The SARAH Cycle:

The SARAH acronym is a model that helps us better understand our / others' responses to change.

S = Surprise ⟶ Shock

A = Annoyed ⟶ Angry

R = Resist ⟶ Reject

A = Accept

H = Help

Remember:

- It is OK to have an emotional response (surprise, anger, resistance); just do not get **stuck** in it.

- **Accept** does not mean you "agree" with the feedback.

- **Accept** means to empathize or ask questions about the other person's perception – to see it as their truth – *then* start to work with it.

Below are some helpful tools for receiving feedback and demonstrating empathy.

Receiving Feedback - Action Steps

1. Stay focused on the *other person* and what they are saying.

2. Identify/accept your emotional response to the feedback - but don't get stuck in it**.**

3. Identify which of the 3 Triggers (Truth/Relationship/or Identity) is fueling your feelings; refer to the job aid for actions to take.

4. Ask questions to explore and understand the other person's perspective; summarize/ empathize to show you are listening and/or to gather next level information.

5. Give information to offer your point of view or to share your intentions.

6. Come to agreement on next steps.

7. Thank the person providing the feedback.

Statements that Demonstrate Empathy:

1. You're _____
   (feeling word)
   that _____. STOP
   (summarize reason)

2. It's _____
   (feeling word)
   when _____. STOP
   (summarize reason)

3. The fact that _____
   (summarize reason)
   makes you _____. STOP
   (feeling word)

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3 Triggers:

"Our triggers are obstacles because they keep us from engaging skillfully in the conversation." – Daniel Stone & Sheila Heen

Managing the 3 Triggers requires "… sorting and filtering—a learning how the other person sees things; of trying on ideas that at first seem a poor fit; of experimenting, and of shelving or discarding the parts of the feedback that in the end seem off or not what you need right now." (Stone & Heen)

Triggers	Reactions	Best Practice(s):
1. The **TRUTH** of the matter. The *substance of the feedback* itself is somehow off, unhelpful, or simply untrue.	"That's wrong." "That's not helpful." "That's not me."	**Ask** questions to **understand**. **ASK** to clarify; **ask** for examples; ask for what you might do differently. **Ask** to discover your **blind spots.** *What don't you know about how you come across?*
2. The **RELATIONSHIP** itself. The feedback is hard to receive because of the **person** delivering *it*—your mother, father, sister, brother, friend, acquaintance, boss, peer, direct report—and what we *believe about the giver* of the feedback.	"After all I've done for you?" "Who are you to say?" "You're the problem, not me!"	1. Look at the **roles** each of you plays in the relationship itself. Ask, "What's the dynamic between us? What are we each contributing to the problem?" 2. Ask questions to explore perceptions and intentions; manage your SARAH Cycle. 3. Summarize and empathize; read cues; **find areas of agreement**. 4. **Own the feedback** – avoid using the person to dismiss the feedback.
3. Our **IDENTITY**: Identity is the story we tell about ourselves about who we are and what the future holds for us, and when critical feedback is delivered, that story is under attack.	"I'm doomed." "I'm not a bad person— am I?"	1. Ask questions to help the employee explore his/her identity. • "What part of this feedback is hard to accept?" • "What's the real challenge here for you?" • "And what else?" 2. Avoid **'all'** or **'nothing-at-all'** thinking: don't deny it or exaggerate it. 3. Allow for **complexity** in identity – you (employee) can feel good about your intentions AND bad that you missed the mark on an occasion. 4. Come to agreement that *in this instance*, identity was not maintained and what the employee will do differently. 5. Value the employee / contribution(s) that come from his/her identity.