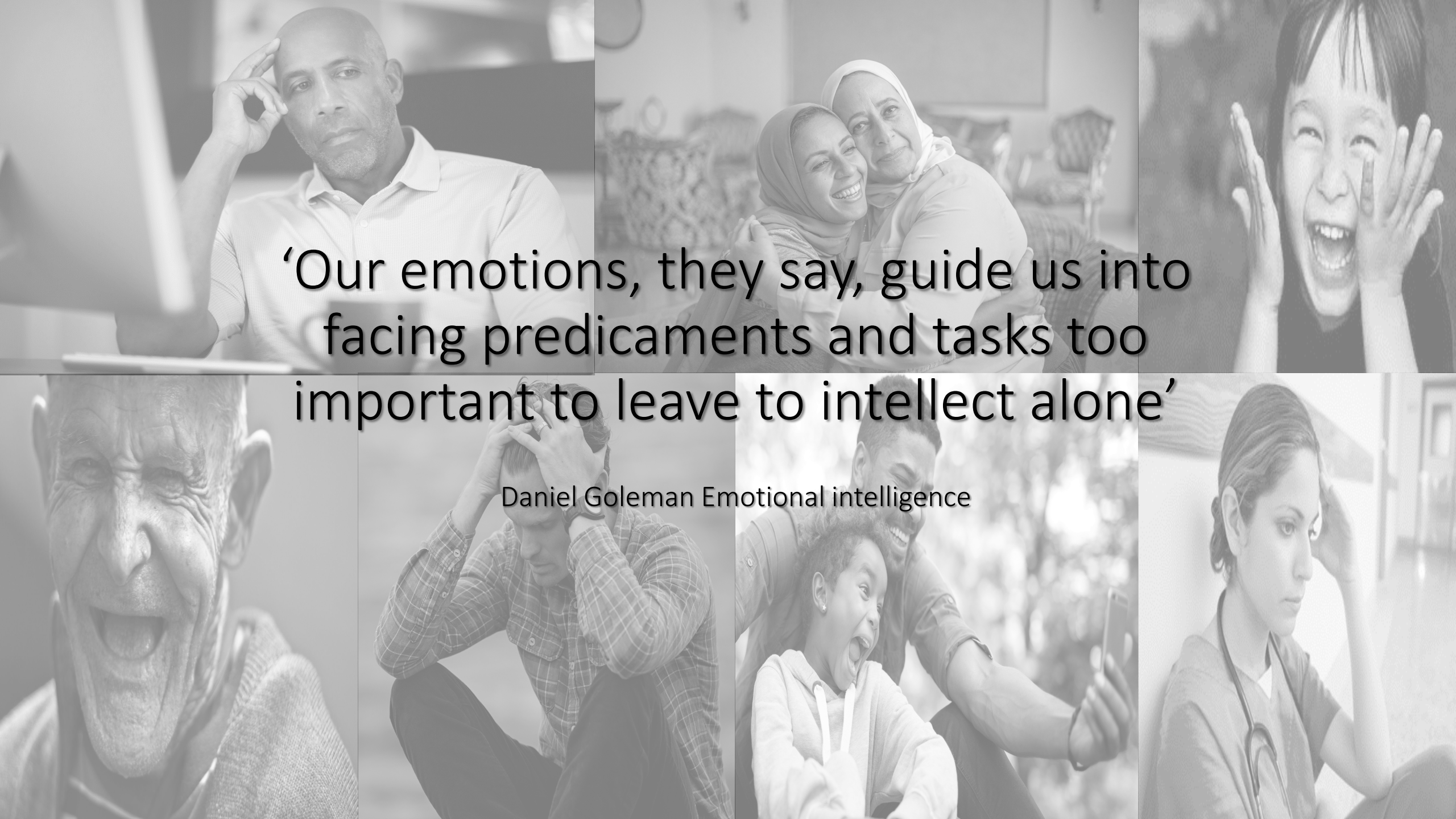




A lived experience  
of the complaints  
process from a  
patient perspective

Carolyn Cleveland  
Director C&C Empathy Training Ltd



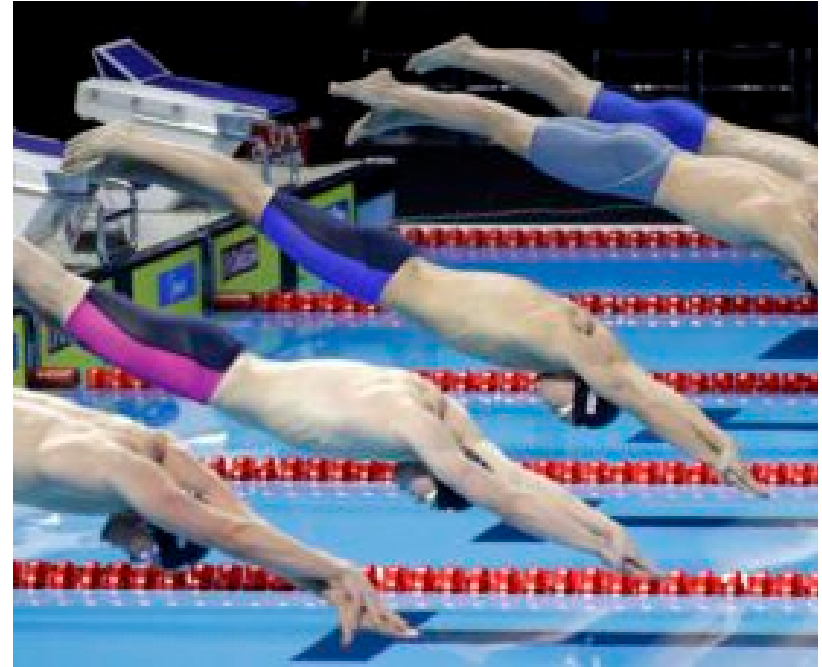


‘Our emotions, they say, guide us into facing predicaments and tasks too important to leave to intellect alone’

Daniel Goleman Emotional intelligence



Instead of going around the swimming pool of an emotional experience of complaints,  
for fairness, justice and learning.



As we explore these important components

# Complaints Standards Framework



*‘Overall, the framework sets out how organizations that provide NHS services can promote fairness, justice and learning when handling feedback and complaints, and take responsibility to be accountable when things go wrong.....’*

*‘... It also recognizes the huge complexity and emotional impact that can come with making a complaint, as well as having a complaint made about you.’*

About the Complaints Standards Framework #MakeComplaintsCount

# A little about me

- Background of **counselling** and **psychology** – Specialised in loss, fear and vulnerability.
- Emotions and psychological impact of **being listened to and understood...or not**, is something I have studied for over 25 years. And forms a big part of my work with the NHS, coroner's officers, and other organisations to support staff to develop their own empathy, compassion, emotional awareness and well-being to provide psychological safety.
- Something I have felt the full force of as **...understanding myself, empathy, compassion and learning with healthcare complaints, or lack of it, goes back a long way!.....**

# Behind every fact is an emotional component

Complexity of emotions and your emotional awareness



Feeling  
uncomfortable,  
actually means  
we are growing;  
we are learning.

Happiness?

Sadness?

Fear?

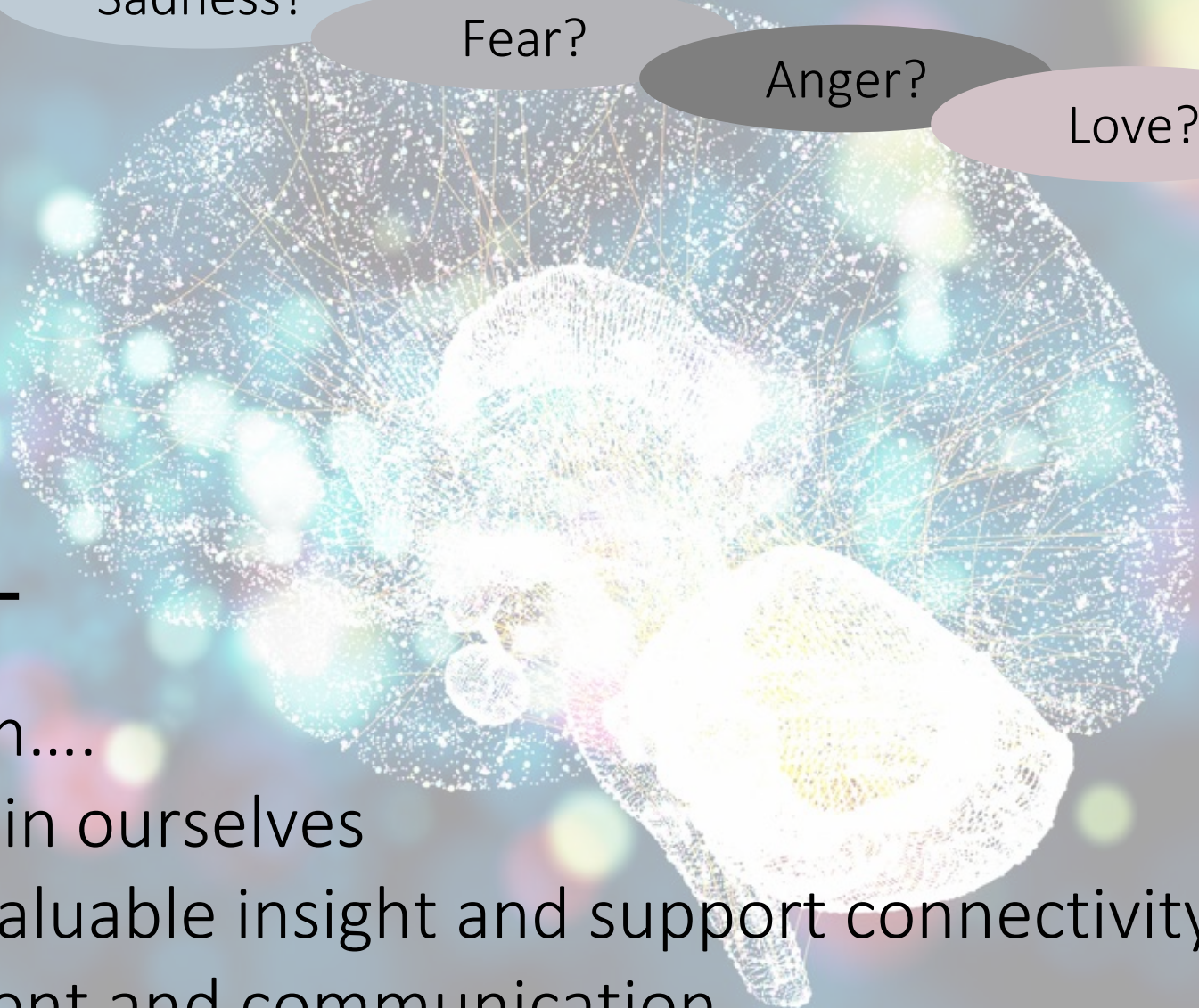
Anger?

Love?

Actions are  
embedded in  
emotions and  
thoughts

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Although shied away from....  
Understanding emotions in ourselves  
and others, can give us valuable insight and support connectivity,  
compassionate engagement and communication





Exploring some of that emotional component.  
This will be done through

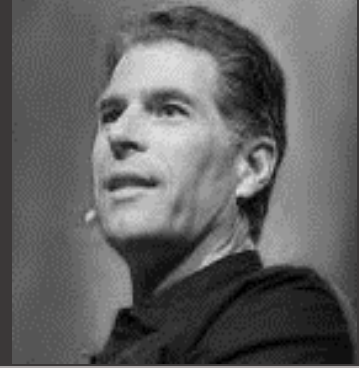
- Openness and reality
- Evoking your **own empathy and compassionate and learning**, as you explore the **emotional component** within the context of a healthcare incident and complaint
- Catching some difficult emotions, but finish with catching some happy ones too
  - Counselling/psychological theories and skills
  - Life....real life and real lived emotional experiences

A black and white photograph of a stack of several open books. The books are arranged in a way that their pages fan out, creating a sense of depth and volume. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, centered horizontally. The text is in a clean, sans-serif font and is slightly shadowed to blend with the background.

People's experiences are people's lives  
People's lives are people's stories



OH NO!! Not  
straight in with  
Neuroscience!



Paul Zak, director of the Center for Neuroeconomic Studies

Found that even the **simplest narrative** can elicit powerful **empathic and compassionate** responses but also **connectivity** responses by triggering the release of neurochemicals like **cortisol** and **oxytocin**

**Cortisol**

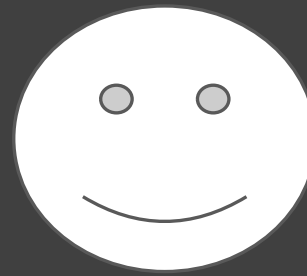
Focuses our attention

**Oxytocin**

Care, connection and empathy

Oxytocin makes us **more sensitive to social cues** around us.  
**Social cues often motivate us** to help others.

Thank you



You will have just had **cortisol** and **oxytocin** released!!




“I've learned that **people** will forget what you said, **people** will forget what you did, but **people** will never forget how you **made them feel.**”

Maya Angelou

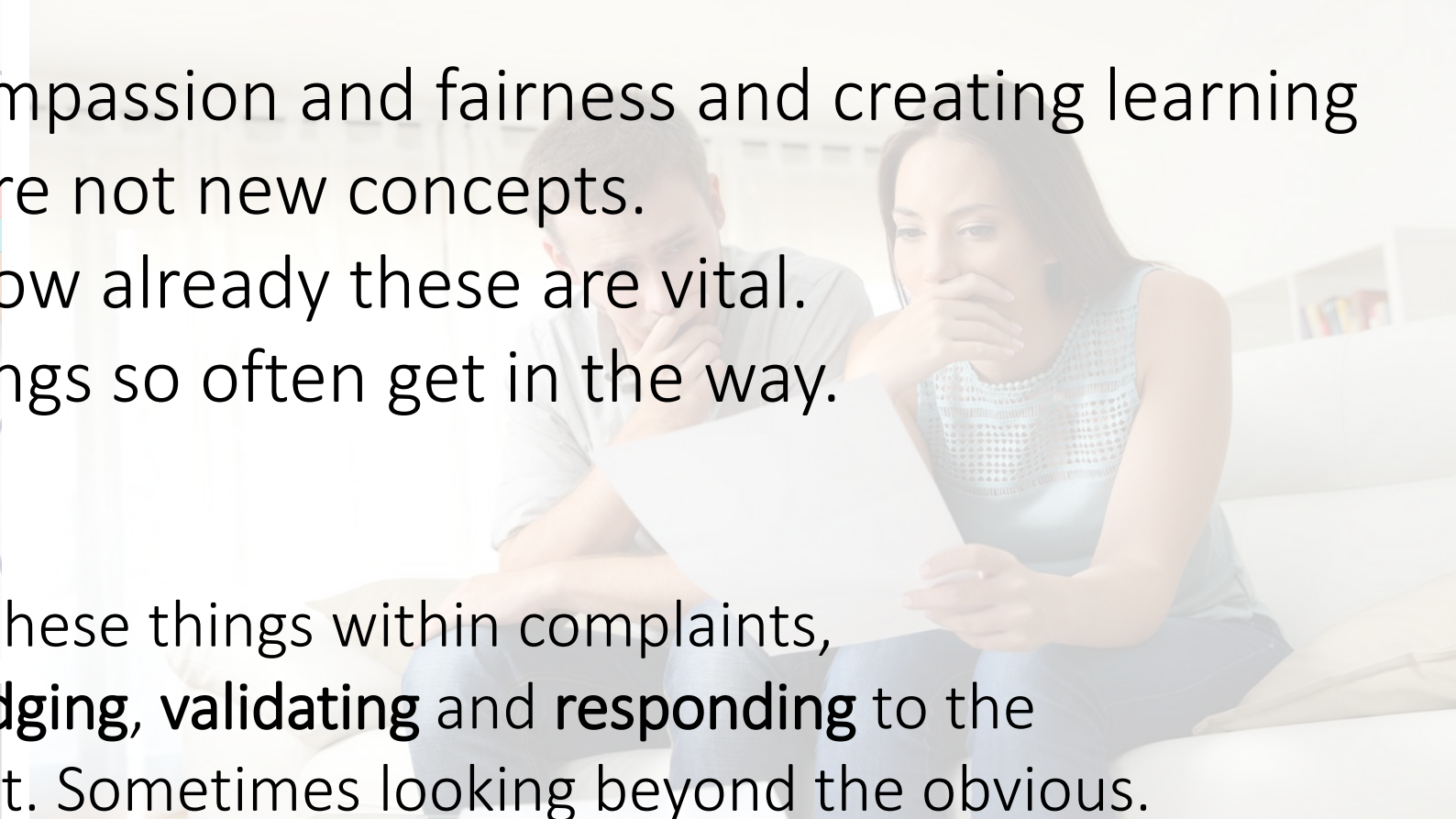
Communication is an **emotionally felt process**...it affects us all



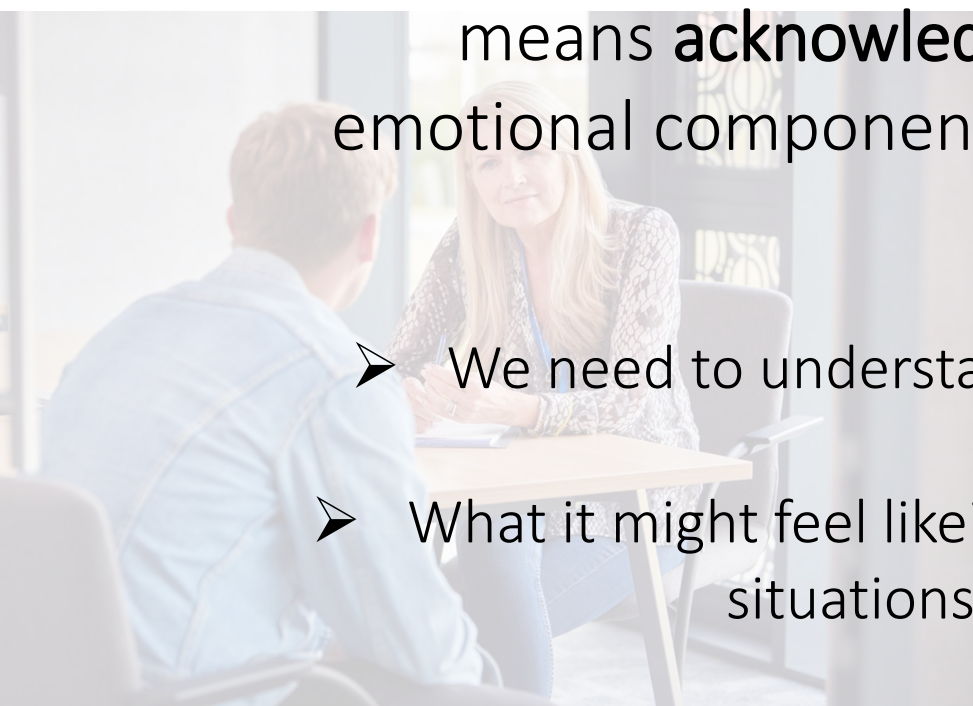
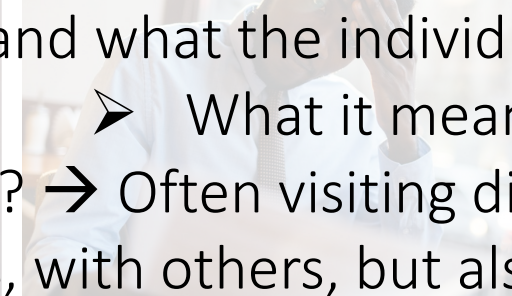
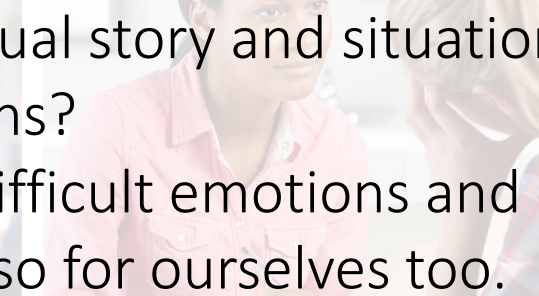
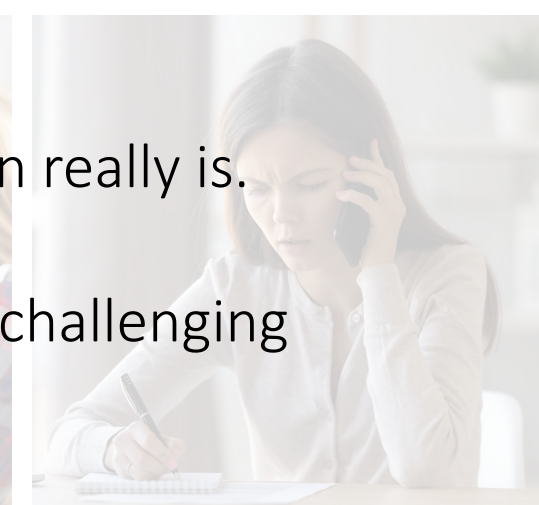


Communicating with compassion and fairness and creating learning are not new concepts.

We know already these are vital.  
But things so often get in the way.



Enabling these things within complaints, means **acknowledging, validating** and **responding** to the emotional component. Sometimes looking beyond the obvious.

- 
- 
- 
- 
- We need to understand what the individual story and situation really is.
    - What it means?
  - What it might feel like? → Often visiting difficult emotions and challenging situations, with others, but also for ourselves too.

Empathy for my family and me



Empathy for clinicians and professionals...what might it be like to be them? What might that feel like?



Emotional awareness and responsibility for my own feelings...what was maternal grief/guilt...what did I need to own and what do I need to take forward?



Let's think back to my story. Who and what did I need empathy and emotional awareness for?

Compassion, fairness, justice and learning



Empathy supports

Who and what did the organisation need empathy and emotional awareness for?



Empathy for Sophie (even after death.) Duty of care.  
Empathy for me and my children. Our perspectives / feelings / needs



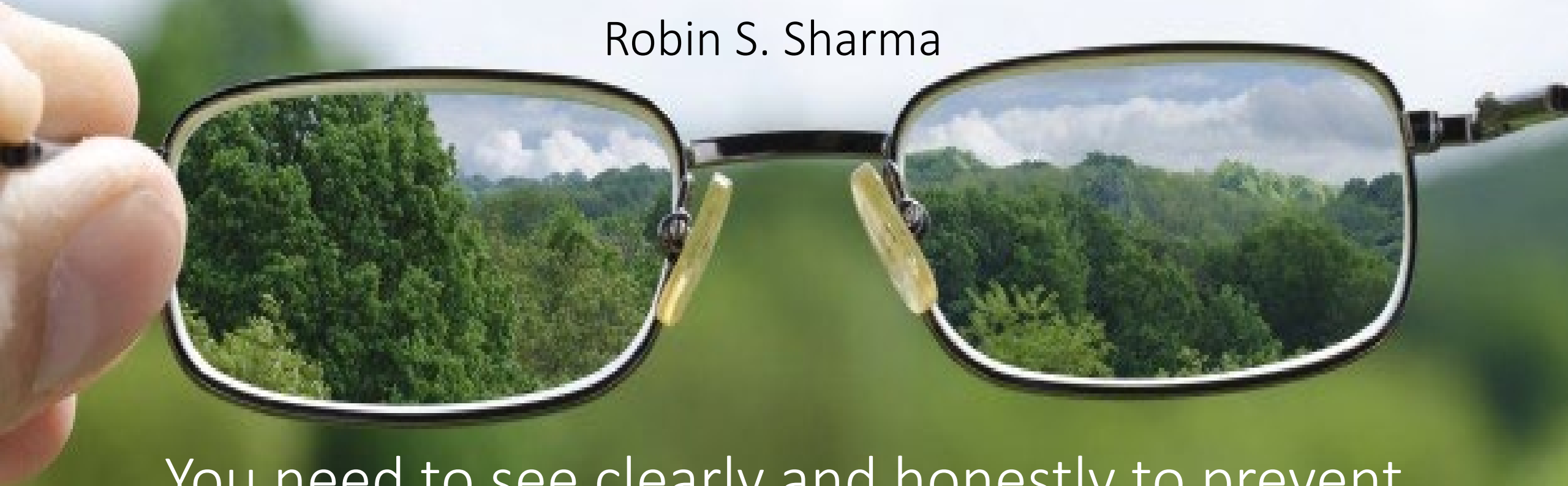
Empathy for their staff. Their perspectives/feelings/needs?



Emotional awareness and responsibility of themselves and organisational for a moral, just and learning culture

‘You will never be able to hit a target that you cannot see’

Robin S. Sharma



You need to see clearly and honestly to prevent further harm

# Learning through knowledge?

What role do patients and loved ones have in complaints?  
How can they help you?

Patients and loved one's can be a font of knowledge



Knowing often vital details that form an important part of the evidence and learning.

Just as every situation in life has a multitude of human factors and considerations to see the full picture



So does every patient safety incident, with patients, families and their loved ones having a key to part of that picture



Listening and understanding = Learning



But it goes far beyond this.

Because patient, family and loved one's investment goes far beyond the incident/complaint.



# Let's remind ourselves of some of the emotional component

Patients and loved ones have their own investment  
It is THEIR...

**Life**

**Their mum**

**Their dad**

**Their friend**

**Their partner**

**Their husband**

**Their neighbour**

**Their sibling**

**Their wife**

**Their child**

**Their son**

**Their daughter**

It is THEIR RELATIONSHIP. THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE.

Let's think about this - How empathic engagement can produce better results for patients and loved ones, but also for the organisation during investigations and complaints



Time and again, conflict gets exacerbated because organisations avoid and fear having conversations when maybe emotions are high. Often staff don't feel confident. So, let's explore what you are achieving, even when it may still feel difficult.



# What does it feel like when someone is really interested in what you have to say?

I feel.  
I think.

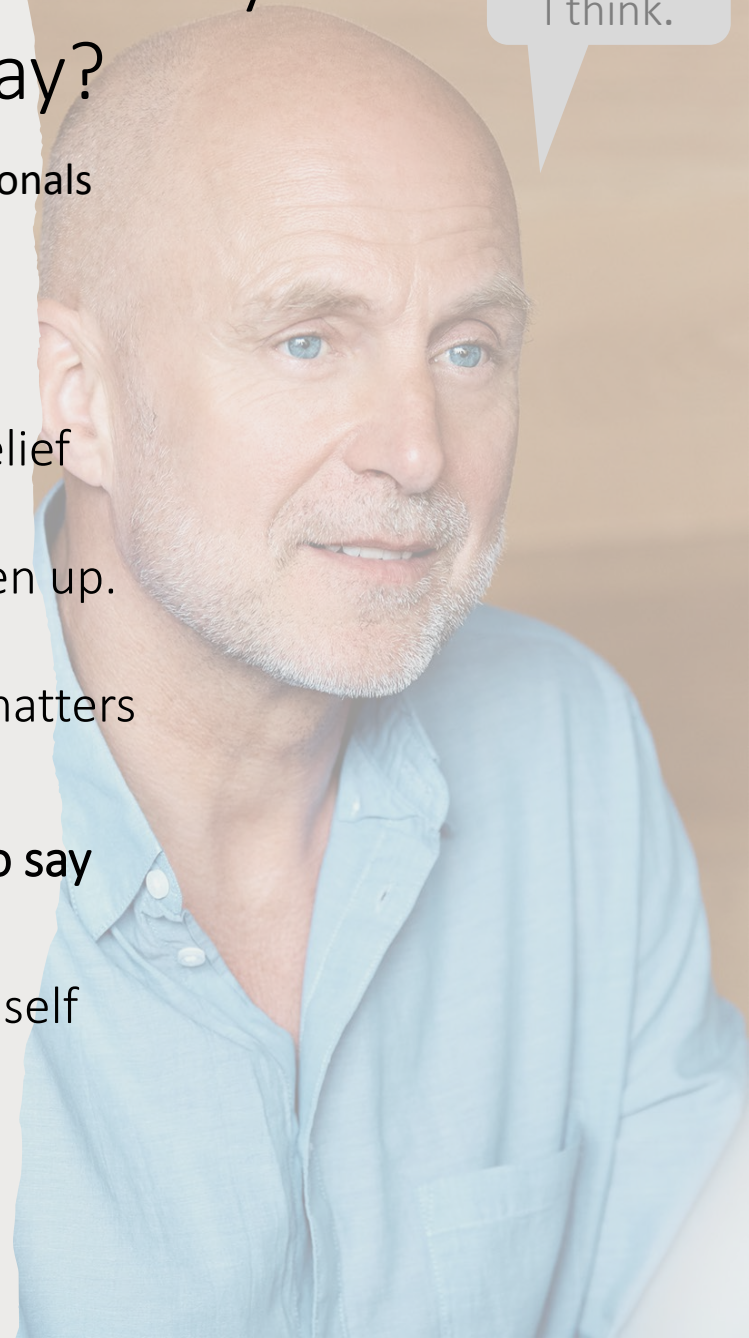
Some of the most common answers when I get healthcare professionals to think about the above question, in relation to themselves

## When someone is interested in what you have to say

- Feel understood and safe, often with a sense of relief
- Feel engaged and empowered.
- Builds trust so will they will disclose more and open up.
- Feel more positive after these kinds of discussion
- Builds confidence where they feel their opinion matters

## When someone is NOT interested in what you have to say

- Can lead to feeling paranoid
- Questioning the other person. Questioning about self
- Self-doubt
- Angry and frustrated
- Misunderstood, isolated
- Disappointed



A human beings, we have biological support to understand the emotions of others.



From: A. N. Meltzoff & M. K. Moore (1977). *Science*, 197, 198, 75-78.

You catch and mirror emotions via your mirror neurons





“Emotions are contagious.  
We've all known it experientially”

Daniel Goleman



You know when you have had a good time with friends...  
you walk away feeling GOOD



You meet with that disinterested, rude person....

You walk away feeling **BAD**.



We really do catch emotions, attitudes and ideas  
that can change how we feel and respond and  
feed into culture



Within our often challenging workdays, listening and communicating with empathy and compassion and understanding the emotional complexity of emotions, for all within complaints....really are...

Empowering tools, that can **significantly, profoundly** and with **long term impact**,  
**enhance** the felt **emotional experience**.

“ People may **HEAR** your words,  
but they **FEEL** your attitude”

C Maxwell





Thank you.

Any  
questions?

Session delivered by Carolyn Cleveland  
Director C&C Empathy Training Ltd

[carolyn@cc-et.co.uk](mailto:carolyn@cc-et.co.uk)

Twitter@carolynccet

