

Dealing with Difficult Customers & Self Care

Carol R. Wright Kenderdine

Easterseals

Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series

 MINNESOTA

Session Objectives

- What do our customers expect?
- How to deal with difficult customers
- Understanding difficult behavior
- Types of difficult customers
- Strategies for dealing with difficult passengers

Objectives, continued

- Dealing with conflict
- Effective communication
- Mood transmission
- Letting go of stress

Customer Service

Instead of teaching our team how to be better at customer service, maybe we should teach everyone else how to be better customers.



What Do Our Customers Expect?

- Personal interaction and assistance
- To get where they want to go, when they want to get there
- A safe ride



What is Customer Service?

“A lot of people have fancy things to say about customer service, but it’s just a day-in, day-out, ongoing, never ending, unremitting, persevering, compassionate kind of activity.”

Leon A. Gorman



What About When We Have Difficult Customers?

It is easy to provide great customer service to nice people who appreciate what we do for them.

What about when we have difficult customers?

Understanding Difficult Behavior

Who are the “difficult”?

In general, it is someone exhibiting negative behavior with most people most of the time.



Conflicting Personalities

- Difficult people are often the result of conflicting personalities, not intentional behaviors.
- We can all be difficult at some point whether we mean to or not.



Types of Difficult Customers

- Angry
- Intimidating
- Impatient
- Complainer
- Know-it-All
- Hard to Hear or Hard to Understand



Angry Customers - Exploders

This person has quick, nasty outbursts.

- Don't tell them to calm down
- Gain self-control
- Do not become defensive
- Take them seriously
- Be empathetic
- Do not raise your voice in anger back



All Clear

Advice: You need emotional protection from these encounters.

Hear it and Clear it!



Intimidating Customers - Aggressive

This customer is abusive and abrupt. They expect to intimidate people and get people to cower. They may threaten to report you. They want to make sure you understand that they are the one in control, and you must do what they say.



Dealing with Intimidating Customers

- Pause and wait for them to run out of steam
- Be polite but very firm
- Do not stoop to the same aggressive level
- Speak calmly in a moderate and slightly lowered voice
- Use negotiation techniques

Impatient Customers

This customer is in a rush. They believe you are not getting things done promptly enough. They want things done “right now”!

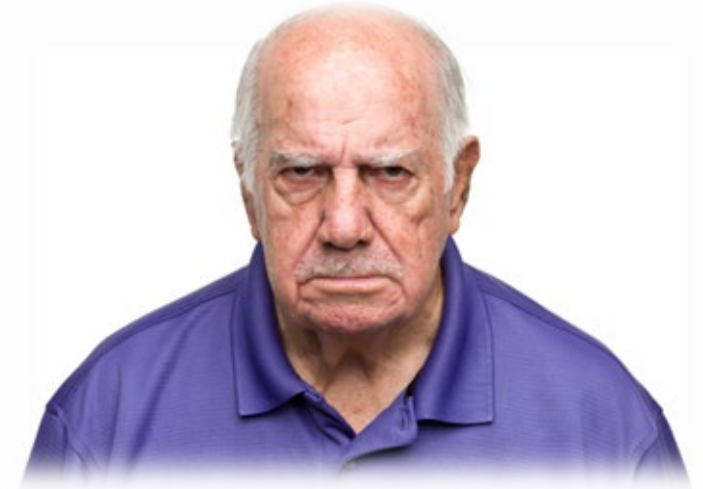
- Empathize with them
- Apologize as needed for any delays
- Explain (briefly) what is happening
- Be realistic and don't rush



The Complainer

The complainer finds fault with everything.

- Listen
- Remain optimistic
- Don't argue or apologize
- State the facts
- Ask "How would you like to see this resolved?"



Staying Under Control

Even when other people get upset, you don't have to.

Someone needs to stay under control, and you are better off if it is you!



Know-It-All

The know-it-all is an expert on all matters and can tell you everything you are doing wrong.

- Be prepared
- Listen and paraphrase back
- Be specific
- Acknowledge his competence
- Use their name when speaking to them
- Remember and use the phrase, “I know that you know...”



Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Passengers

1. Change YOUR attitude
2. Change THEIR attitude



ATTITUDE
IS
EVERYTHING

Why are Difficult People Difficult?

Always start with yourself:
Could you be the problem in this relationship?



Counting What Really Counts



- Why do we keep track of the negatives, but ignore the positives?
- Keeping track of good experiences puts you in a better frame of mind, motivating you to help others feel more positive too.
- Remember, you are the scorekeeper. It's up to you to make the good times count!

Check Your Attitude

Check your own perceptions

- How do you feel about the situation?
- How confident are you that you are handling things correctly?
- Are you able to see beyond the criticism?
- Is there any truth to the complaint?
- Can you empathize with their point of view?

Change Your Attitude

- Keep an open mind
- Look for common interests
- Create a desire to resolve the conflict
- Let go of the past



Attitude Adjustment

- Use your imagination to find solutions
- Ask questions
- Don't interrupt
- Pay attention to body language
- Determine real issue behind problem

Dealing with Conflict

Do not fight back.

Don't try to beat them at their own game.

They have been practicing it for a long time.

You may be a beginner by comparison.

It doesn't solve the problem to keep butting heads.



Dealing with Conflict, continued

Do not try to appease them.

It won't work because difficult people have an insatiable appetite for more conflict.

Change Their Attitude

You cannot change their attitude.

You may be able to influence their perspective of the situation.

Understanding Their Perspective

- Try to determine what is the underlying issue.
- Approach the situation from their perspective
- Empathize with their situation.



Changing a Difficult Person

You cannot change other people.

You can change your response to their behavior.

By changing your responses, they may decide to change, or they may not. However, you will feel more in control of the situation.

Difficult People

Do not take the difficult person's behavior personally.

A difficult person's behavior is habitual. They behave this way with most people.

Do not make excuses for the difficult person's behavior.

Think of other people who have faced adversity and have not become difficult. They have to own their own behavior.

Resolving Conflict

- Demonstrate respect for other's viewpoints
- Identify the specific issue of concern
- Discuss alternatives
- Agree on a solution (even if temporary)



Effective Communication

- Send clear messages
- Take time to think before speaking
- Be honest
- Be sincere
- Be positive/avoid negativity



Effective Communication, continued

Use “I” statements

Avoid “You” statements

Spreading the Mood



- How often are you affected by someone else's good or bad mood?
- Because mood transmission is highly unconscious, we can all benefit by becoming more aware of how we influence or are influenced by others.
- You can pass on pleasure, pressure, stress or a smile. The choice is yours.

Tally Up Your Influence

- Tally up the number of individuals with whom you interact in the course of just one day, and you can measure your influence.
- How many people will go away feeling more energized (or irritated) by your behavior?
- Your one act of kindness, friendly smile, extra effort or courtesy extended can ripple through countless others.

Give More

- When we are asked to “give more,” we often think to ourselves, “I am already doing the best that I can.” (and you probably are!)
- However, we are given the option of “pleasantly surprising others,” we feel less like worker bees and more like fireflies!



Not a Perfect World

- If the world were perfect, we'd never have to deal with upset passengers or unreasonable demands.
- Part of your responsibilities as a driver requires listening, reacting, and assisting people who are far from perfect.



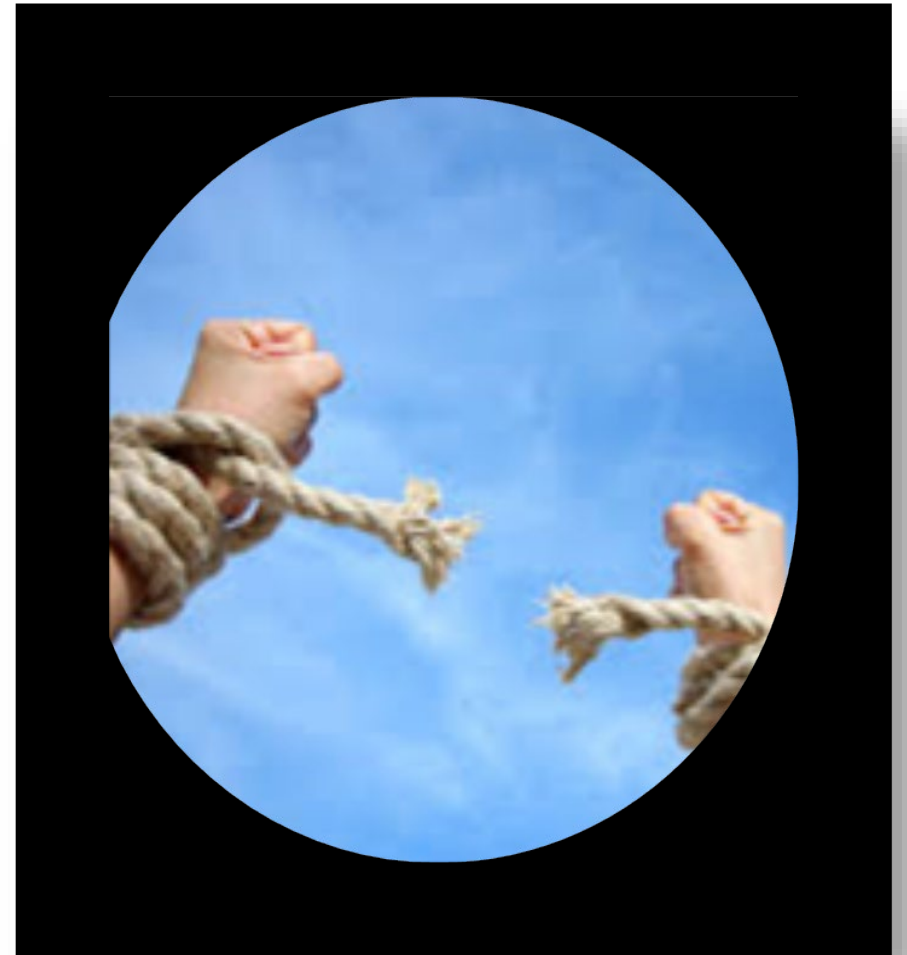
Hear It and Clear It

Remember the Advice from the tip earlier:

Hear it and Clear it!

You listen as the passenger vents,
You empathize and do everything
you can to solve the problem, and then
you let it go.

The better your ability to let it go, the easier
your job will be.



Not Your Fault

Passengers vent their frustration because they feel a situation is out of their control.

They often recognize that it's not your fault, but they still feel compelled to vent anyway.

The next time someone gets upset, remind yourself to hear it and clear it!

See what a difference it can make!



Taking Care of Yourself

When we take care of ourselves,
we can take better care of others.

Five Ways to De-Stress in Less than 5 Minutes

Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series

 MINNESOTA

1. Box Breathing

- Sit upright in a chair with your hands on your thighs.
- Inhale and exhale through your mouth, completely emptying your lungs.
- Inhale slowly through your mouth for a slow count of 4. Completely fill every corner of your lungs.
- Hold your breath for 4 slow counts.
- Slowly exhale through your mouth for a slow count of 4.
- Do not breathe in. Hold for a count of 4.
- Repeat 4 times. Then breathe normally.

2. Be. Here. Now.

- When you notice your mind racing, anxiety building, and you are getting stressed, PAUSE.
- Close your eyes, take a deep breath in through your nose.
- Release your breath slowly through your mouth.
- PAUSE. Slowly say to yourself, “Be. Here. Now.”
- Picture the feelings you were having escaping from your body between the words.
- Open your eyes. Look only at what is in front of you. Find something to concentrate your attention on.

3. Express Gratitude

- Before you start, grab a pen and paper.
- Close your eyes and take a deep breath.
- PAUSE for a moment.
- Think about something you are grateful for and write it down.
- Describe it in as much detail as possible.
- Write how it makes you FEEL.
- Now think of 3 more things you are grateful for.
- Every day before you get out of bed or at night before you go to sleep, think of at least 3 things you are grateful for. Practice GRATITUDE.

4. Body Scan

- Close your eyes. Take 5 deep, cleansing breaths.
- Starting with the top of your head and moving to the bottom of your feet, notice all of the sensations you feel (or don't feel) as you move across your head, face, tongue, jaw, neck, shoulders, back, arms, hands, fingers, stomach, "seat," thighs, calves, ankles, heels, soles of your feet, your toes.
- Notice any stiffness, aches, (Don't try to make them go away – just notice where they are). Notice parts of your body that are relaxed, comfortable...
- Now, move your body. What feels good? Notice.
- What do you hear? Smell? Notice.
- Take 2 deep breaths. Release them slowly.

5. Name 3 Things

- Take a deep breath. Let it out slowly.
- Open your eyes & name one object you see in front of you.
- Take another breath & name another object. Take a breath and name a third.
- Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Name 3 sounds that you hear, taking a breath between each.
- Take a deep breath. Note 3 feelings that you're experiencing (hot, anxious, hungry) taking a breath between each.
- Repeat the process. (See, hear, feel)
- Take a deep breath. Let it out slowly.

Self-Care

“Self-care is giving the world the best of you,
instead of what’s left
of you.”



Katie Reed

The Energy to Thrive

List as many activities as
you can that GIVE you energy.
what fills you will energy
that you can apply to your
life to create
momentum?

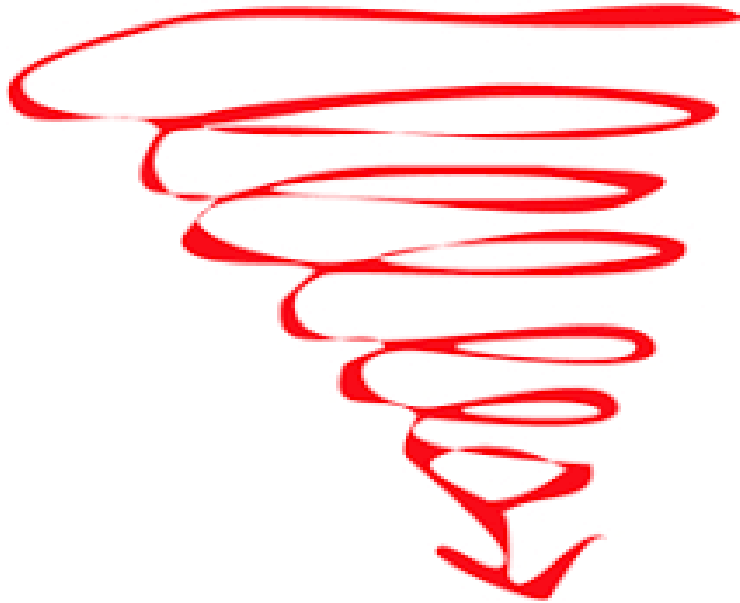


The Energy Drain

List 3 – 5 activities that are part of your daily life that drain your energy.



Minimize the Effect of the Energy Drain



What tools do you have that can help you remove or lessen some of the energy drain in your life?

EXAMPLES: Letting go of perfection; asking others for help; prioritizing what needs to get done; letting some tasks go...

Happiness

“Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”

Abraham Lincoln



Your Responsibility

Waiting for someone else to make you happy is the best way to ensure that you are sad.



So, how can you make sure that you THRIVE? You need to make it a priority in your life!

Plan Ahead

What is your plan for tomorrow?

Morning
Afternoon
Evening

Now Add...

What is your plan for

Sometime soon...

Is there any time in there reserved just for you?

Yes or No

WORST

What is the worst thing on your personal “to do” list right now?

What is the worst thing that will happen if it doesn't get done?

I m possible



“Nothing is impossible.
The word itself says,
“I m possible!”

Audrey Hepburn

Looking Forward...

What is at least one thing you are looking forward to?

The Theory of the Dipper & the Bucket

Our buckets are constantly emptied or filled. When they are full, we feel great!

When they are empty, we feel discouraged.



A Different Kind of Bucket List

- ✓ Don't dip into other people's buckets
- ✓ Shine a light on the positive
- ✓ Form close relationships
- ✓ Give unexpectedly
- ✓ Redefine the Golden Rule
- ✓ Fill your own bucket

Modified from How Full is Your Bucket

Tom Rath & Donald Clifton, Ph.D.

Questions





Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series

Contact Us!

Carol R. Wright Kenderdine
Assistant Vice President, Transportation & Mobility
Easterseals, Inc.

cwright@easterseals.com