

HOW TO NAVIGATE HARD DYNAMICS WITH CURIOSITY, NOT FEAR

STEP 1: NOTICE THE PLAY

What just happened?

- I was interrupted
- My expertise was questioned
- I was given a task beneath my role
- I was left out of a decision/my idea was dismissed
- Tone felt dismissive or sharp
- Other: _____

What was my first thought?

STEP 2: DECODE THE DEFENSE (Thoughts → Feelings → Actions → Results)

Thought (story I told myself): _____

Feeling (What showed up in my body):

- Tight chest Heat Freeze Irritation Doubt Other: _____

Action I wanted to take:

- Stay silent Apologize Over-explain Shrink React Other: _____

Likely result if I let this thought run the show: _____

STEP 3: GET CURIOUS (Questions I can ask *instead of reacting*)

Clarifying Qs:

- "Can you help me understand what you're seeing?"
- "What's the concern you're trying to solve?"
- "What concern does this raise for you?"
- "What's the one thing you want to be sure I hear?"

Alignment Qs:

- "What does success look like to you here?"
- "Can we clarify priorities so I'm aligned?"
- "What outcome are you hoping for?"
- "What context would be helpful for me to have next time?"
- "What would make this idea more useful for where we're headed?"

Boundary-Holding Qs:

- "Before we move on, may I finish my point?"
- "Before we move on, can we take a minute to fully consider this?"
- "Can I finish this thought so we're aligned?"
- "Before we keep going, can we level-set expectations?"
- "Can you clarify how this aligns with my role priorities?"

My Go-To Question (the one I'll use when I feel pressure): _____

HOW TO NAVIGATE HARD DYNAMICS WITH CURIOSITY, NOT FEAR

NOW... REWRITE THE PLAY (This is the thought I want leading my actions — not fear.)

What's the truer thought I'm choosing? _____

If I believe this thought, what action do I take? _____

THE NEXT TIME THIS HAPPENS....

The situation I'm preparing for: _____

The question I will lead with: _____

The standard I'm holding for myself:

- I don't need to prove - I need to clarify
- Curiosity is strength

I belong in the room

I can be calm and clear

I can be respected without being abrasive

CHEAT SHEET: COMMON DYNAMICS → CURIOUS RESPONSES

When I'm interrupted:

→ "Can I finish this thought so we're aligned?"

When my competence is questioned:

→ "Walk me through what concern you're seeing."

When I'm handed low-value work:

→ "Can you clarify how this aligns with my role priorities?"

When I'm left out:

→ "What context would be helpful for me to have next time?"

When tone gets sharp:

→ "Before we keep going, can we level-set expectations?"

When my idea is dismissed or brushed past:

→ "Can you help me understand what part of the idea isn't landing?"