



# STICKY SITUATIONS GUIDE – PART 2

6 FOOLPROOF RESPONSES – AND A BONUS -  
TO GET WHAT YOU WANT, MAKE MONEY  
& BUILD TRUST



We're back with more Sticky Situations - you know those awkward situations when you don't know what to say, when emotions are flooding your brain, your hands are sweating and a lot is on the line. It can be difficult to find the right words to delicately maneuver in the situation. That's where having some fallback lines come in handy.



We want to help you create connections, make money and give you proven ways to glide through awkward predicaments. In the bonus, I've included the ONE thing that has transformed my marriage more than any other and helped me in countless business situations.



# SITUATION #1: TURNING SOMEONE DOWN

Someone has asked you for something – a raise, a favor, a promotion - that you are going to have to turn down. You are bearing bad news, and the other person is going to be unhappy.



# SITUATION #1: TURNING SOMEONE DOWN

## EXAMPLE:

My friend Van has spent most of her career in banking. Part of her job was turning down unqualified applicants for loans. Getting turned down is horrible news if you want to buy a house, start a business, etc. So she had high-stakes, difficult conversations with clients on a regular basis. Sometimes she would start the conversation by painting the picture of how saying “yes” to their request wasn’t really in their best interest. She’d say, “You know that Christmas movie gone wrong, where the bank forecloses on Christmas Eve. We don’t want that to be you.” Then she’d say:



# SITUATION #1: TURNING SOMEONE DOWN

## RESPONSE:

“You are not ready for this loan right now, but I’m willing to help you get ready.”

Another variation is: “I can’t say yes right now, but I’m open to saying ‘yes’ in the future if things change.”

## RESULT:

It’s a firm “no.” Although the client is disappointed, the client sees why a “yes” could be damaging to them. And the “no” could change if the conditions do. It also goes a long way toward preserving the relationship.



## SITUATION #2: HOW TO HELP WHEN SOMEONE HAS A PROBLEM

You're boss or co-worker is struggling with a problem or complaining about an issue. You're not sure what to do to help him or her.





# SITUATION #2: HOW TO HELP WHEN SOMEONE HAS A PROBLEM

## EXAMPLE:

A colleague tells you she's really unhappy in her job. What do you do?

## RESPONSE:

You want to help, so you acknowledge what's going on. This shows you've been listening: "Sounds like you're really feeling unfulfilled at work, and it's got you down." Then say: "How can I help?"



# SITUATION #2: HOW TO HELP WHEN SOMEONE HAS A PROBLEM

## RESULT:

Obvious, right? This question is so important. Yet, most people don't use it enough, me included. Our first response is often to:

1. Give our opinion - "If you had a different boss, you'd love working there!"
2. Offer our advice – "Why don't you talk to a recruiter at a placement firm?"

Your friend has dozens of options in front of her – talk to her boss, ask for a new assignment, see if she can switch departments, look for another job, have a direct conversation with a difficult coworker, take a class to get more qualifications, use this as a catalyst to move to a new city where she's always dreamed of living or even reframe her situation in a more positive light.

# SITUATION #2: HOW TO HELP WHEN SOMEONE HAS A PROBLEM

## RESULT:

By asking, "How can I help?" you're asking for direction. You're acknowledging that:

1. She's the expert of her own life.
2. That you want to be there for her and are not sure how.

The results to asking "How can I help?" may surprise you. One friend said, "Just make sure I'm not still complaining about this issue two months from now." She just wanted someone to keep her accountable as she sorted through her options. I couldn't have guessed that response, so I'm glad asked, "How can I help?".



# **SITUATION #3: YOU'RE CROSS- WAYS WITH A BOSS ON MONEY**

What happens when you  
and a supervisor disagree  
over an important issue?



# SITUATION #3:

## EXAMPLE:

You started a new job at a salary that was lower than you wanted. The boss says she can give you a raise after 90 days if your performance is good. After 90 days, you sit down with your boss who compliments your performance but says nothing about the raise. So you bring it up. “I never mentioned a raise after 90 days,” she says blankly. Now, you’re angry, hurt, confused and your trust in your boss has plummeted. You feel robbed. Is your boss lying? Does she truly not remember the conversation because it just wasn’t as important to her as it was to you? Does she breezily make promises but doesn’t follow through? Had budgets been cut and she didn’t want to admit the money she had earmarked for the raise has gone to something else?



# SITUATION #3:

## EXAMPLE:

This situation happened to me early in my career. My mistake was not confirming it in writing at the time of the conversation. That raise was really important to me. I learned a hard lesson. Put it in writing to confirm it at the time of the initial conversation. Then if your boss has a different take on it, you can address it immediately rather than three months down the road. Now, what do you do? You've tried rehashing the conversation, even providing details like where you were sitting when you had the conversation and she's still drawing a blank. You're stuck because the conversation wasn't shared with anyone in HR, etc. It becomes a he said/she said. Your only option is to let the raise go for now, but be crystal clear going forward on important issues where you need agreement.

# SITUATION #3:

## RESPONSE:

“I can see we somehow got our wires crossed on this one. I’ll do a better job of confirming it in writing next time so that we we’re on the same page. Just so I’m clear, when am I next eligible for a raise?”

## RESULT:

This does two things. You don’t apologize and tell your boss. “I must’ve gotten this wrong,” when you know you didn’t. In fact, you were so sure about it you called your mom in Cleveland and relayed the whole raise-in-90-days conversation the day it happened.

You’ve made a tactical retreat in an argument you aren’t going to win. You’ve asked for clarity on when you would get a raise – which you will follow up in writing to her as soon as you get back to your desk. You have put her on notice that you will be more careful going forward on putting important agreements in writing so that there is no confusion. And you have tried to not burn the relationship with your new boss. You’ll also continue to use this information as a guide to see how she handles agreements with others. Is she great about other agreements, but “forgetful” about financial ones? Do other people trust what she says or is she known for backtracking. Let the 90-day raise be a lesson that keeps on giving – you insights into how to navigate with your boss.



## SITUATION #4: SAYING NO TO A REQUEST

You are being asked to do something that's going to take a chunk of your time and effort. Sure, it's worthwhile, but you don't want to do it.



# SITUATION #4: SAYING NO TO A REQUEST OR TASK

## EXAMPLE:

A friend of mine got offered a gig. It was in a field where she had been working. Now, she was transitioning into another field. The pay was paltry, and it would take a lot of time she didn't have, especially given her career switch. Because she wanted to make everyone happy, she said yes. Now, she regretted it. She could see herself resenting the time she would be sinking into it every week. I encouraged her to go back to them immediately and change her yes to a no. She did and even found them a replacement. When you have to say "no", think about using:

## RESPONSE:

You wouldn't get the best me if I said "yes," so I'm going to have to say no.



## SITUATION #4: SAYING NO TO A REQUEST

### RESULT:

After turning down the project, my friend felt happy instead of burdened. "I can use that time for the direction I really want to go in."

Companies often make it hard for employees to say "no" to anything. They value everyone getting along, but by squashing conflict, they are also often stifling creativity and innovation and causing employee angst.

"People silence themselves because they want to be seen as accommodating and hard-working," Leslie A. Perlow, author of "Saying Yes When You Mean No", told the *New York Times*. "They think that by staying silent they can speed things up or preserve relationships, but they usually make everything worse."

WHEN YOU  
SAY YES TO  
OTHERS  
  
MAKE SURE  
YOU ARE  
NOT SAYING  
NO TO  
YOURSELF  
  
-PAUL COEHLO

## SITUATION #5: THE COLLEAGUE WHO ACTS LIKE YOUR BOSS BUT ISN'T

How do you handle a Large and In Charge co-worker? The one whom outsiders assume is the boss because of the way he or she acts in a meeting.

Photo Copyright George Cathcart/CWPA/Barcroft Images



# SITUATION #5: THE COLLEAGUE WHO ACTS LIKE YOUR BOSS BUT ISN'T

## EXAMPLE:

Sometimes co-workers act like they're the ones in charge – even when they're not. Other times, it's more accidental. A colleague gets so caught up in her pitch to a group outside the company that she promises deliverables from your department without consulting you – and you're in the room.

## RESPONSE:

You don't want to look petty or territorial. And you don't want the company guests to feel like they've parachuted in on a family squabble. If what she promised is doable and reasonable, then don't correct her in the room in front of everyone. But afterward say to her privately, "You did a great job on the presentation, and our department can make this happen this time. But I get concerned when you start promising stuff from our department without consulting me first, because then it's going to reflect badly on you and me when we don't deliver. Next time, either ask me ahead or even on the fly in the meeting. That will keep us on the same page and able to deliver on what we promise."



# SITUATION #5: THE COLLEAGUE WHO ACTS LIKE YOUR BOSS BUT ISN'T

## RESPONSE:

If she's making promises that would cause your team hardship or that aren't possible in the timeframe, then to protect your team, you need to speak up in the moment and say,

“While we'd like to pull that information together by next week as Lori mentioned, I need to go back and check with our team if that's doable given our project workload right now. Let me get back to you all by the end of the day on it and let you know when to expect it.”

Then you can choose whether or not to hit the point home by talking with her privately about the need to remain on the same page, etc.

# SITUATION #6: FINDING OUT WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT

You may be told to do several things or you may be given conflicting “marching orders” for tasks and are unclear how to handle the situation.



# SITUATION #6: FINDING OUT WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT

## EXAMPLE:

Your boss often comes by with a “Dump and Duck” -- drops by, dumps several tasks on you and then ducks out. You now have four new tasks and one new project to work on, but you don't know which is a priority, when they're due or which assignment needs to be more thorough. Now you're really confused, because you already were in the middle of a couple of other projects that seemed to be a priority to him last week.

# SITUATION #6: FINDING OUT WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT

## RESPONSE:

This requires you requesting 10 minutes with your boss. Once together, you need to ask a few clarifying questions.

Repeat all the assignments (even the ones you were in the midst of before he came in) because your boss may decide one is now unnecessary, or he or she now has new information. Then say:

“I want to do a good job on these for you. Which of these is most urgent and which is most important? Do you have any deadlines around these I should be aware of?”

Listen to what he says and then say, “Thanks! In light of these new assignments do you want me to put that other project (the one he dumped on you last week) on the back burner for now to get these done?”



# SITUATION #4: FINDING OUT WHAT'S IMPORTANT

## RESULT:

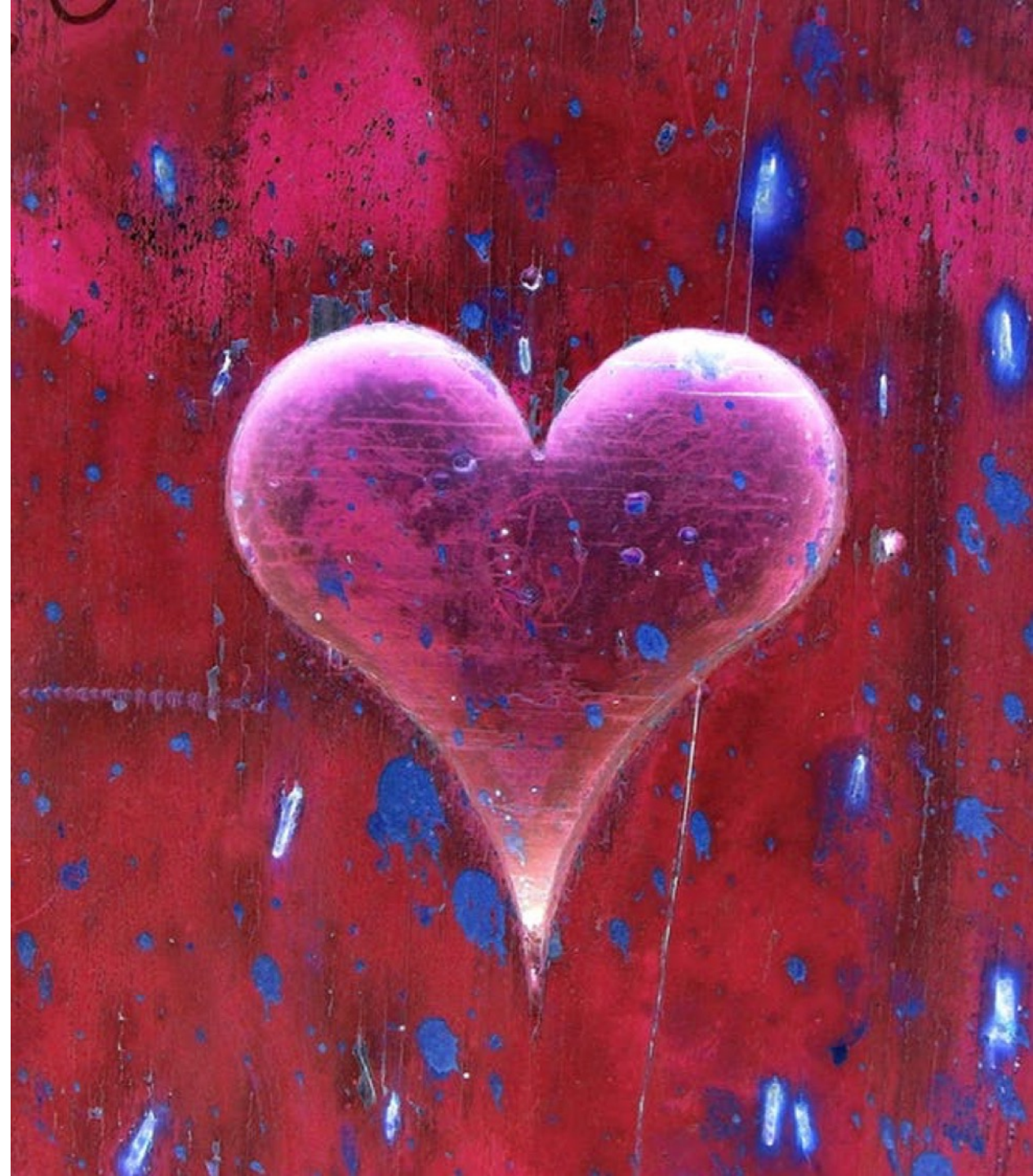
Your boss may say, “Glad you asked! I was in a hurry. I’ve got to take the report with me when I leave for Chicago on Friday, and the client update is just a top-line one-sheet we need for that new weekly meeting on Thursday I now have with Biz Dev. And the project I gave you last week, why don’t you see if Jack can handle it?”

Here’s what it does for you:

1. Stops you from guessing – possibly wrongly - on what your boss was thinking.
2. Avoids you staying late at work trying to get everything done.
3. Enables you to meet your boss’ expectations because you have better information.
4. Keeps you from being angry and resentful because you’re feeling put upon.
5. Stops the informational vacuum.

# **BONUS SITUATION #7: DEALING WITH PEOPLE AT THEIR WORST**

Often, someone is upset or angry about a situation, or they're being rude or curt, and it can be gut-wrenching. They're being difficult, what do you do?



# BONUS SITUATION #7: DEALING WITH PEOPLE AT THEIR WORST

## EXAMPLE:

My husband, John, comes home from work, shuts the back door a little harder than normal, gripes that he almost tripped over a pair of my shoes in the utility room and complains about the fact that we're having tacos for dinner. My reaction is:

**Scenario #1-- Fight.** Which looks something like this: "Why are you being so critical? I've had a tough day too – and at least I started dinner." It's the triple whammy! I've called him critical, dismissed whatever's going on with him and managed to weave in a little snide attack since he rarely cooks (although to his credit, he's great at cleaning up.) That response triggers the Who Had the Worst Day contest where we are trying to one-up the other for the measly prize of a shred of sympathy. It doesn't work, neither of us wins, and we both end up distant from each other. Why? I sensed his anger or frustration, and then immediately erected my defenses instead of staying open.

# BONUS SITUATION #7: DEALING WITH PEOPLE AT THEIR WORST

## EXAMPLE:

**Scenario #2 -- Flight.** My other option is to flee. I just want to avoid this grumpy person as best I can all night and hope he's in a better mood tomorrow. Now, he's had a tough day at work and is being ignored all evening. That's sure to get him in a great mood by morning! Right?

(Again, maybe this kind of stuff only happens at our house.)



# BONUS SITUATION #7: DEALING WITH PEOPLE AT THEIR WORST

I have more options than Fight or Flight. And you do too. We have a third option that maybe you call on frequently or maybe you've rarely considered:

## – **Focus.**

I'm going to turn toward the person\* – physically and emotionally - and not away from him or her. I'm going to focus.

Although this is an example from our marriage, I've used it with our kids and in business with surprising success. Again, it's about slowing down and staying open.

Here's how it looks with John:

*(\*Fine print here - I'm talking the ebbs and flows of normal behavior. I'm not talking about when someone is verbally or physically abusive, highly volatile, mentally unstable or in the throes of addiction, etc. )*

# BONUS SITUATION #7: DEALING WITH PEOPLE AT THEIR WORST

## RESPONSE:

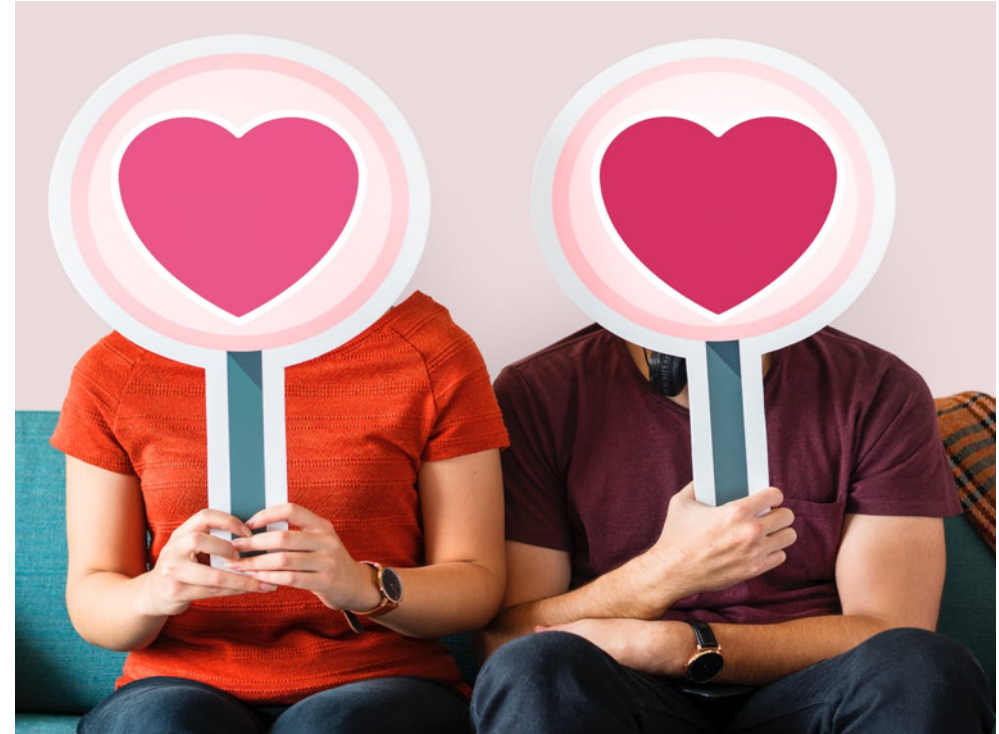
I stop what I'm doing (in this case cooking taco meat) and turn toward him with my full attention and look at him. "Wow! It looks like you ....(and just name the situation without judgement.)

"must've had a really bad day."

"had the wind knocked out of your sails."

"seem disappointed, hurt, angry, upset, afraid." (whatever you think the emotion is).

Then add this sentence, "I'm here for you if you want to talk about it."



# BONUS SITUATION #7: DEALING WITH PEOPLE AT THEIR WORST

So this is how it might look at work:

*Colleague visibly upset:* Why is it a team project until something goes wrong, and then the boss thinks it's my project?

*You:* It sounds like you just got the wind knocked out of your sails. I'm here for you if you want to talk more about it.

Here's how it might look at home with a child:

*Son:* You shouldn't have told me it was time to leave the game in front of my friends. You always do stuff like that!

*Parent:* So, it sounds like you were really embarrassed in front of your friends because of what I did. Did I get that right?

*Son:* Yeah!

*Parent:* I'm here for you if you want to talk more about it.

# BONUS SITUATION #7: DEALING WITH PEOPLE AT THEIR WORST

## RESULT:

Our friend Toby says,

*“We need love the most when we deserve it the least.”*

**Focus** rather than Fight or Flight helps keep the connection in the relationship and not put up our defenses or flee the scene of the “crime”. In times of a mini-crisis, we can turn toward each other rather than away. We show that even though the person might be grumpy, hurt or angry, we still care.

We’re not cutting off connection because they’re not at their best. This is probably one of the most important things we’ve worked on in our marriage, and it has made it so much better! We don’t Focus every time, but it’s **progress not perfection**.

Now, you have a way to support an angry or upset child, work colleague, friend or significant other in a simple yet powerful way.



# SUMMING IT UP

Having some phrases that you can use in sticky situations will give you more confidence when situations turn awkward.

So remember:

1. Try writing the line down on an index card or in a notebook, so you have it handy. (If you type it into your phone, you can look distracted and uninterested by searching for it.)
2. Say it with a smile
3. Be curious and listen to the response.



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Let us know how some of these lines worked for you!

Besides these, what are some responses that you've found that are really effective? Shoot us an email and let us know [teresa@adventuresatwork.com](mailto:teresa@adventuresatwork.com)

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