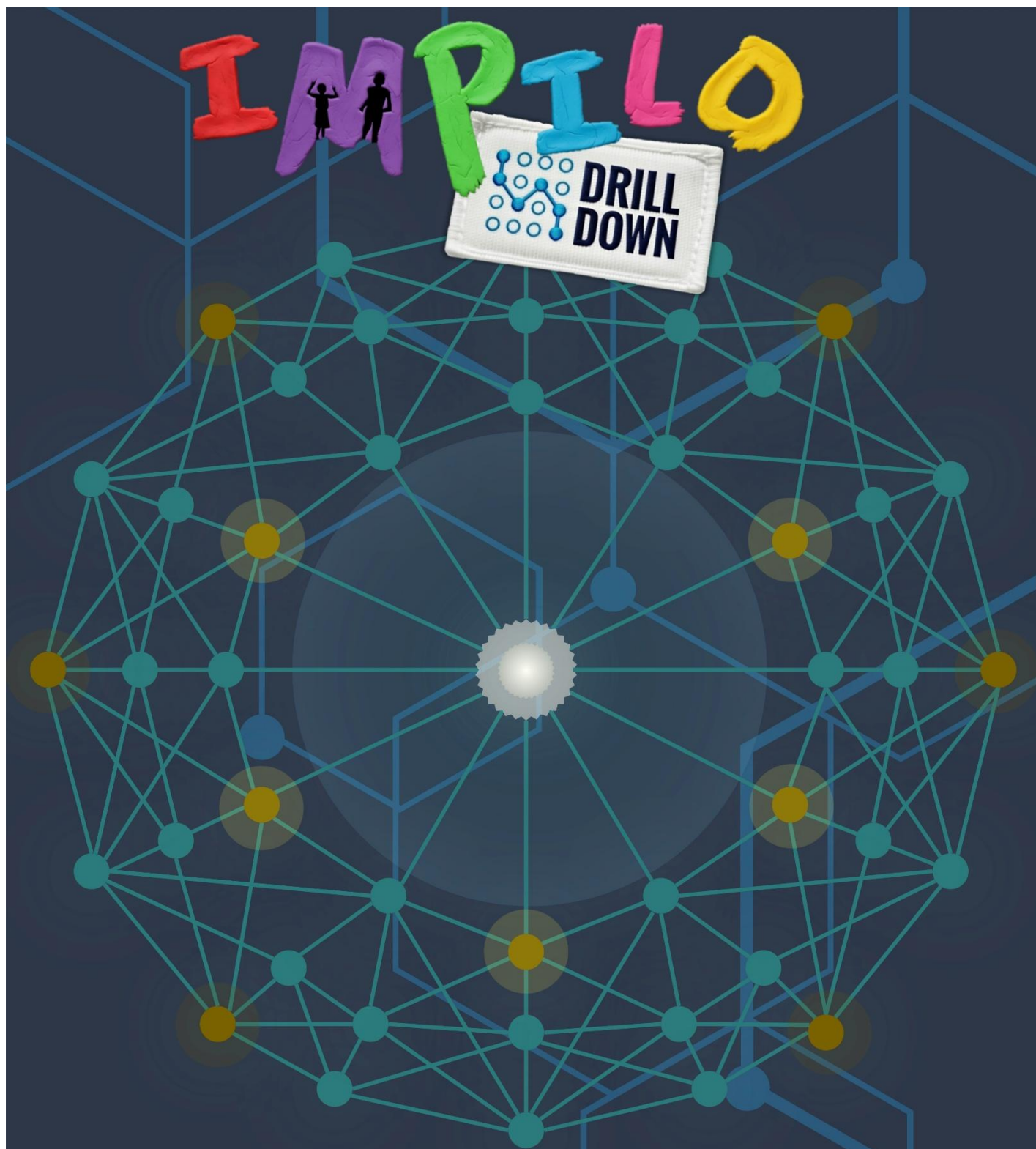
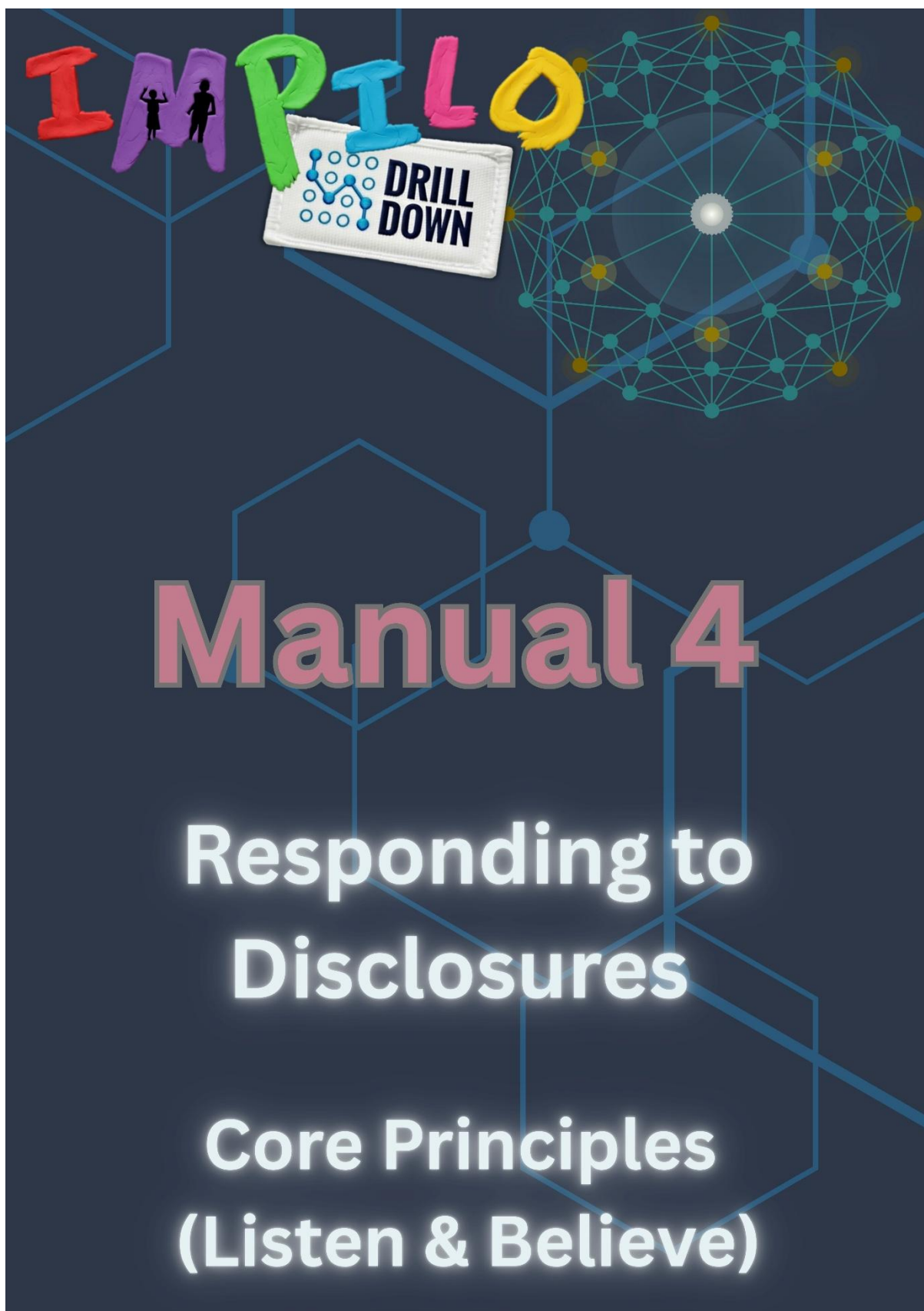




Module 4

PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR SAFER WORKPLACES AND STRONGER FAMILIES



Manual 4

Responding to Disclosures

Core Principles (Listen & Believe)

SECTION 1: DESCRIPTION OF THE MODULE'S FOCUS

This module focuses on equipping you with the foundational skills to respond safely and supportively when a colleague begins to disclose experiences of gender-based violence, bullying, or coercive control. You will learn how to create immediate psychological safety in those critical first moments, practise active listening and belief statements, recognise responses that can unintentionally cause harm, use supportive body language and tone, and apply simple grounding techniques to stay present and calm under pressure. Through realistic banking scenarios, this module emphasises trauma-informed, survivor-centred principles that honour the dignity and agency of the person disclosing while protecting your own emotional wellbeing.

HOW THIS MODULE BUILDS ON PREVIOUS LEARNING AND CONNECTS TO THE OVERALL PROGRAMME

This module builds directly on the earlier foundations established in Modules 1–3. Having learned to recognise harmful dynamics, build psychological safety in teams, and adopt an Upstander mindset, you are now ready to translate awareness and intention into confident, practical action when disclosures occur. It forms a core pillar of the overall programme by bridging recognition and mindset with actionable response skills, contributing to safer workplaces, stronger families, and a culture of collective care across South African banking environments.

BRIEF NOTE ON THE FIVE VIDEOS AND HOW THE MANUAL SUPPORTS THEM

The five accompanying videos each address a key aspect of supportive disclosure response in concise 5-minute segments. This PDF Training Manual extends the videos by providing deeper explanations, expanded banking-specific scenarios, ready-to-use scripts and phrases, practical tools (including uKukhula CBT, NLP, and Mindfulness elements), reflection prompts, and quick-reference job aids so you can confidently apply these principles in your daily role.

SECTION 2: LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

KNOWLEDGE

- Clearly explain the core principles of trauma-informed disclosure response, including why the first moments matter and how they influence safety and trust in a banking workplace.
- Identify common responses (verbal and non-verbal) that can re-traumatise or shut down a colleague's disclosure, as well as those that create psychological safety.

SKILLS

- Create immediate emotional safety when a colleague begins to disclose by using active listening techniques, belief statements, supportive body language, and appropriate tone.
- Apply simple grounding and mindfulness techniques (drawn from uKukhula principles) to stay present and regulated during emotionally charged conversations.
- Offer initial supportive responses without overstepping professional boundaries, while knowing when and how to make warm referrals.

ATTITUDES & BEHAVIOURS

- Adopt a survivor-centred, non-blaming, and empowering mindset that honours the dignity and agency of every colleague, regardless of cultural background, role, or management level.

- Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and respect for South Africa’s diverse banking workforce (aligned with BASA 2023 demographics) when responding to disclosures, framing support around shared values such as protecting dignity and strengthening families.
- Commit to practising small, consistent actions that contribute to a safer team culture, including self-care as a responsible Upstander colleague.

SECTION 3: KEY CONCEPTS SUMMARY

CORE CONCEPTS COVERED ACROSS THE FIVE VIDEOS

This module introduces the essential principles and practical approaches for responding effectively when a colleague chooses to disclose experiences of GBV, bullying, or coercive control. Across the five videos you will explore how to create immediate safety, listen and believe with empathy, avoid common harmful responses, use supportive non-verbal communication, and stay grounded under pressure — all while maintaining professional boundaries in busy banking environments.

Key Concepts and Principles

- **The First Moments Matter:** The initial response sets the tone for safety and trust. A calm, present, and non-judgemental reaction helps the person feel heard and supported rather than dismissed or unsafe.
- **Listen and Believe – Core Skills:** Active listening involves giving full attention, using encouraging nods and minimal prompts. Belief statements such as “I believe you” or “Thank you for trusting me with this” validate the person’s experience without needing to investigate or fix the situation immediately.
- **What Not to Say or Do:** Avoid responses that minimise, blame, or pressure the person (e.g., “Why didn’t you...?” or “Are you sure?”). These can re-traumatise and close down future disclosures.
- **Body Language and Tone:** Non-verbal cues — open posture, appropriate eye contact, calm tone, and respectful physical distance — often communicate safety more powerfully than words alone.
- **Staying Present Under Pressure:** Simple grounding techniques (such as brief breathing or the 5-4-3-2-1 sensory awareness exercise from uKukhula mindfulness) help you regulate your own emotions so you can remain a steady, supportive colleague.

SUPPORTING UKUKHULA ELEMENTS

Gentle CBT reframing helps shift unhelpful thoughts (e.g., “I don’t know what to say” → “I can offer calm presence and belief”). NLP phrasing supports rapport and empowering language. Mindfulness tools promote emotional regulation in the moment.

SECTION 4: PRACTICAL TOOLS & SCRIPTS

This section gives you immediately usable tools and language for responding to disclosures in your banking role. Practise these in low-pressure moments so they feel natural when needed.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE: RESPONDING IN THE FIRST MOMENTS

1. **Pause and Ground Yourself** – Take one calm breath before responding.
2. **Create Safety** – Offer your full attention and a private space if possible.
3. **Listen Actively** – Focus on the person, use encouraging nods.
4. **Believe and Validate** – Use simple belief statements.
5. **Offer Support Without Overstepping** – Ask what they need right now and signpost resources.
6. **Follow Up Later** (Delay strategy from the 5 D's) – Check in sensitively after the conversation.

YOU CAN SAY – READY-TO-USE PHRASES

Creating Immediate Safety

- “I’m here with you right now. Take your time.”
- “This is a safe space to talk – whatever you share stays between us for now.”

Listen and Believe

- “Thank you for trusting me with this.”
- “I believe you.”
- “I’m really sorry this happened to you.”
- “You don’t have to explain anything unless you want to.”

Gentle Prompts

- “I’m listening.”
- “What do you need from me right now?”

What Not to Say Avoid: “Why didn’t you leave/report it sooner?”, “Are you sure that’s what happened?”, “It could be worse”, or offering quick fixes like “Just ignore them.”

BODY LANGUAGE & TONE QUICK GUIDE

- Face the person with an open posture (uncrossed arms).
- Maintain soft, appropriate eye contact.
- Keep a calm, steady, warm tone of voice.
- Respect personal space and cultural comfort levels.

- Nod gently to show you are listening.

UKUKHULA TOOLS FOR THE MOMENT

Mindfulness Grounding (Staying Present Under Pressure)

Try This – One-Minute Reset (use discreetly):

5 – Name 5 things you can see around you.

4 – Name 4 things you can touch.

3 – Name 3 things you can hear.

2 – Name 2 things you can smell.

1 – Name 1 thing you can taste.

CBT Thought Reframe

Unhelpful thought: “I don’t know what to say – I might make it worse.” Helpful reframe: “My calm presence and belief are already helping. I don’t need to fix everything right now.”

NLP Self-Talk Anchor

Before responding, silently say to yourself: “I am a steady, supportive colleague. I choose calm and respect.” This anchors confidence and rapport.

“You Can Say” Box – Support Without Overstepping

“I’m glad you told me. Would it help if I walked you to HR / the EAP contact, or would you like me to check in with you tomorrow?”

Quick Decision Framework

- Is the person in immediate danger? → Delegate / escalate safely.
- They just need to be heard? → Listen, Believe, Support.
- You feel overwhelmed? → Use grounding, then offer to connect them to professional support.

Print or save these phrases and tools as a pocket reference. Regular small practice builds your confidence as a Skilled Upstander Colleague.

SECTION 5: EXPANDED SCENARIO LIBRARY

Here are six realistic banking scenarios that extend the examples shown in the videos. Each reflects the diversity of South African banking teams (aligned with BASA 2023 demographics) and common workplace settings.

SCENARIO 1: BRANCH COUNTER (JUNIOR BLACK AFRICAN FEMALE TELLER)

Context: A junior teller (Zulu-speaking, early 30s) is serving customers when a colleague shares a personal disclosure during a quiet moment.

What happened: The colleague (Coloured female, same level) quietly says her partner has been controlling and she feels unsafe at home.

Possible Responses:

- Less effective: “You should just leave him” or “Are you sure it’s that bad?” (minimises and pressures).
- Effective: Calm listening and belief, creating safety. **Recommended Language & Actions:** Pause, use open posture. “Thank you for trusting me with this. I believe you. I’m here to listen.” Offer to walk her to HR or EAP after her shift (Delay). Use grounding if you feel anxious.

SCENARIO 2: CALL CENTRE POD (HYBRID ENVIRONMENT)

Context: During a busy shift, a male Indian South African call centre agent (mid-20s) discloses emotional abuse from a family member to a team member.

What happened: He mentions feeling trapped and anxious, affecting his focus on calls.

Possible Responses:

- Less effective: Changing the subject quickly or saying “Work is not the place for this.”
- Effective: Validating and signposting support. **Recommended Language & Actions:** “I’m really sorry you’re going through this. I believe you and it’s okay to feel this way.” Gently suggest EAP resources. Apply 5-4-3-2-1 grounding afterwards to stay regulated.

SCENARIO 3: TEAM MEETING (OPEN-PLAN OFFICE)

Context: In a middle management team huddle, a Basotho female team leader discloses subtle bullying by a senior colleague.

What happened: She shares examples of undermining comments that have left her doubting herself.

Possible Responses:

- Less effective: Dismissing with “That’s just office politics” or offering unsolicited advice.
- Effective: Active listening and belief while maintaining confidentiality. **Recommended Language & Actions:** “Thank you for sharing this. I believe what you’re saying and it’s not okay.” Use supportive tone and nods. Offer to help explore escalation options safely.

SCENARIO 4: HYBRID VIRTUAL MEETING

Context: A White male back-office analyst (senior level) privately messages a Coloured female colleague after a tense hybrid team call about feeling coerced in a project.

What happened: He discloses controlling behaviour from a manager affecting his wellbeing.

Possible Responses:

- Less effective: Jumping to “You need to report this immediately” without listening.

- Effective: Creating safety through chat or follow-up call. **Recommended Language & Actions:** “I hear you and I believe this is impacting you. Would it help to talk briefly after the meeting?” Use calm tone and respectful follow-up (Delay strategy).

SCENARIO 5: BRANCH BACK OFFICE

Context: A senior Black African male operations clerk notices a younger Xhosa female colleague appearing distressed.

What happened: She discloses coercive control at home that is affecting her concentration and family life.

Possible Responses:

- Less effective: Victim-blaming questions or silence due to discomfort.
- Effective: Empathetic presence and warm referral. **Recommended Language & Actions:** “You are safe to speak here. I believe you.” CBT reframe for yourself: “My role is to listen and support, not solve.” Signpost TEARS or internal EAP.

SCENARIO 6: CALL CENTRE SHIFT CHANGE

Context: During handover, a Venda female agent discloses bullying from a team leader impacting her confidence.

What happened: She shares specific incidents and fears of speaking up.

Possible Responses:

- Less effective: “Just ignore it and focus on targets.”
- Effective: Validating experience and exploring next steps together. **Recommended Language & Actions:** “I’m glad you told me – I believe you. Let’s think about how I can support you safely.” Use NLP anchoring for calm: “Steady and respectful colleague.” Offer private follow-up.

These scenarios show how the core principles apply across different roles and contexts. Reflect on which responses feel most natural for your position and practise the recommended language regularly.

SECTION 6: APPLICATION & REFLECTION

REFLECTION PROMPTS

Take a moment to reflect in a way that feels safe and supportive for you. There are no right or wrong answers — only honest insights that help you grow as a Skilled Upstander Colleague.

PAUSE AND CONSIDER

- How did the principles in this module (especially creating safety and listening to believe) land with you?
- Which common unhelpful response (from Video 3) have you witnessed or used in the past, and what makes it harmful?

- In what ways can your body language and tone make a bigger difference than words alone in a high-pressure banking environment?

PERSONAL APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- What is one situation in your daily role (branch counter, call centre, team meeting, or hybrid setting) where you could apply these disclosure response skills?
- Which uKukhula tool (grounding technique, CBT reframe, or NLP self-talk anchor) feels most useful for you personally, and when will you practise it?
- How can responding supportively to a colleague's disclosure also strengthen protective factors for their family and children?

TEAM DISCUSSION STARTERS (FOR MANAGERS AND TEAM MEETINGS)

- “What does creating psychological safety look like for us when someone shares something difficult?”
- “How can we support each other to use belief statements and avoid re-traumatising responses in our team?”
- “Thinking about our diverse team (different cultures, roles and levels), how can we make sure our responses honour everyone's communication style and values like respect and family protection?”
- “What small team ritual could we introduce to check in on wellbeing and reinforce Upstander behaviours?”

End your reflection by acknowledging one strength you already bring to supporting colleagues. Small, consistent actions create lasting cultural change. You are already making a difference.

SECTION 7: QUICK REFERENCE TOOLS

DISCLOSURE RESPONSE POCKET GUIDE (MODULE 4)

Core Principles

- First moments matter — create safety
- Listen to Believe
- Avoid re-traumatising responses
- Use supportive body language & tone
- Stay grounded for yourself

KEY PHRASES YOU CAN SAY

Safety & Presence

- “I’m here with you right now. Take your time.”
- “This is a safe space to talk.”



Listen & Believe

- “Thank you for trusting me.”
- “I believe you.”
- “I’m really sorry this is happening to you.”
- “You don’t have to explain unless you want to.”

Support & Next Steps

- “What do you need from me right now?”
- “Would it help if I connect you with EAP / HR?”
- “I can check in with you tomorrow if you’d like.”

What to Avoid

- Why didn’t you...? / Are you sure...? / Just ignore it / Quick fixes

QUICK DECISION FLOW

1. Person begins to disclose → Pause & ground yourself
2. Listen actively + Believe → Use belief statements
3. Offer support → Ask what they need (no pressure)
4. If needed → Warm referral to EAP / TEARS / GBV Command Centre
5. After → Self-care & follow up sensitively (Delay)

SELF-CARE & GROUNDING QUICK TIPS (UKUKHULA)

One-Minute Reset (5-4-3-2-1)

5 things you see | 4 you can touch | 3 you hear | 2 you smell | 1 you taste

CBT Reframe

Unhelpful: “I might make it worse.”

Helpful: “My calm presence and belief are enough right now.”

NLP Anchor

Silently: “I am a steady, supportive colleague. I choose calm and respect.”

Body Language Checklist

- ☐ Open posture
- ☐ Soft eye contact
- ☐ Calm, warm tone

- ☐ Respect personal & cultural space

Print or save this page as your ready reference. Keep it accessible in your workspace. Regular use builds confidence and contributes to safer banking teams and stronger families. You've got this.

SECTION 8: RESOURCES & SIGNPOSTING

INTERNAL BANK RESOURCES

- **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):** Confidential counselling and support — available 24/7. Contact details are on your intranet or HR portal.
- **Harassment & GBV Policies:** Refer to your bank's Code of Conduct, Harassment Policy, and Reporting Guidelines.
- **Reporting Channels:** Speak to your line manager, HR Business Partner, or use the anonymous whistle-blower hotline.
- **Wellbeing & Transformation Teams:** Support for psychological safety and diversity initiatives.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

- **TEARS Foundation:** Specialist counselling and support for GBV survivors. Helpline: 0800 555 555 (24 hours).
- **National GBV Command Centre:** 0800 428 428 (24 hours) or SMS "help" to 31531.
- **Other Services:** Lifeline (0861 322 322), local clinics, shelters, and community-based organisations.
- **Legal Advice:** Commission for Gender Equality or Legal Aid South Africa.

RELATED PROGRAMME RESOURCES

- Revisit Module 3 (The Upstander Mindset) for building confidence before responding.
- Module 5 (Responding to Disclosures – Support, Refer & Follow Through) for next steps.
- Module 11 (Protecting Yourself & Your Colleagues) for deeper self-care tools.
- Full programme PDF manuals and videos for ongoing reference.

ENCOURAGING CLOSING MESSAGE

You now hold practical skills that can make a real difference in your colleagues' lives and in building safer, more supportive banking teams. Every time you listen, believe, and respond with care, you help break harmful cycles and strengthen families and communities.

Thank you for choosing to be a Skilled Upstander Colleague — your actions matter. Keep practising these tools with compassion for yourself and others. You are part of positive change.

