Kind Engineering

How To Engineer Kindness

By <u>Evan Smith</u>

Evan Smith

- From Ireland, in Germany currently
- Site Reliability Engineer
- Big nerd
- Kind Engineer

Kind is about being invested in other people, figuring out how to help them, meeting them where they are.
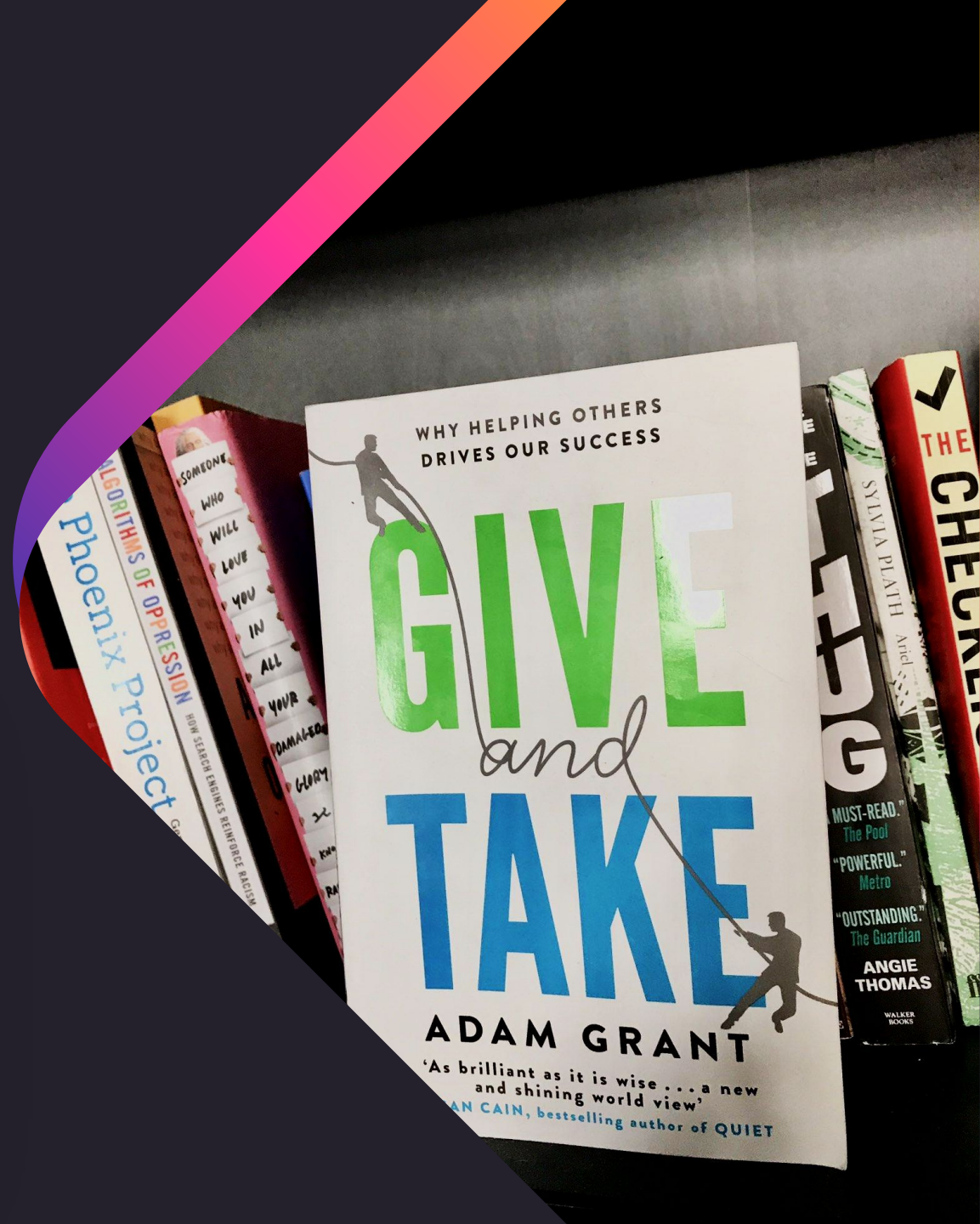
— *Tanya Reilly, "Continuous"*

What has **kindness** ever done for me

Adam Grant's book "Give and Take" presents studies and anecdotes that support the fact that "Givers" (kind) are:

- More productive
- Create more meaningful networks/friendships
- More likely to receive help
- More successful
- Happier

Code
Reviews

Code Reviews

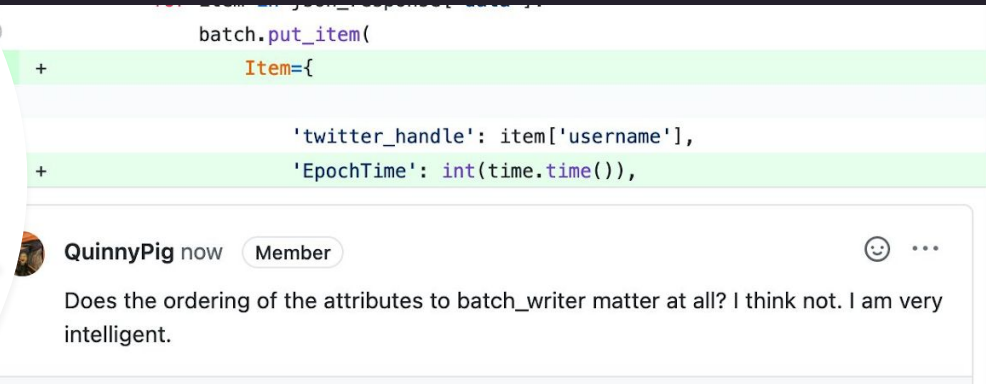Honesty

Psychological Safety

Feedback

Tone

- More why, less how and what

- Don't assume ineptitude

- More open-ended questions

- Less opinions/statements

- Ask for clarification rather than correction

Why?

Nitpicks

Unimportant comments - could merge without addressing them.

1. Identify and call out nitpicks (`nit:`)

2. Is there a larger problem?

```
        batch.put_item(
+           Item={

                'twitter_handle': item['username'],
+               'EpochTime': int(time.time()),
```

QuinnyPig now   Member

Does the ordering of the attributes to batch_writer matter at all? I think not. I am very intelligent.

Communicating Synchronously

- Lots of questions? Reach out!

- Public criticism is hard

- May be a misunderstanding

- Back-and-forth is tiring

Communicating
Synchronously

...when it helps

Honesty

Being at work

- Be more than "just professional"

- Care about people, "bring your whole self"

- Challenge directly but include the positives

- Admit when you're wrong

- White lies aren't evil but they don't help

Being
at work

Be yourself, because who you are is brilliant.

Be Honest
When It Helps

Nice

Kind

"Good job in the meeting"

"Your answer to the question was a bit rambly and you missed the opportunity to convince the team about your idea. But it is a good idea so practice your elevator pitch."

Psychological Safety

Encourage Feedback

- You should be the first to ask for feedback. And especially negative feedback. After a project ends, or after a meeting or a presentation. Take some time to gather feedback. You could take the structure of the Sprint Retrospective: why should I stop doing? What should I keep doing? What should I start doing?

- By seeking out criticism, you make yourself vulnerable and more open. It builds up a rapport with people and makes them more amenable to criticism for you. It counters the "you can dish it out but you can't take it" problem.

Encourage
Feedback

Artwork by Kate Escolin: twitter.com/tinygreensart

Be Inclusive

- Keep an eye out for people who maybe don't contribute as much in meetings or in documents and try to find ways to give them a voice. It might be just prompting them for feedback in the meeting or maybe you need to re-evaluate how people can contribute.
- Be open to different backgrounds and different life experiences by talking to them and offering to cater to their preferred style of suggestions and communication. Not everyone feels comfortable being outspoken in a meeting so maybe sharing documents beforehand or providing an anonymous suggestion form would give them space to make their opinion heard.
- Give people a voice by letting them express themselves in whatever format they feel right. And then bringing those ideas to a central point/meeting/document/dance-off.

Be Inclusive

No Blame

- Often an individual failure is actually a failure of either process of environment or workflows.

- An old manager used to say that we put you in the position to make that mistake or push that commit and that is why the team takes ownership over it. We succeed together, we fail together.

- Ultimately people feel safer, pulling out problems with the process or the workflow or the pipeline.

No Blame

Turn **Failure** Into **Learning**

- It's important to recognise that failure is not absolute. It's not the end of the world, we fail, probably dozens of times a day. And we don't always recognise it, but we learn from it, we do it better the next time around.

NANO

Turn **Failure** Into **Learning**

Artwork by Amie Gerardi: amiegerardi.wixsite.com/portfolio

Give & Receive
Feedback

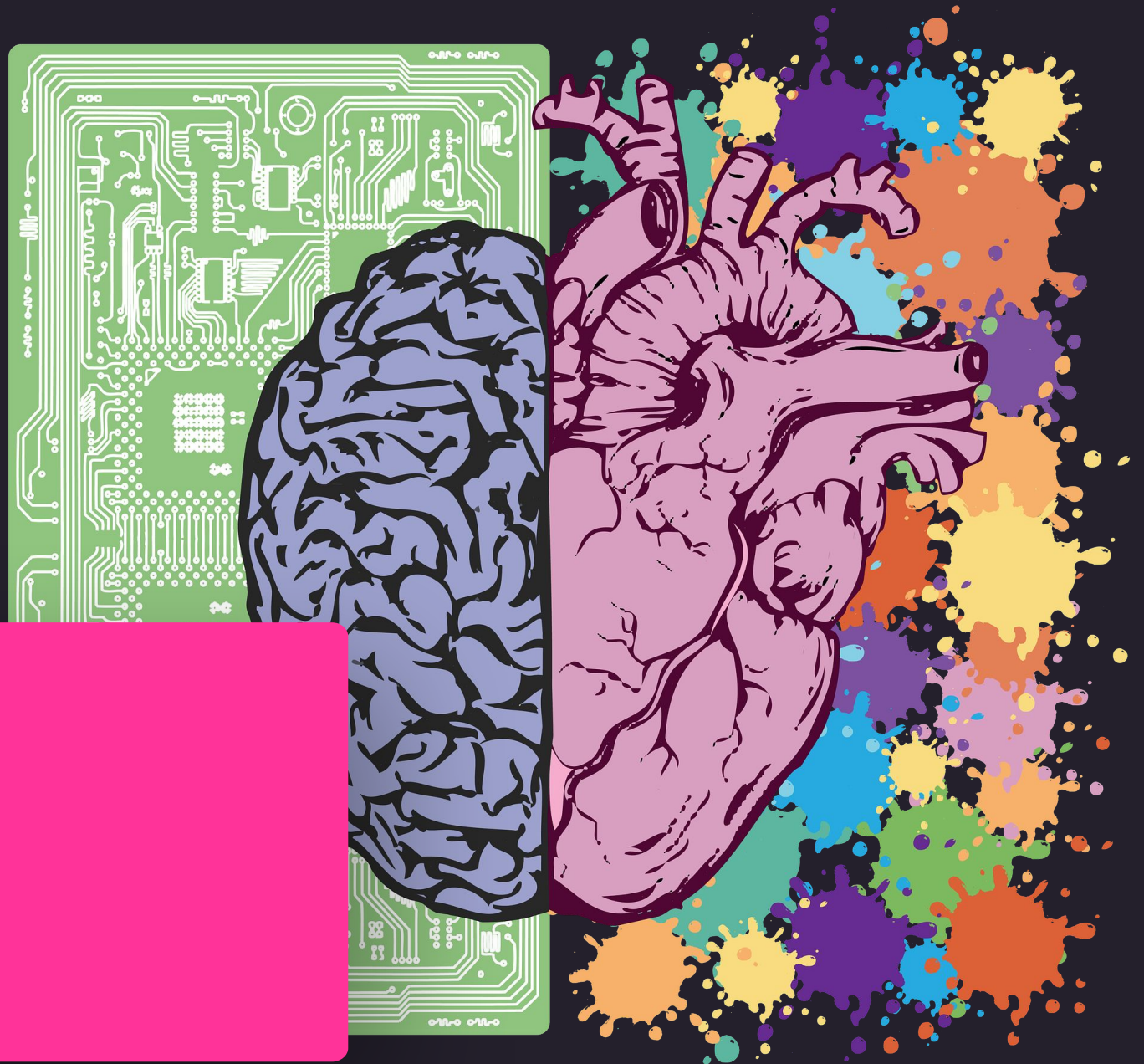# How to give and receive negative feedback

- Start by asking for criticism, not giving it

- Don't make it personal

- Be specific about praise and criticism

- Is there a solution?

Giving

3 Steps

- ✓ Emotion
- ✓ Credibility
- ✓ Logic

Specifically Receiving

- Understand how you prefer to receive feedback and make sure people know or you correct them

- Listen, understand and thank the person for their feedback

- Don't react in the moment, take some time to gather your thoughts and process

- Ask for clarifications or examples where you can

Specifically Receiving

- Understand feedback preferences

- Listen, understand and thank

- Don't respond immediately

- Ask for clarifications or examples where you can
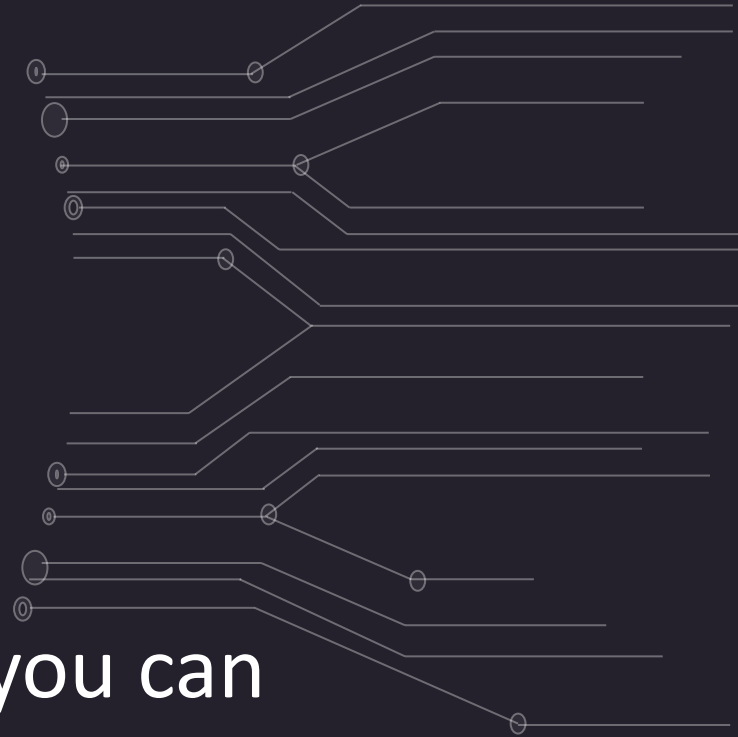
Further Reading

Further Reading

- [book] "Give and Take" — Adam Grant

- [book] "Radical Candor" — Kim Scott

- [article] "Being Glue" — Tanya Reilly

- [article] "Getting Feedback" — Allison McMillan

- [article] "Changing Company Culture Requires a Movement, Not a Mandate" — Sarah A. Soule & Bryan Walker

- [article] *"Psychological Safety and the Only Pyramid Scheme That Works"* — Me but I swear it's good!

In Summary:

Kindness is about:

- Communication
- Honesty
- Safety

@TheJokersThief

me@iamevan.me

Finally,

How can you be kinder?

Download reference slides: iamevan.me/s/kind.pdf