

## Expecting the Unexpected: Empathy Exercise

### One-upping:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

OMG, you think you have it bad! Let me tell you about what happened to this one family I know ... etc., etc.

That's **'one upping'** them. They don't need to hear who has it worse than them. They don't need to hear that they should not feel the way they do.

### Fixing:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

Oh, I know some people! I can help you find a job...

That's **fixing** it. And no one needs to be 'fixed'. It also sends a subtle message that you think that they cannot solve their problems without your help.

### Advising:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

If I were you, I would start looking for job right after I updated my resume.

That's **advising** and unless they specifically asked for it, they aren't needing that from me.

### Interrogating:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

Ohhh No! How could you let that happen?!!?

That's **interrogating**... And they didn't come looking for the Spanish Inquisition.

### Explaining:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

It's only that way because you aren't being positive and you aren't trying hard enough

They aren't looking for an **explanation**.

### Correcting:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

Hey, look on the bright side! There are many things in life to be thankful for.

That would be me **correcting** them and they are not needing me to tell them that they aren't interpreting their circumstances or feelings correctly.

## Expecting the Unexpected: Empathy Exercise

### Educating:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

Well, there is so much you can learn from this...

**That's educating** and they don't need an education on what is happening to them.

### Consoling:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

None of this is your fault. You are just in a bad patch. It will turn out alright.

They don't need me to **console** them. That minimizes their feelings.

### Judging:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

If you hadn't quit that job you had, and thrown your money away, then none of this would be happening right now...

They don't need me to **judge** their actions. And everyone hates being told, 'I told you so'

### Commiserating:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

I hate your boss so much! I wish people like that would just die so the rest of us could be happy!

They don't need me to **commiserate** with them, even though I want to. Commiserating makes it "all about me"

### Storytelling:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

Oh, this reminds me when I couldn't find a job! I was so stressed when the bills came and I didn't know where I was going to get the money, so I called my ...

**Storytelling** distracts people from what they are feeling. It may be a great stall tactic, but it still serves nothing or no one.

### Sympathizing:

**If someone said to me today:**

OMG, \_\_\_\_\_! My life could not be worse! I'm totally broke, and I feel so scared. I've never been this worried before. I don't know what I'm going to do...

**I would NOT say:**

OMG! That's so awful! I feel so bad for you! What are you going to do!??

They don't need **sympathy** from me either. Sympathy is a lot like pity—it implies that you are better than them.