

The *Art* & **Science**
of Managing
Difficult Patron Interactions

Kentucky Dept. for Libraries and Archives
September 2018

9/26/2018
8

Agenda

- **Building a positive experience**
- **Handling difficult interactions through:**
 - *Taking control*
 - *Solving the problem*
 - *Dealing with safety*
- **Being prepared**



What Is a Difficult Patron?



Building a Positive Experience

9/26/2018

"The only way to get the best of an argument is to try and avoid it."

Dale Carnegie



9/26/2018

Activity

- Describe a situation where you received excellent customer service
- Describe a situation where you received poor customer service

9/26/2018

Building a Positive Experience

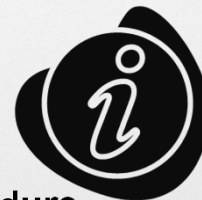
- **Be proactive! Acknowledge the patron/refer to them by name**
- **Undivided attention**
- **Tone of voice and body language**
- **Help customer help him/herself**
- **Do they have what they need?**
- **Do they need anything else?**
- **Thank them for their business!**



9/26/2018

Other Positive Steps to Take

- **Policy and procedure clearly posted**
- **Staff members know and understand policy and procedure**
- **Adequate signage in the library**



9/26/2018

Taking Control

9/26/2018

"In the Middle of Every
Difficulty Lies Opportunity"

Albert Einstein



9/26/2018

Control

- **Set the tone for the interaction**
- **Calming yourself, calming others**



9/26/2018

Responses

- **Heightened emotions provoke physical responses**
- **Our thoughts further influence how we feel**
- **Learn to control your responses**



9/26/2018

Breathe!

- **Controlling your breathing is essential!**
- **Breathe deeply from your diaphragm**
- **In through the nose and out through the mouth**
- **Count to ten**



Thoughts

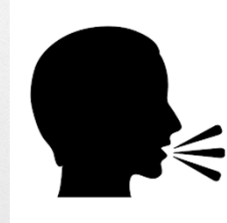
Make a list of calming thoughts to replace anxious or angry thoughts:

- **“Stay calm...”**
- **“People get upset when they believe they’ve been treated badly.”**
- **“Breathe and focus...”**
- **“This isn’t personal.”**
- **“I am here to help.”**



Voice

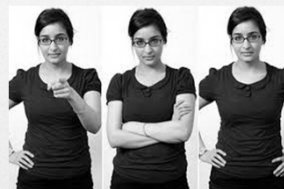
- **Calm tone**
- **Normal volume or even softer**
- **“How may I help you?”**
- **Don’t stammer**



9/26/2018

Body Language

- **Just as important as verbal**
- **Make eye contact**
- **Smile!**
- **Don’t: Slouch, cross your arms, point at them, touch anyone, invade their personal space, gesticulate palms down or use close handed gestures**



9/26/2018

Listen

- **A frustrated or angry customer wants to know that they are being heard.**
- **Listen attentively!**
- **Don't interrupt**
- **Use brief, positive prompts**



9/26/2018

Acknowledge

- **Acknowledge their request or complaint**
- **Repeat in your own words:**
 - **“So if I’m hearing you correctly.”**
 - **“Let me make sure I understand the problem.”**

9/26/2018

Validate

- **Be empathetic and nonjudgmental:**
 - “That must be very frustrating.”
 - “I can see why that would be irritating.”
 - “I can see you are really upset.”
- **Apologize-but be careful!**
- **Validation goes a long way!**

9/26/2018

Solving the Problem

9/26/2018

Everything is Negotiable.
Whether or Not the
Negotiation is Easy is Another
Thing.

Carrie Fisher



9/26/2018

Solving the Problem

- **Work with the customer**
- **Negotiate**
- **Follow library policy**
- **May have to bend some rules**



9/26/2018

Ending the Transaction

- **Verbal confirmation:**
 - “ Were we able to solve your problem today?”
- **Anything else they need help with?**
- **Contact info for follow up**
- **Thank them for coming in and for letting you know about the problem**



9/26/2018

Video

Customer Service Training: Replace the Danger Phrase:
"Our Policy..."

Effective Communications with Dan O'Connor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaRHTRWSOjE>

9/26/2018

What If They're Still Not Happy?

- **Getting a manager involved may be necessary**
- **Let the manager know what's going on before you take him to the customer**
- **Stay with him while waiting on the customer**
- **Stick with the decision!**



Last Thoughts

- **Ignore insulting language and accusations as best you can**
- **Don't get dragged into pointless arguments with the patron**



Safety

9/26/2018

"The safety of the people shall
be the highest law."

Marcus Tullius Cicero



9/26/2018

Signs of Physical Aggression

- **Fist clenching**
- **Violating personal space**
- **Excessive use of foul language**
- **Verbal assaults**



What To Do

- **Firmly inform the patron that abuse will not be tolerated:**
 - "I want to help you, but it's not okay for you to yell at me."
 - "I'm feeling threatened by your behavior. This is not helping us resolve things."
- **Keep eye contact**
- **Look for physical barriers**
- **Arms length**
- **Attempt to isolate the person from others in the room or area**
- **Document after the incident**



Safety in Numbers

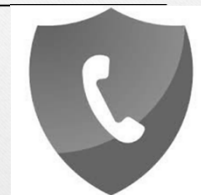
- **Get help from your coworkers**
- **Someone should stay with you**
- **Might need to call for help**



9/26/2018

Calling for Help

- **Call security and/or management right away**
- **911 is a final resort, but a valid one**



9/26/2018

Proactive Safety Measures


- If hiring security is not possible, designate a staff member as the “Building Security Officer,” in charge of public safety.
- Security is everyone’s business. Try to be alert and observant at all times.
- Maintain good relations with local law enforcement and encourage them to include the library on their “rounds,” especially in the evenings and on weekends.
- Create a building security policy and hold meetings to explain and discuss it with all staff members.
- Hold frequent in-service workshops, with drills and simulations, designed to reduce staff response time in emergencies.

9/26/2018

Being Prepared

9/26/2018


“To be prepared is half the victory”
Miguel de Cervantes



9/26/2018

Library Policy

- Read up on library policy
- Fines
- Fine limits
- Amount waived
- Check out periods
- Computer usage
- Ask your supervisor!
- Safety - Unacceptable behavior in library
- Everyone on the same page
- Rules equitably enforced



9/26/2018

Coworkers Are a Great Resource!

- **Watch experienced coworkers**
- **Ask questions**
- **Training sessions**
- **Cheat Sheet**
- **Analyze past interactions, both failed and successful**



9/26/2018

Scenarios

Angry Customers Suck Scenarios

Tampa Bay Library Consortium, April 2015

Andrew Sanderback of People~Connect Institute

and PCI Webinars

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CarlEwDrJQo&t=2368s>

- Patron Upset About Homeless Person
- Patron Upset About Blocked Account


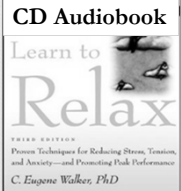
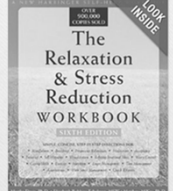


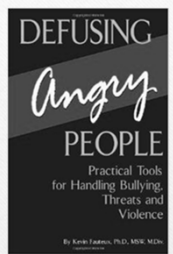
9/26/2018

Resources



9/26/2018

Resources



Read by the Author

Thank You!

KDLA
300 Coffee Tree Rd.
502-564-8306
800-928-7000, option #3
Phones: 8:30-4:30, Mon.-Fri.
Research Room: 9-4, Mon.-Fri.
KDLAReferenceDesk@ky.gov

