

Compassionate Conversations: Supporting clients through sensitive life events

Overview

This half-day workshop equips client-facing staff with the skills to handle sensitive situations such as bereavement, cancer, and dementia with empathy and professionalism.

Through practical exercises and guided conversations, participants will build confidence in using compassionate language, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and supporting clients with dignity.

Objectives

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Build awareness of the emotional landscape of these situations
- Managing their own emotional resilience
- Recognise emotional cues
- Respond with empathy
- Know when and how to escalate or seek additional support

Expert trainer

Scott focuses on helping people to understand people. People make purchases, people sell to people. Even internet selling platforms are designed by people. People want to be happy when they make their purchase. Scott applies positive psychology techniques to his training and encourages participants to build on their core strengths and attributes.

Working in the retail banking sector, Scott formed a strong framework of customer service sales and service standards, interacting with customers face-to-face or on the telephone, including via customer contact centres. He then used this expert knowledge and skill to train and coach colleagues. After leaving the corporate world Scott developed his experience as an independent trainer and coach with a wide range of businesses and sectors including retail, hospitality, travel, finance, technology, wholesale, education, charities, utilities, legal and manufacturing.

Workshop outline

1 Your experiences of sensitive situations

- How did you feel?
- How did you respond?
- What could have been better?

2 Understanding sensitive life events

- Overview of bereavement, cancer, and dementia—what clients may be experiencing emotionally and cognitively
- Key psychological and emotional impacts
- What not to say: common mistakes or phrases that cause harm

3 Foundations of empathetic communication

- Active listening (attending fully, paraphrasing, reflecting emotions)

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- Empathy vs. sympathy
- Tone, timing, and non-verbal communication

4 Language that supports with sensitivity

- Phrases that convey warmth, respect, and support
- Creating scripts or sentence starters for tricky moments
- Identifying cues for when to refer to a senior colleague or pause the conversation

5 Boundaries and emotional resilience

- Balancing compassion with professionalism
- Dealing with emotional transference or distress
- What to do if staff feel overwhelmed
- Escalation routes or internal protocols

6 Case studies

- Small groups work through 1–2 realistic composite scenarios
- Discuss what to say, how to handle the call or meeting, what to record/escalate
- Groups share key insights

7 Action points and next steps

- Share key takeaways
- Participants to write down:
 - One new technique they will use
 - One challenge they want to keep working on

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