

Your Upward Feedback Starter Kit

Approach Radical Candor with your boss the same way you do with your team — ask for guidance before you give it. Remember, you want to understand the other person's perspective before you start dishing praise/criticism. Ready to give it a try? Here's a simple checklist to keep you grounded:

✓ Seek first to understand

Before offering feedback, ask about your boss's perspective. They may be working from information you haven't seen. Questions like "What's your thinking behind X?" or "Can you walk me through the decision on Y?" help build shared context and reduce assumptions.

💡 This helps you avoid falling into the trap of blaming intention when what's missing might just be visibility.

✓ Ask for permission

Check in before giving feedback. A simple "Would now be a good time for a quick thought on today's meeting?" gives your boss a chance to be present and receptive. It also shows respect for their time and space.

💬 Try: "Is it okay if I share something I've been thinking about?" or "Would feedback on this be helpful right now?"

✓ Use CORE to structure your message

The CORE model keeps your feedback grounded:

- Context – When and where did the situation happen?
- Observation – What did you notice?
- Result – What was the impact?
- Expected Next Step – What would improve things going forward?

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🗣️ Use this to stay specific, not vague. Feedback isn't helpful if it's just "You're always micromanaging." Instead: "In Monday's project meeting (**Context**), you reviewed the deck slide-by-slide (**Observation**), which seemed to slow momentum (**Result**). Could we try sharing comments ahead of time next round? (**Expected Next Step**)"

✓ Focus on behavior, not personality

Avoid labels like "controlling" or "unapproachable." Stick to what happened and how it affected you or the team. This helps prevent defensiveness and keeps the conversation productive.

❌ Not helpful: "You're really disorganized."

✅ More helpful: "I noticed there were last-minute changes to the deck this morning, and it created some confusion with the client."

✓ Do it in private

Unless your boss has explicitly invited public feedback, share criticism one-on-one. Private conversations allow for more open dialogue and reduce the risk of embarrassment or escalation.

🤝 Think of it as a personal check-in, not a performance review.

✓ Offer praise too

Make feedback a two-way street. Highlight what's working, not just what isn't. This builds trust and shows that your intent is to support—not tear down.

👏 "I appreciate how clearly you set expectations in that kickoff meeting. That kind of clarity really helps me stay on track."

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✓ Be timely

The best feedback happens close to the moment. When something feels off, don't let it sit. If emotions are too high, take a breath—but don't wait a week. Waiting too long dilutes the impact and makes it harder to remember details.

🕒 “Right after the meeting” is better than “sometime next month.”

✓ Practice

Rehearse what you want to say with a trusted friend, mentor, or colleague. Practicing out loud helps you clarify your message, reduce nervousness, and prepare for possible responses.

📝 You can even jot down 2–3 key points on a sticky note to keep yourself grounded during the conversation.

✓ Stay human

Above all, remember: you're not giving feedback to a job title. You're talking to a person. Lead with curiosity. Speak from a place of care, not contempt. And don't expect perfection—on either side.

💬 “I'm sharing this because I care about doing great work together.”