

Tips to Help De-Escalate a Challenging Situation...



With the reopening of businesses, you may run into unpleasant or even hostile behavior from a customer regarding following certain guidelines such as physical distancing or wearing face coverings.

Consider these tips to help defuse a challenging situation in the safest way possible.

Keep it professional. Remember, their response is not aimed at you personally. Try not to judge or discount the other person's feelings.

Avoid overreacting. Remain calm and rational and keep your expressions, tone of voice and movements non-threatening.

Respect their personal space. Keep at least three feet away to help decrease the other person's anxiety and prevent escalation.

Be empathetic and refer to the need for safety. You might say something like, "I understand that keeping six feet away is hard to get used to (or that wearing a mask is uncomfortable)—but it's a good way to keep everybody safe from infection."

Give them a few minutes to let what you said sink in. Sometimes it takes people longer to think things through.

Enlist their help resolving the issue. Think of saying something like, "We appreciate your shopping with us. What can we do to resolve this issue to help you get what you need here?"

Do not answer challenging questions about your authority. Avoid getting into a power struggle—again, calmly stick to the issue at hand.

Set simple and enforceable limits. Offer choices and consequences. **If ignored, seek assistance from a manager.**

Talk to your supervisor or reach out to a licensed professional counselor for help building healthy communication skills.