

# Using Customer Service Techniques to De-escalate

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# Customer Service During Crisis

Customer Service may be the prominent message for every business.

There is always the potential to deal with angry, hostile or otherwise non-complaint behavior on any given day.

Learning effective De-escalation techniques that can help us better deal with such disruptive behaviors—learning to effectively organize our thoughts and responding with composure—therefor becomes essential to safe and successful resolutions.

## Customer Service During Crisis

# Design a script for frontline staff

CRAFT LANGUAGE THAT WORKS FOR YOUR MUSEUM  
THAT EVERYONE CAN USE WHEN SPEAKING TO  
GUESTS. THE SAME LANGUAGE SHOULD BE ON ALL  
OUTGOING COMMUNICATIONS.

What topics  
to cover in  
script:

What can  
visitors expect  
to see when  
they come to  
your museum?

Masks are  
required  
indoors &  
outdoors

Any  
changes to  
their  
benefits

Additional  
offers and  
new things  
that are  
available.

Number of people  
allowed in groups

Protocols  
in place  
for their  
safety

Social Distancing  
is required



## Use this same language on phone, email and in person

- ▶ Explain the “WHY” early and often so they can’t say they were surprised by new rules, or changes in what your institution provides.
- ▶ Having an effective strategy in place before a situation occurs is more likely to be productive than those decisions made when on the receiving end of emotional outbursts.

## *Over Communicate before people visit your museum*

Start with proper messaging about procedural changes on your website, social media, entryways, all public facing means of communication should be repetitive, clear and concise.

Use every communication channel you have available to insure you reach as many people as possible.

Social  
Media

Email  
signature

Phone  
Messages  
and hold  
music

Website

Tickets  
and  
receipts

Signage

# Get them to “Opt In” or agree to the rules before they arrive

Before check out/ticket purchase:

By clicking this box you agree to following CDC recommended health and safety practices, including:

Wearing appropriate face coverings and maintaining physical distance.

Guests who fail to comply with these requirements will be asked to leave the museum.





## Membership-Rules and Benefits change?

Not all changes are  
bad!

Highlight the GOOD  
things that happened.

Welcome Back! Due to the generosity of our members we were able to accomplish many things during our closure.

- ▶ We've added hundreds of hours of free content online! You can access it 24 hours a day!
- ▶ We extended our member benefits by 4 months to cover the time we were closed.
- ▶ We (catalogued hundreds of artifacts, digitized our collection)
- ▶ We became Instagram famous.
- ▶ We helped countless school children with virtual field trips.
- ▶ We have improved our cleaning procedures
- ▶ Many other things! Discuss!

# Refunds-other language to include on receipts

## Tickets

- ▶ Tickets are timed entry. We will do our best to accommodate you if you are not on time but cannot guarantee admission if you arrive late.

## Membership

- ▶ Your generosity allows us to research, take care of artifacts, animals, maintain buildings....etc.
- ▶ Your member benefit (admission) has a value of \$-- (much less than the donated amount)

**BE A HERO  
WEAR A  
MASK**



Illinois  
Department of Commerce  
& Economic Opportunity  
illinois.gov

**RESTORE ILLINOIS**

A Public-Private Partnership to Build a Better Future

Once people arrive  
on site  
Use lots of signage!

- ▶ Reminder in Parking Lot
- ▶ Give them every possible opportunity to remember their mask.

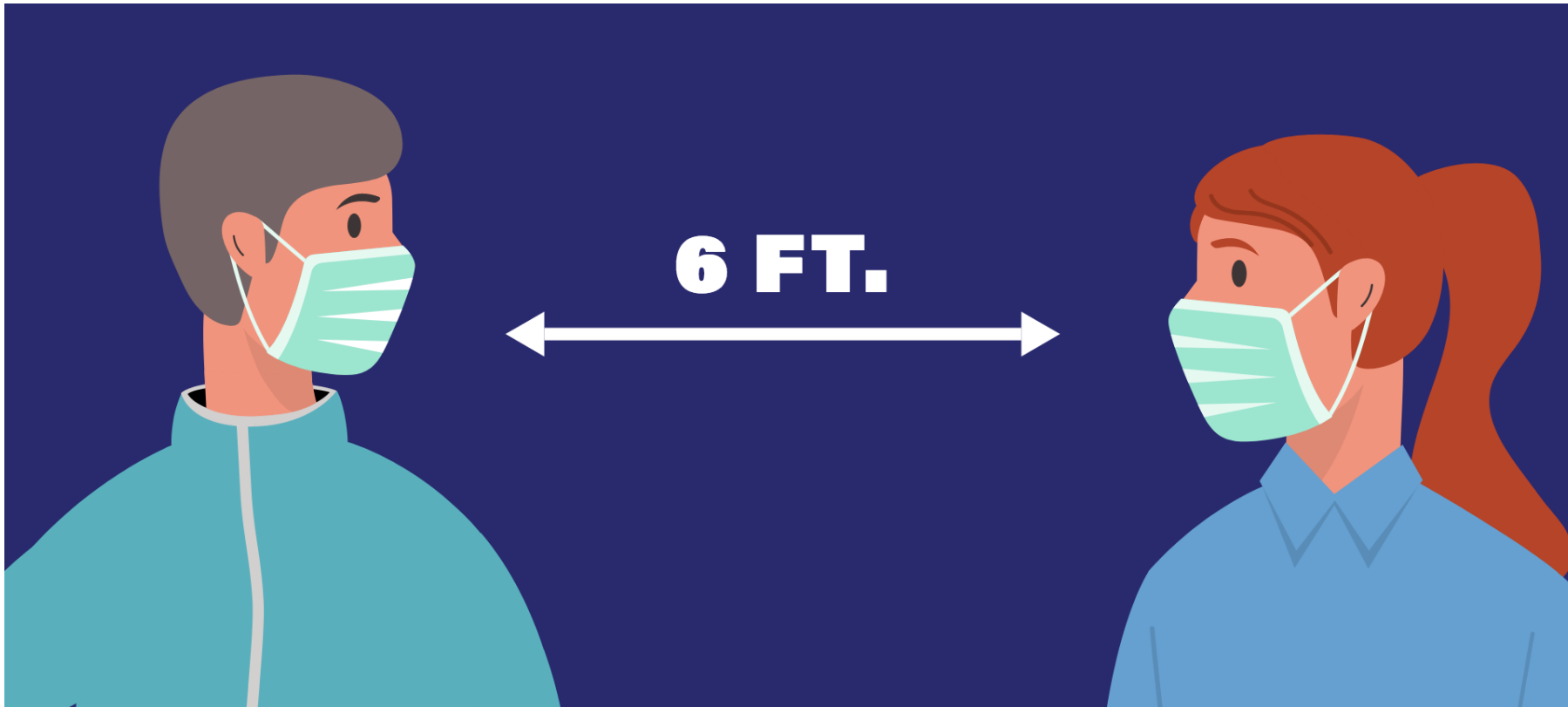
# FACE COVERINGS REQUIRED



BEFORE ENTERING PHASE 4

Signage may be more direct as one gets closer to the entrance.

- ▶ They should see several messages before arriving at the door about required masks, social distancing, etc.



## Explain the “WHY”

CDC Guidelines recommend...

Our [county, city] mandates...

For the safety of all visitors...

# What to do if someone is confrontational

## Put the situation in context

- ▶ This is not personal
- ▶ People are scared/confused. This causes frustration
- ▶ Looking for someone/something to blame
- ▶ No one likes to hear the word “No” and many limitations are being added to our lives right now
- ▶ It is human nature to identify a cause and focus of our anger

# What to do if someone is confrontational

## Listen actively

- ▶ Reflect back what you hear
- ▶ Time is your friend-give them time for their body chemistry to self regulate
- ▶ People want to be heard and understood
- ▶ Sometimes all you have to do is listen.
- ▶ Listening is a powerful tool, and sometimes all that is needed is to allow an angry person to vent their anger and frustration to someone who is actually listening to what they are saying.

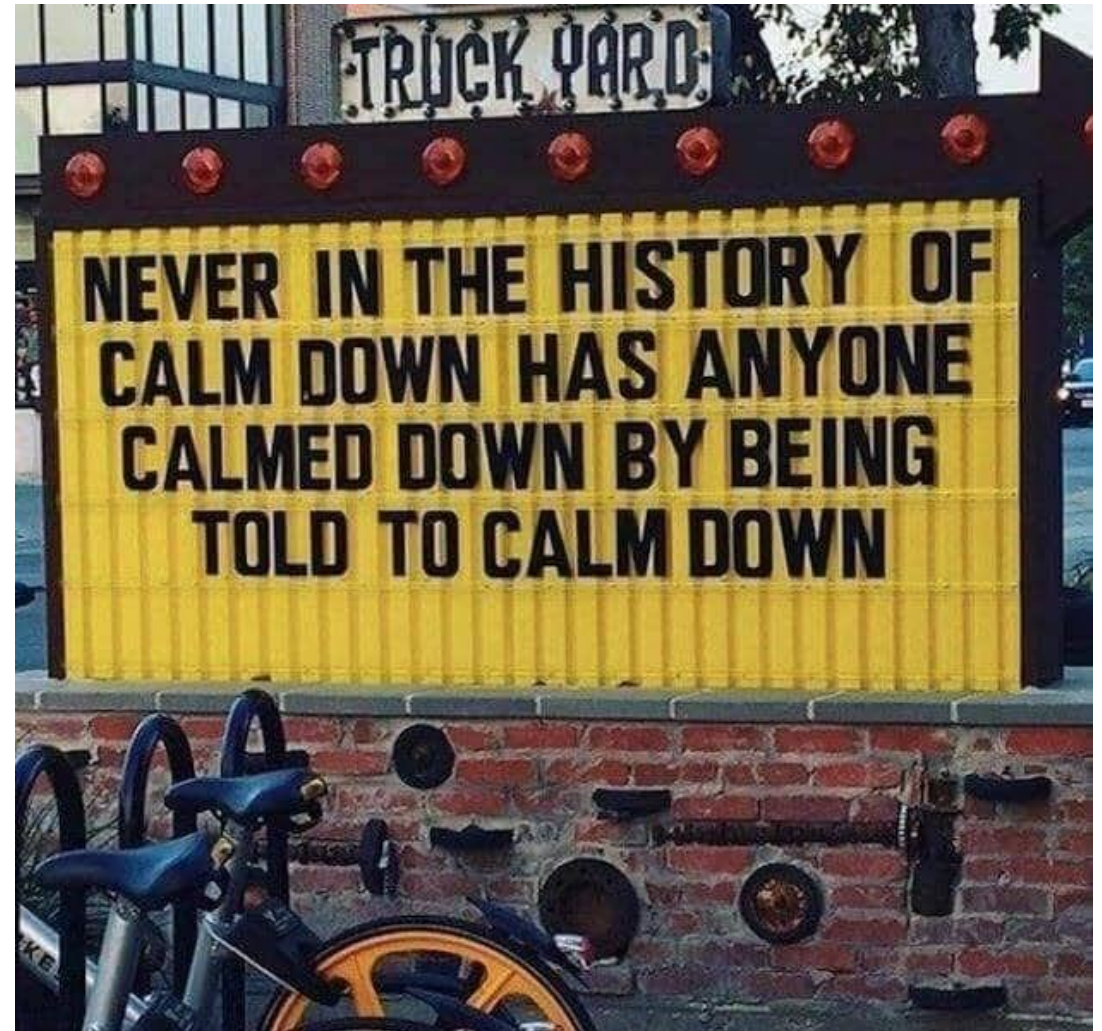
# Don't contradict people

Don't use clichés. The worst of these being, “Calm down.”

When someone is upset, and you tell them they are wrong, you may be seen as questioning their integrity or intellect.

Even if you know beyond all doubt that they're incorrect, explaining that will not facilitate de-escalation.

Be consistent. Consistency is courtesy. Make sure all frontline staff are behaving equitably to all who visit.





# Stay Calm

## Be intently focused on them

- ▶ Give them your undivided attention
- ▶ Listen to make them feel validated and important
- ▶ Speak slowly, calmly, and in a lower timbre.






## Avoid overreacting

- ▶ This is not personal.
- ▶ Remain calm, confident, rational, and professional
- ▶ You can't control their behavior
- ▶ You can only control your response.



## Preserve their dignity

- ▶ Respond in a respectful way.
- ▶ Acknowledge their frustration.
- ▶ Try to move the conversation out of public to save them embarrassment.
  - ▶ Having an audience can fuel anger.

A photograph showing a woman and a man in a meeting. The woman is on the left, wearing a grey sweater, and the man is on the right, wearing a dark shirt. Both are shouting with their mouths wide open. The woman is holding a white document. The background is a plain wall. The image is partially obscured by a dark grey overlay on the right side of the slide.

## Acknowledge the incident and its impact on the visitor.

Language like “I certainly understand being angry in situations like this.” communicates that you are taking their concern seriously and respectfully.

Denial, minimization, projecting blame elsewhere, or sweeping it under the rug only serve to incite further rage.

# Ask Questions

## Clarify their position

- ▶ Be curious
- ▶ Asking, rather than telling can be disarming
- ▶ Watch your tone
- ▶ Don't be argumentative

## *Useful Phrases*

*Tell me what happened.*

*How can we make this right for you?*

# Seek to Understand and Find Common Ground

## Align and Identify

- ▶ Identify and align with their message if you can.
- ▶ Or
- ▶ Express that you understand their position

## Useful Phrases

- ▶ *“I admire the fact that you really care about the quality of our work...”*
- ▶ *“I appreciate how important this is to you...”*

# Show Empathy

Empathy needs to be shown during conflict situations.

Even if you do not agree with the person's position, expressing that you understand why that person feels a particular way will help resolve the conflict.

# Control your tone and body language

Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice.  
Respect personal space.  
Allowing personal space tends to decrease a person's anxiety.



Be non-defensive and don't take anything personally.



Although difficult, try to reframe their aggressiveness toward yourself as "They need a target for their anger and must view me as strong enough to take it." "



Never condescend.  
Even if they're behaving poorly.  
This will only escalate a situation.



# Apologize when appropriate

- ▶ Accepting responsibility and sincerely apologizing for anything in the situation that is believed to be unjust can make a significant difference.



# Focus on the Future

Asking what we can do better in the future, engages guest in a problem-solving activity rather than fault-finding.

This creates hope for a resolution and a positive outcome to the situation.

# Seek to solve the problem together

Try to identify one reasonable next step; even if it is setting time for a meeting about their concern.

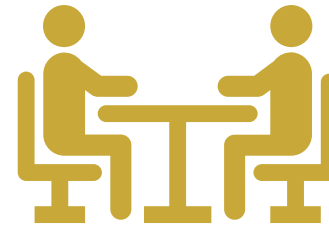
When indicated, accept responsibility for a mistake.

Taking a one-down position from a stance of strength can be very disarming.

# Know your limits



Understand that it's not always easy to solve problems alone.



Sometimes the most professional decision is to ask for help or let someone else take over, if that's an option.

# Be Safe

Keep yourself and others safe. This should always remain our primary objective.

Understanding basic de-escalation techniques that can help us better deal with such disruptive behaviors

Having the ability to effectively organize our thoughts and respond from a position of strength is essential to safer and more successful interactions

Improves customer service, promotes safety, and strengthens brands.

# Collaborate with others!



# Take care of frontline staff.





Treat everyone  
equitably!