

TLP Five-Minute Read Over Coffee – Showing emotion at work


Showing emotion at work - reflections!

→ I was with a very good client yesterday and we were talking about the death of the Queen. I pride myself on my 'cold, hard analysis' when talking about politicians and global events but in that moment, I started to cry a little. That really took me by surprise.

→ At work I have always expressed a certain type of 'Englishness' that keeps my emotions well under control. I work with companies to improve their communication skills and one of my core values is the need to retain your professionalism and effectively manage your feelings like 'anger'. I have worked with clients in very tense situations, and only once have I ever felt that shouting was justified - when a manager in that moment was trying to prevent an accident in a production zone.

→ Given this - my tears yesterday initially made me feel stupid. Thinking about that situation last night I decided to be a little gentler on myself.

What was clear to me is that the Queen has been deeply rooted in my sense of what is good about my country - the power of this came to me all in one moment when speaking to that client. Living in Luxembourg I have felt defensive about 'Brand UK' in recent years. However, the Queen has always represented a profound source of pride as a symbol of values that really matter to me.

 So, my learning from this - is that my 'keeping your emotions under control at work' mantra needs to soften a little. I still believe that there need to be real boundaries between your work and private life and for sure 'keeping cool' can be a very powerful asset in many work situations.

💡 However, the danger of this model is that it can be too rigid, suffocating and act as a type of 'emotional straitjacket'. We are all human beings and being able to show emotion in the workplace and not feel shame and stupidity - that really matters.
