photograph of two people sitting at a white table in a bright, modern office or meeting room. The person on the left is wearing a dark suit jacket and has their hands clasped. The person on the right is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and is holding a brown paper coffee cup. On the table, there is a notebook, a pen, and a red lanyard. The background shows large windows with a view of a city building.

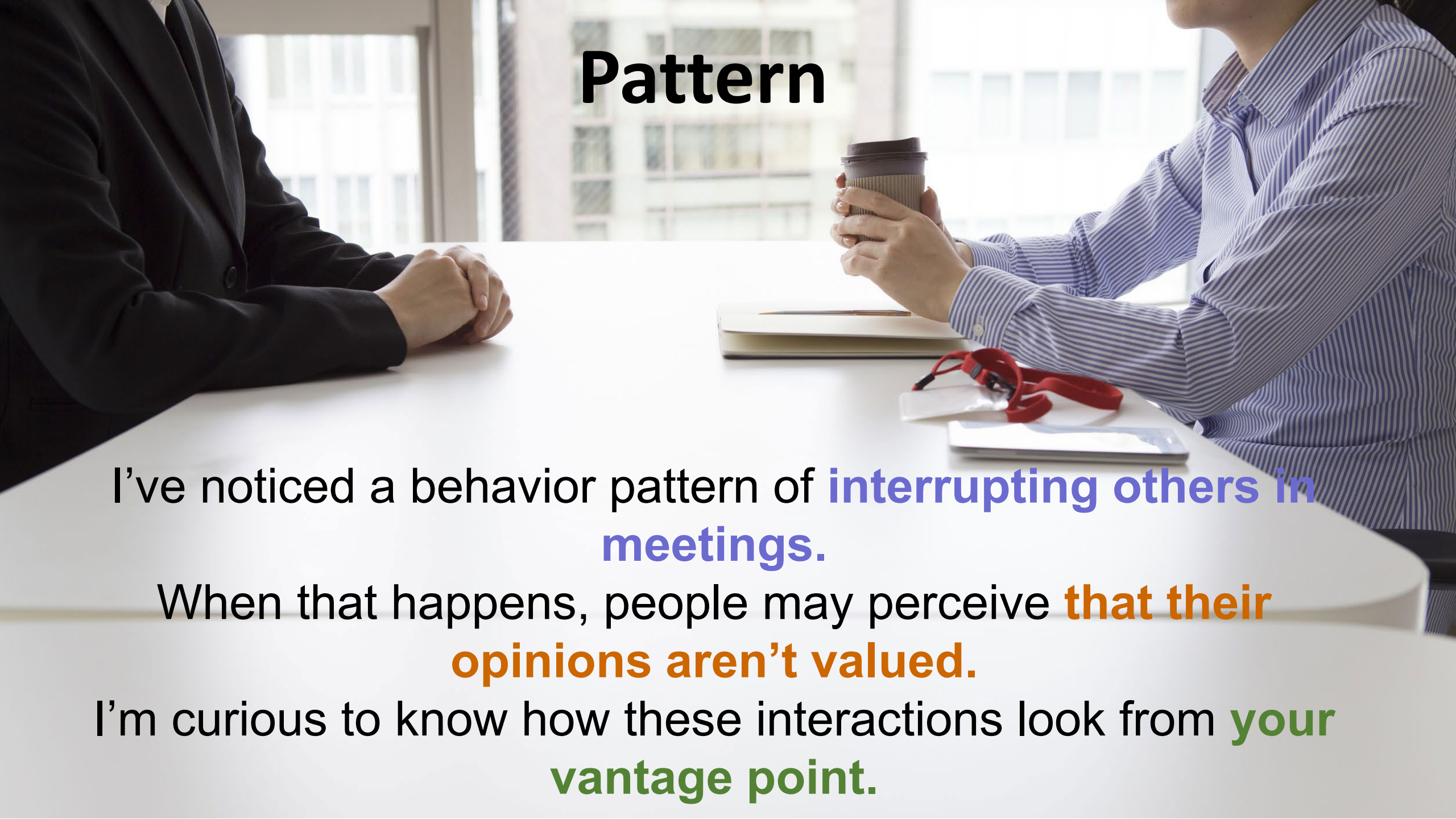
Repeated Behavior Problems

Content (Behavior)
Pattern of behavior
Relationship damage from
repeated behavior

Crucial Accountability

Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan, Switzler

Pattern

A photograph of two people sitting at a white table in a bright room with large windows in the background. The person on the left is wearing a dark suit jacket and has their hands clasped. The person on the right is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and is holding a brown paper coffee cup. On the table, there is a notebook, a pen, and a red lanyard.

I've noticed a behavior pattern of **interrupting others in meetings.**

When that happens, people may perceive **that their opinions aren't valued.**

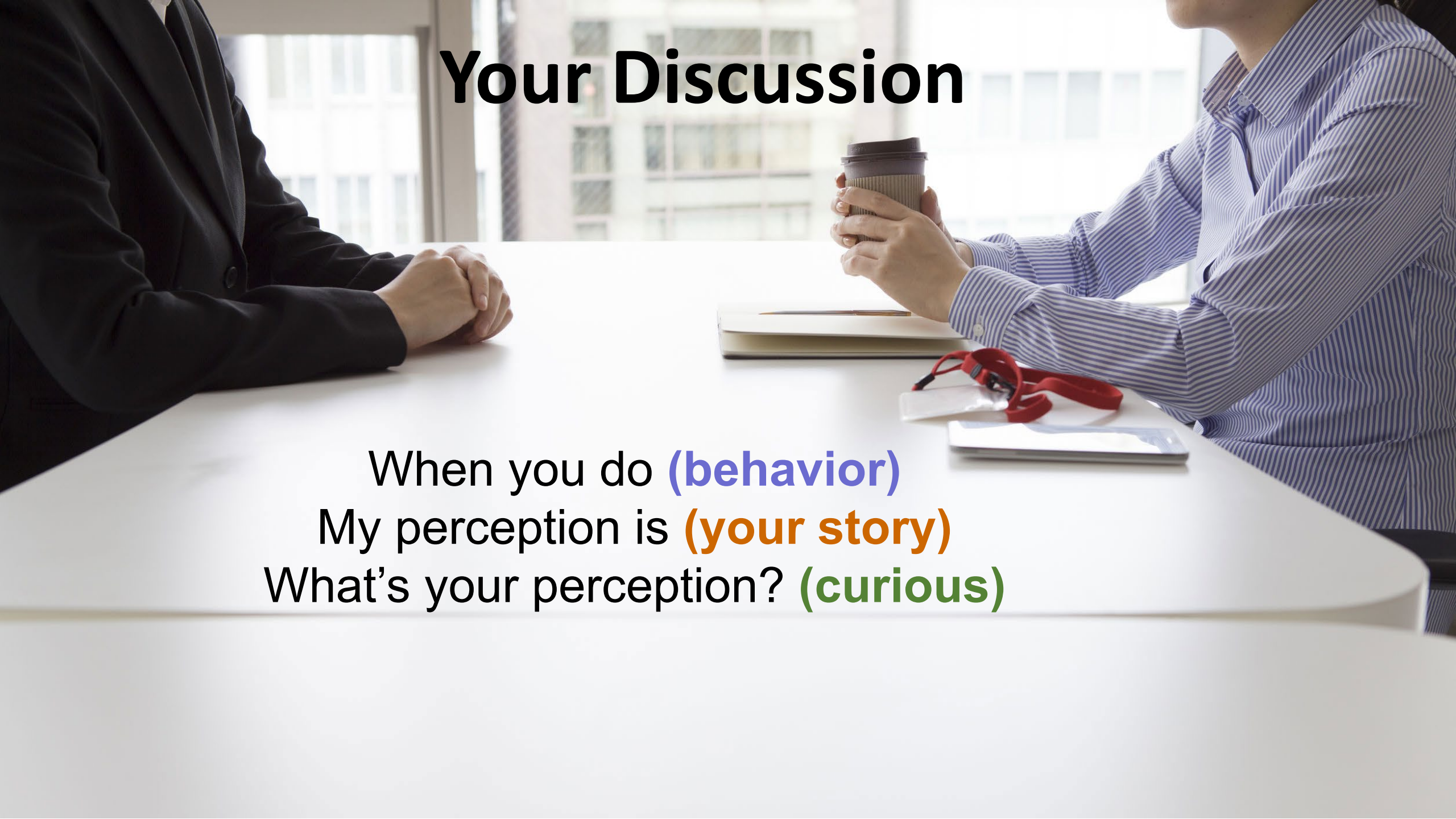
I'm curious to know how these interactions look from **your vantage point.**

Relationships

A photograph of two people sitting at a white table in a bright, modern office setting. The person on the left is wearing a dark suit jacket and has their hands clasped. The person on the right is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and is holding a brown paper coffee cup. On the table, there is a notebook, a pen, and a red lanyard with a badge. The background shows a large window with a view of a city building.

As we've discussed, I'm still noticing a behavior pattern of **interrupting others in meetings**. At this point, the behavior is damaging relationships between you and others. People perceive **that their opinions aren't valued and that you don't want to hear other input. As a consequence, people are asking to not work with you.** Tell me **how you see this behavior.**

Your Discussion



When you do **(behavior)**
My perception is **(your story)**
What's your perception? **(curious)**



5-Step System

1. Be clear, calm, curious
2. Identify behavior
3. State perception
4. **Engage in dialog**
5. Define next steps

Discussion Template

A photograph of two people sitting at a white table in a bright, modern office setting. The person on the left is wearing a dark suit jacket and has their hands clasped. The person on the right is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and is holding a brown paper coffee cup. On the table, there is a notebook, a pen, and a red lanyard. The background shows a large window with a view of a city building.

When you do **(behavior)**
My perception is **(your story)**
What's your perception? **(curious)**
(Discuss openly)

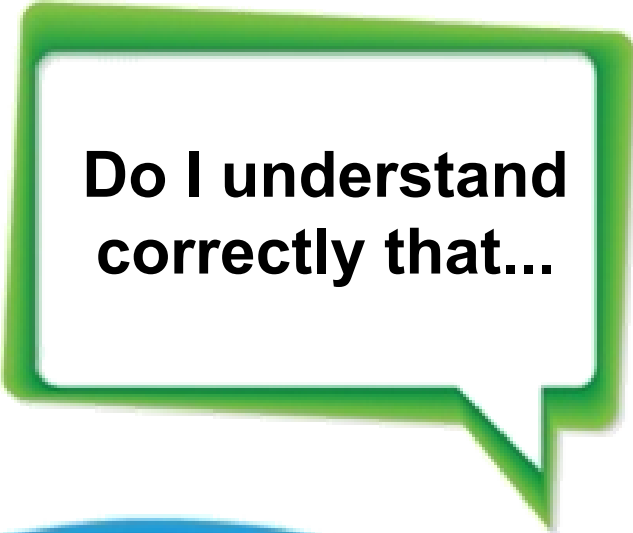
Listen Reflectively



**Let me repeat
that back to you.**



**What I hear you
saying is...**



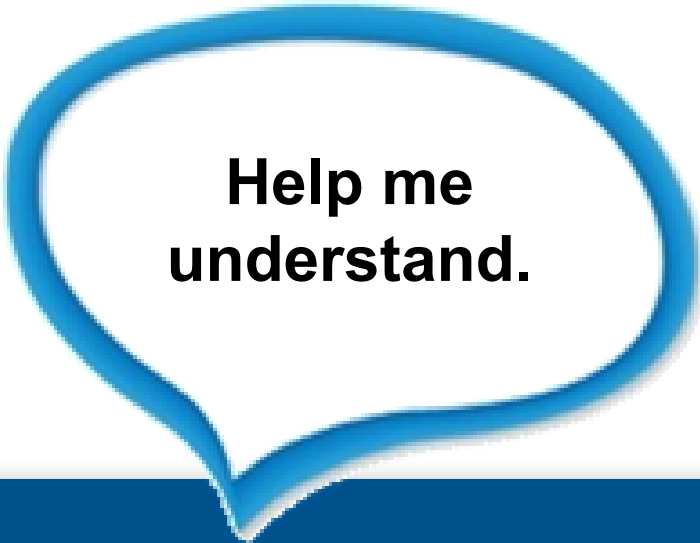
**Do I understand
correctly that...**



**Say more about
that.**



Tell me more.



**Help me
understand.**



5-Step System

1. Be clear, calm, curious
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5. **Define next steps**

Discussion Template



When you do **(behavior)**

My perception is **(your story)**

What's your perception? **(curious)**

(Discuss openly)

I request **(desired behavior)**

Content



When you **don't turn the report in on time**

My interpretation is **that perhaps you don't know how to do it or you don't believe it is important.**

Help me understand **from your perspective.**

(Discuss openly)

Now that we both understand more fully, I ask **that you clarify priorities, make every effort to meet deadlines, and let me know in advance if there are problems.**

Pattern

I've noticed a behavior pattern of **interrupting others in meetings**
When that happens, people may perceive **that their opinions aren't valued.**

I'm curious to learn how these interactions look from **your vantage point.**
(Discuss openly)

I ask **that you allow others to finish their thought before responding.**

Relationship

As we've discussed, I'm still noticing a behavior pattern of **interrupting others in meetings**. At this point, the behavior is damaging relationships between you and others. People perceive **that their opinions aren't valued and that you don't want to hear other input. As a consequence, people are asking to not work with you.**

Tell me **how you see this behavior.**
(Discuss openly)

Now that we talked about it, **let's register you for the listening skills course and in the meantime, I ask that you make an effort to allow others to finish their thought before responding so that you to start rebuilding these relationships.**

Tell me **your**
understanding of
the next steps.

Reverse Reflective Listening

A person with long, straight, dark brown hair is holding a white rectangular card in front of their face. The card has a large, bold, black question mark on it. The person's hands are visible at the bottom of the card. The background is a solid, vibrant pink color.



When you **don't use the checklist**

I feel **worried that something will be missed, and the company will look bad, and I admit that it feels like the work that went into the checklist isn't appreciated. And, I know there are lots of ways to manage exhibits.**

I'm curious to **understand how you perceive this.**

(Discuss openly)

So that neither of us is surprised, what if **we go over preparation together. I can learn about changes you suggest, and I'll share any potential problems, so no one is stuck or embarrassed.**

Tell me your understanding of your next steps and mine.

Discussion Template

When you do **(behavior)**
My perception is **(your story)**
What's your perception? **(curious)**
(Discuss openly)
I request **(desired behavior)**
Decide next steps together



Have your accountability discussion

**Be clear, calm,
and curious**

Listen!



**Focus on
Behavior**

Your Take-Aways

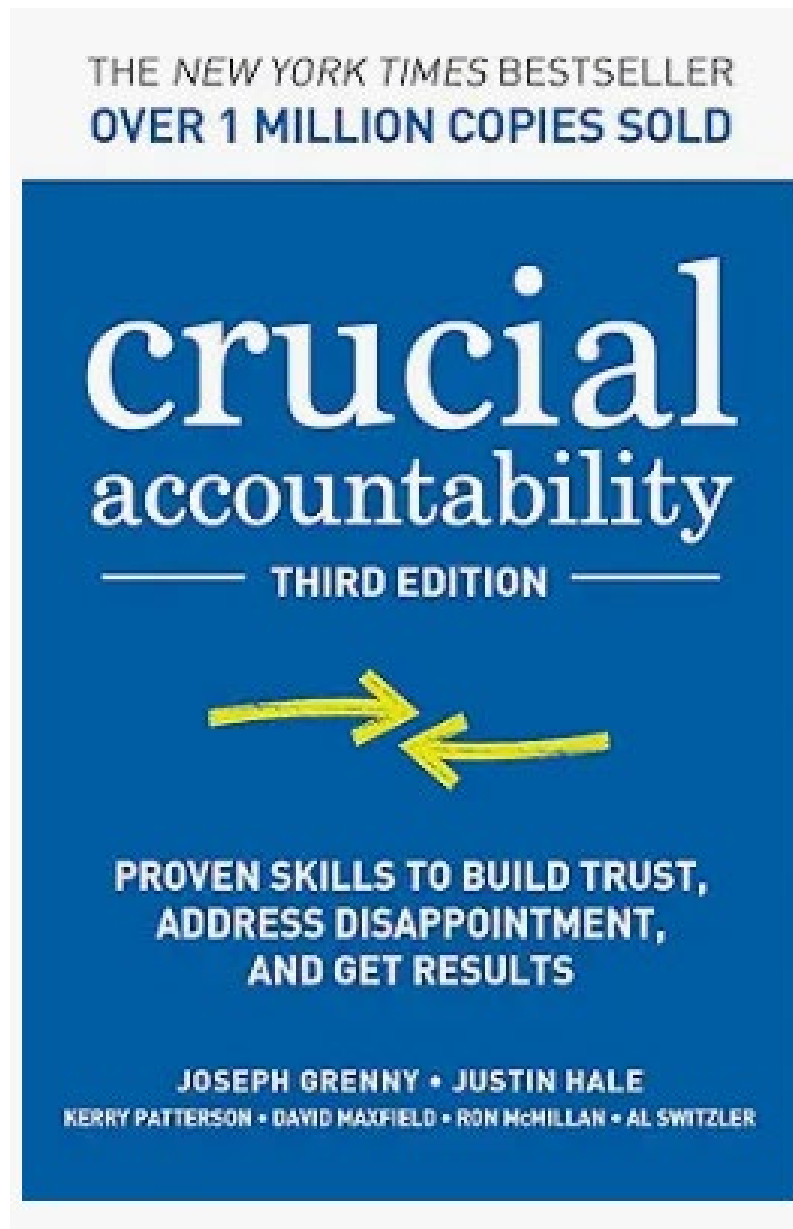
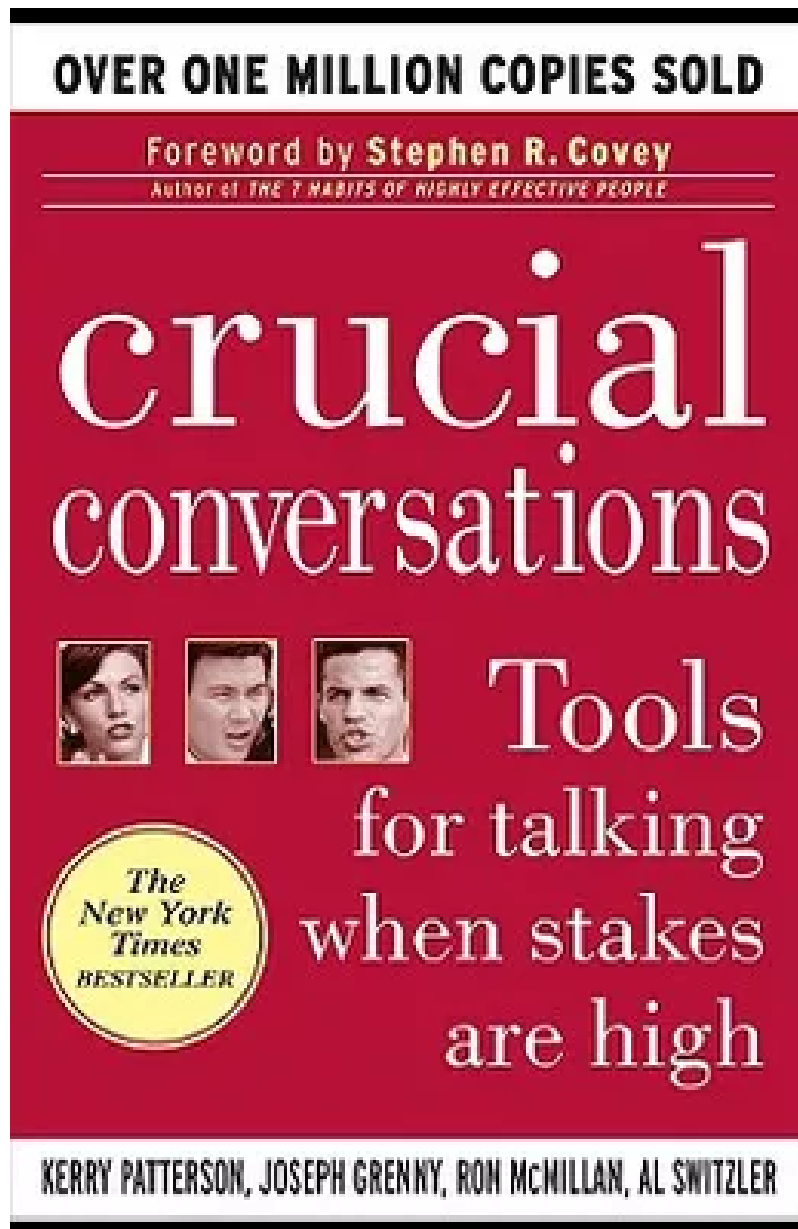
5-Step System

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2. Identify behavior
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5. Define next steps



What will you practice?

You are **always**
practicing



Connect on LinkedIn



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