



UNIT-3

Dealing with Difficult Customers

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

Unit 3

Deaing with Difficult Customers

Description	What They Do	What We Do
Abrupt		
Abusive		
Angry		
Arrogant		
Bully/Bossy		
Closed-Minded		

Dealing With Challenges Assertively

An Assertiveness Model

One difficulty that we can face in our customer interactions is the need to act assertively. Being assertive is not natural for some people. It can cause anxiety for the person responsible for customer service. However, sometimes customer demands really are outrageous or cannot be met. Sometimes they are rude and we must intervene assertively in order to resume a sense of calm and professionalism, either in the workplace or over the telephone.

Speaking assertively doesn't mean being aggressive, angry, or disrespectful. Assertive behavior means standing up for your personal rights, and acting in direct, honest, and appropriate ways that express your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs without violating others' rights.

There is an assertiveness formula that can help when we aren't sure how to tell others how we think or feel and how we would like them to behave. There are several variations to this formula, and the formula doesn't work in all situations, but it can be useful. When using the model, you will frame your conversation in the following way:

- When you (specific behavior)
- I feel (specific feelings)
- I would appreciate it if you (suggested change of behavior)

Example: "When you come into our restaurant and yell at me to get you a good seat, I feel like you expect me to ignore the lineup that is here in front of you, and I feel embarrassed. I'd like you to acknowledge me, say good morning, and then wait your turn like everyone else."

Think of situations where you could use this formula. Practice the wording to yourself, and then try it out in a fairly non-stressful situation and see how it works. Like most things, it gets easier with practice, and feels more natural with time.

You don't have to act assertively in every situation, and this formula isn't the only way to deal with difficult or stressful situations. For example, most of us hate being criticized, but rather than become defensive, or react assertively, allow the criticism to prick your curiosity. Ask questions like, "Why do you feel that way?" or, "What exactly do you mean when you say I'm not playing fair?"

Small Group Work

Develop some suggestions for dealing with each of these challenges.

You don't know the answer to the customer's question.

You have to say no to the customer's request.

Your computer is moving slowly and the customer is getting impatient.

The customer has unreasonable expectations.

The customer is skeptical about what you're telling him.

The customer is angry for no apparent reason.

The customer refuses to give you all the information you need.

Dealing With Difficult People

Getting to the Heart of the Matter

Despite our best efforts and our good use of customer service techniques, our attempts can seem to be for nothing. Behaviors we thought we had influenced positively (or corrected altogether) can regress.

For example, your manager might have spoken with an employee (not you, of course!) about some below-par behavior: perhaps they are always late for work, despite the fact that they are supposed to be answering phones and greeting visitors promptly at 9:00 a.m. The manager has spoken with the employee, and although this will lead to improved behavior for a few days, he always slips back to being late.

What's Missing?

They aren't getting to the heart of the problem. It's not enough to tell the individual that they are breaking the rules, or that a colleague has to cover their tasks when they are late. If it were enough, the behavior would stop.

You can learn a lesson from this that will help you help customers. Ask yourself what is really bothering *you* to get at what is really bothering *them*. Often the behavior touches a nerve that is much more personal. For example, if you do a favor for a friend, and then they demand more from you, you may feel that they are taking advantage of the relationship. That's at a much deeper level than just the rules that are being broken.

If the person is perpetually late because they do not set their alarm (and get up to it) because they really do not care about their job, or they feel underutilized, or they are being bullied by a co-worker and cannot drag themselves into the office, then we are getting at the root of the real problem.

The ability to peel an issue back to its core takes patience and precision. Sometimes we don't do this because it can take time to uncover the real problem. We can often find ourselves in too much of a hurry to do this properly. At other times, our emotions get involved and we make a decision that we really don't want to go there because we'll also have to deal with what is bothering us.

If you don't stop to think about the big picture, you'll end up either missing the problem or going after too many problems at once. To stop yourself from being over-involved, you must be able to state the problem in a single sentence. If you make it longer, your conversation will lose focus as soon as it starts.

The Three F's

To get to the heart of the problem, evaluate the 3 F's: **facts**, **frequency**, and **frustrated relationship**.

Facts

What are the facts of the issue? Create a list so that you do not get sidetracked while you plan your conversation. Don't drag in other stories or unrelated issues that have happened previously. If you are

talking to someone about a shipping problem, stick to that and leave quality or customer service issues out of it.

Frequency

Make sure you have a very clear history of the frequency of the issue and any patterns. For example, if they say they've called the customer service line "tons of times," get an exact number, with dates and times if possible.

Frustrated Relationship

If your real concern is about the relationship, but you only focus on the pattern, then you are not likely to get the change that you are aiming for. You have to discuss what is important to you in terms of the relationship. Remember: the ability to peel an issue back to its core takes patience and precision.

Types of Difficult People

Difficult people get themselves sorted into categories, just so we can develop a strategy for dealing with them. If you pick up almost any book on the subject, you will find descriptions of these people and some suggested ways of dealing with them.

**The Stubborn One
Description**

Solutions

**The Quiet One
Description**

Solutions

**The Jester
Description**

Solutions

**Yakety-Yak
Description**

Solutions

**Off Base
Description**

Solutions

**Bigger Issues
Description**

Solutions

**The Chatterbox
Description**

Solutions

**The Know-It-All
Description**

Solutions

**The Whiner
Description**

Solutions

Be a Problem Solver

Reducing Conflict

Conflict occurs when the emphasis is on the differences between people. The more divided you seem to be, the more differences there are. You get along better with people when the emphasis is on similarities. The difference between conflict with a friend and conflict with a difficult person is that with a friend, the conflict is tempered by things you have in common. Obviously, then, reducing differences is essential to your success in dealing with people you can't stand.

Here are some key tools for reducing conflict.

Blending

Blending is any behavior by which you reduce the differences between you and another person in order to meet them where they are and move to common ground. Blending increases your rapport with others. For example, have you ever been in conversation with someone when you unexpectedly discover that you both grew up in the same place? In that moment of discovery, differences were reduced and you felt closer.

Or you go to a restaurant with a friend, look at the menu, and ask, "What are you having?" Your question may have had little to do with menu choices and a lot to do with sending a signal of friendship.

You blend with people in many ways. You blend visibly with your facial expression, degree of animation, and body posture. You blend verbally with your voice, volume, and speed. And you blend conceptually with your words.

As natural as it is to blend with people you like or with people who share similar objectives, it is equally natural not to blend with people whom you perceive as difficult. The failure to blend has serious consequences, because without blending, the differences between you can become the basis for conflict.

Here are some examples of blending in a conflict situation.

Example 1

Customer: You people keep messing up my computer. I've had it in here twice since I bought it and it still isn't working.

Help Desk Technician: I'm sorry your computer still isn't working. When mine is not working, it's so frustrating. Waiting to have things fixed, especially when they are new, is even more frustrating. Let me try and help you today.

Here we demonstrate blending with the statement, "When mine is not working, it's so frustrating."

Example 2

Customer: I ordered those winter tires weeks ago! I can't believe that they aren't here yet. You must not have ordered them.

Helpful Tire Technician: I'm really sorry about the delay. Now that winter has arrived, I know I'd want my tires too. I can see here that they were ordered five weeks ago. Let me track the shipment and see where they are, or what the delay is.

Here we demonstrate blending with the statement, "Now that winter has arrived, I know I'd want my tires too."

Redirecting

Redirecting is any behavior by which you use rapport to change the outcome of your interactions and reach a more satisfactory outcome. Blending always precedes redirecting, whether you are listening to understand or speaking to be understood.

Identify Positive Intent

We can define positive intent as the good purpose meant to be served by a given communication or behavior. Our failure to recognize and appreciate positive intent can have lasting consequences.

A powerful key to bringing out the best in people at their worst is to give them the benefit of the doubt and assume a positive intent behind their problem behavior. Since your difficult person may be unaware of this, ask yourself what real purpose might be behind a person's communication or behavior and acknowledge it. For example, someone may be upset because they have not received the service they required. They may be difficult toward you and make personal remarks, but the positive intent behind their words is that they don't want special treatment, nor do they necessarily mean ill toward you. They just want to get what they asked for.

If you are not sure about that positive intent, be creative and make something up that could be true. Even if the intent you ascribe to the behavior isn't true, it will allow you to blend and develop rapport.

Identify Highly Valued Criteria

Criteria are the standards by which we measure whether ideas are good or not, the means for determining what a thing should be, and the benchmark by which people gauge whether they are for or against an idea. Criteria become especially important when differing ideas or points of view are being discussed.

Money, bonding, teamwork, or increasing knowledge are some of the things that may be important to us.

Whenever a discussion starts to degenerate into conflict, try to ascertain the reasons why people are for or against something. Then look for an idea or solution to the problem that blends these criteria together. That is another way to turn conflict into cooperation.

When Discussions Degenerate Into Conflict

When your problem person is talking:

- Blend visibly and audibly
- Backtrack or echo some of their own words
- Clarify their meaning, intent, and criteria
- Summarize what you've heard
- Confirm to find out if you got it right

While blending is an important skill to use when dealing with others, never blend with a hostile gesture directed at you. Don't meet aggression with aggression. If the other person raises their voice or shakes their fist, the key to blending is to underplay it assertively.

Your action plan for angry, aggressive people should include:

- Holding your ground and use deep breathing to stay calm.
- Interrupting the attack by repeating their name several times.
- Quickly backtracking or echoing their main point to show them you have been respectfully listening.
- Aiming for the bottom line by taking ownership and expressing the situation from your point of view.

Some more important points to keep in mind when you are dealing with difficult people:

- No one cooperates with anyone who seems to be against them. In human relations there is no middle ground. Unconsciously, people want to know, "Are you with me or against me?" That's one of the things you have in common with your difficult people.
- Express your truth in a way that builds someone up rather than tears them down.
- Use "I" language, because "you" statements can be accusatory.
- Be specific about the problem behavior.
- Show them how their behavior is self-defeating.
- Suggest new behaviors or options.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to being honest with someone is concern about hurting their feelings. But you do no one a favor by withholding information and allowing them to continue behaviors that don't work for them either.

Problem Solving in Six Steps

Step One: Define the Problem

- Discuss symptoms (especially if the problem is unknown).
- Discuss size (or seriousness) and impact (effect) of the problem.
- Determine the exact wording of the problem in question form.
- Define terms in the question.

Step Two: Research and Analyze the Problem

- List topics that need to be researched or discussed, including causes and past efforts to solve the problem.
- Research the problem if necessary.
- Discuss the research in an organized way.
- State the first topic to be discussed.
- Give everyone a chance to cite research or their opinion on the topic.
- Ask if anyone has anything further to say on the topic.
- Summarize the group's findings on the topic.
- State the next topic to be discussed and repeat the procedure until all topics have been discussed.

Step Three: Establish a Checklist of Criteria

- List all possible criteria and give everyone a chance to respond.
- Discuss each criterion.
- Reduce the list to a workable length by combining criteria where possible.
- Rank remaining criteria from most to least important.

Step Four: List Possible Alternatives

- Think outside the box. This means you have permission to get creative and find alternatives that are outside what we usually think of.
- These are just possibilities, so list anything that comes to mind.

Step Five: Evaluate Each Alternative

- Read through the list of alternatives, eliminating those that obviously do not meet the criteria agreed on in the third step.
- Reduce the list further by combining any similar alternatives.
- Discuss each remaining alternative's strengths and weaknesses, referring to research presented in the second step when necessary.
- Determine how well each alternative meets the criteria (according to the number of criteria and importance of each).
- Continue reducing the list until the best alternative (or alternatives) is reached.

Step Six: Select the Best Alternatives as Your Solution and Discuss How to Implement Them

- Outline the who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Make sure you consider all people involved.
- You may want to develop contingency plans.

Role Play**Situation One: Happy Burgers**

Jane is working at Happy Burgers alone one night. A customer comes in and orders a Super Smiley Meal. This customer then changes his mind and wants a Beamer Special. He then changes his mind again and wants a Smirky Sundae. He becomes frustrated because Jane can't get his order right.

Situation Two: Your Cash Bank

Sam walks into the bank one day to take money out of his account. The teller informs him that that account has been closed due to suspicion of criminal activity. Sam becomes very upset and demands to speak to the supervisor, who is not in.

Situation Three: Acme Widgets Inc.

On her way to work, Erin stops in at Acme Widgets to pick up her company's order. She is told that their order hasn't been received and will need to be placed again. This is the fourth time that this has happened this year and Erin is not happy.

Situation Four: Fresh Veggies

Tom is planning a big birthday dinner and goes to Fresh Veggies to get everything he needs. He's particularly excited about the fresh berries that the store's flyer promised. However, when he arrives at the store, there are none to be found. A cashier tells him they are out of stock.

Situation Five: Leaky Pipes

Jacob calls in a plumber to fix his leaky bathtub. He goes downstairs to let the plumber do his work. He returns to the bathroom to find the plumber asleep in the bathtub and the work uncompleted.

Situation Six: We Fix It

Joan calls technical support one evening to fix a recurring problem with her computer. She is told that the computer is supposed to do this and there is nothing they can do. Naturally, she is not very happy about this.

Customer Problem Solving

The Process

We looked at a process to help us solve problems in general. Now, let's look a specific process that we can use to resolve a customer's problem.

1. Express respect
2. Listen to understand
3. Uncover their expectations
4. Repeat the specifics of their problem
5. Look for possible solutions
6. Take action and follow through
7. Double check for satisfaction

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The Recovery Process

Once a customer problem is identified, the service recovery process should begin. Not all of the six steps described below are needed for all customers. Use what you know about your products and services, and what you can discover about your customers' problems, to customize your actions to the specific situation. One size doesn't fit all.

You should always take immediate steps to solve problems. The sense of urgency you bring to the problem solving tells your customers that recovery is important to you and to your organization.

Apologize.

It doesn't matter who is at fault. Customers want someone who will acknowledge that a problem occurred and show concern.

Listen and empathize.

Treat your customers in a way that shows you care about them as well as about their problem. People have feelings and emotions. They want the personal side of the transaction acknowledged.

Fix the problem quickly and fairly.

A “fair fix” is one that’s delivered with a sense of professional concern. At the end of the day, customers want what they expected to receive in the first place. The sooner, the better.

Offer atonement.

It’s not uncommon for dissatisfied customers to feel injured or put out by a service breakdown. Often they will look to you to provide some value-added gesture that says, in a manner appropriate to the problem, “I want to make it up to you.”

Keep your promises.

Service recovery is needed because a customer believes a service promise has been broken. During the recovery process, you will often make new promises. When you do, be realistic about what you can and can’t deliver.

Follow up.

You can add a pleasant extra to the recovery sequence by following up a few hours, days, or weeks later to make sure things really were resolved to your customer’s satisfaction. Don’t assume you’ve fixed the problem. Check to be sure.

The Fifth Critical Element – Measure It

Tools to Use

Wouldn’t it be great if all of our customers were happy and we didn’t have to deal with complaints or problems? The only way to know what’s really going right and wrong is to measure regularly. When we rely on our memories, we can let a lot of things slip away.

Critical Evaluation

You can measure a particular service or product in great detail. Follow up with customers and ask what’s working, what can be improved, and how much they like it. Also ask what could be done differently to develop options. Then assess the advantages and disadvantages to determine whether it makes sense to make changes.

Informal Surveys

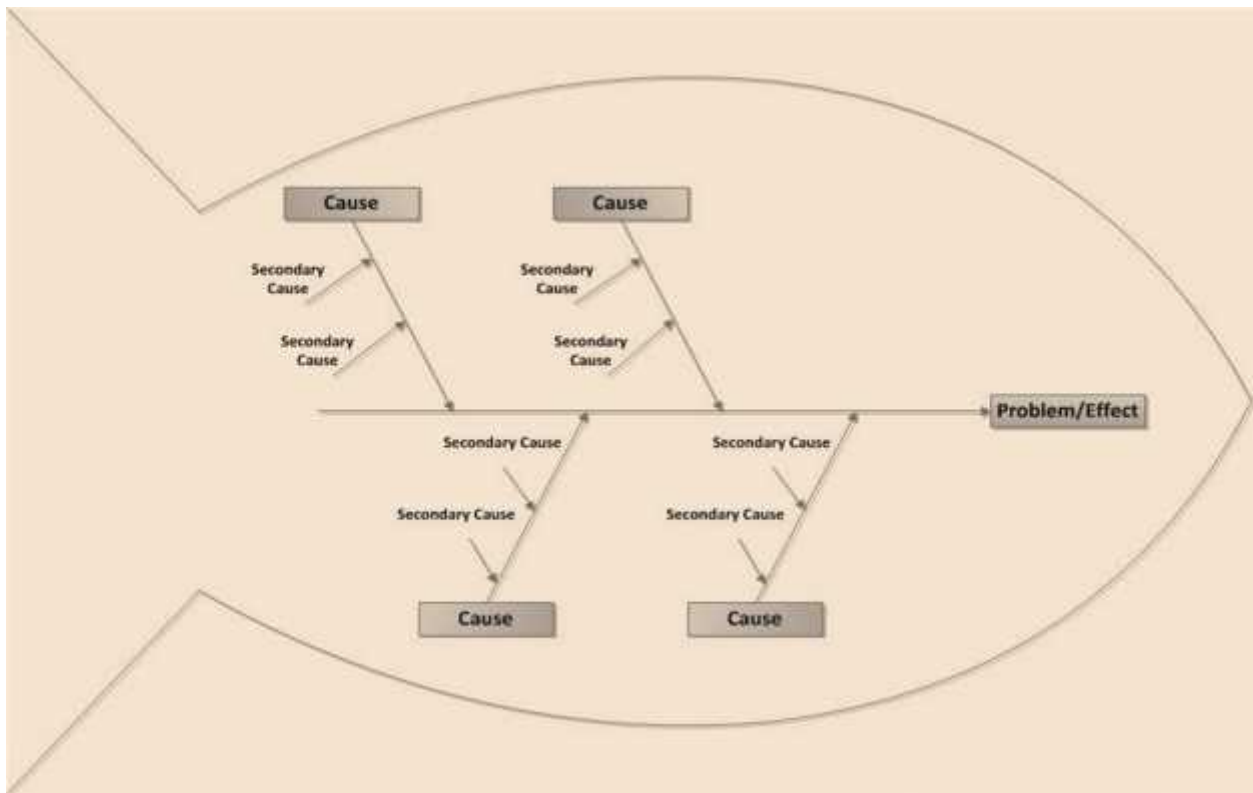
Ask your customers what they want. Ask them how you are doing. If you ask the same questions from one year to the next, you can compare periods of time. Offer your customers a gift to thank them for participating.

Focus Groups

These usually have eight to ten participants who are pre-screened for subject matter experience. During the focus group, a moderator discusses specific issues with participants. These are very structured sessions, and after group discussion, the moderator produces the results in a report format. Don't try this if you haven't participated in one or done sufficient research into focus group structure, questioning, and analysis. If done well, expect to get lots of detailed feedback and to have a very good understanding of what the group thinks.

Fishbone (Cause and Effect, or Root Cause)

This method is used to identify the causes of a problem. Each major bone of the fish has a heading that is a cause of the problem, such as Equipment, Systems, Processes, People, and Environment. The head of the fish is the problem. This method allows participants to discuss the problem and categorize possible reasons under the headings. Each heading is then examined to determine if it is causing a symptom until the root cause is determined. The fish bone is a way to combine brainstorming with a visual representation that organizes the information at the same time.



Brainstorming

Everyone in the group makes suggestions and shares ideas. All ideas are considered. Ground rules establish that there are no poor or stupid ideas. No critical comments are allowed during the brainstorming activity.

The point is that although an individual idea may not be feasible, someone might use that idea and expand on it to create a fantastic idea.

Benchmarking

See how others do what you do and use their ideas if they are applicable. Sometimes you can simply ask and they will let you know how they do things. Otherwise, you will have to do some research, or measure yourself at a particular time and set your benchmarks from there. Benchmarking is helpful whether you are looking at systems, processes, or methods.

Measurement in Practice

Suggest the best measurement technique to solve the problem.

Situation One

Happy customers will return to our company again. How will we know our customers are happy with our products and services?

Situation Two

We introduced a new product six months ago. It is selling well; we sold 90% of the first run within 90 days, but those are the last statistics gathered. However, production costs are increasing, which will narrow our profit margin. Do we continue to produce and sell this product?

Situation Three

Our call center staff tells us that callers are complaining because they have to wait on hold for too long before speaking to a representative.

Situation Four

Our front counter staff has been asked by customers to add chairs to the waiting area so that people can sit and wait instead of standing in line. The staff has also been told on “many occasions” that the parking lot access is poor, with concrete steps and uneven pavement.

Situation Five

In previous years, our super salad was our best seller, accounting for about 65% of our lunch and supper time sales. Now it has dropped to about 45%. Do we need to change our menu? Or should we come up with something different?

The Sixth Critical Element – Reinforce It

Reinforcement Techniques

Once an organization decides how they are approaching customer service and makes a commitment to their processes, they must live up to the expectations that they have subscribed to. Just as important, those practices must be reinforced.

If you are receiving pay (hourly, salary, or by commission), then you are getting paid to do your job, and that is often reinforcement enough to deliver what is expected. Sometimes companies will put enhanced reinforcement in place by doing things such as:

- Having customers complete a survey about the service they received
- Having supervisors observe when we do good work and provide some kind of recognition
- Celebrating when targets are met, like an increase in returning customers

All of these activities are a way to reinforce our commitment to providing excellent customer service. They reflect the relationships we build within the organization and with our customer base.

Developing and Maintaining Relationships

Relationships are the key to a functional, positive team. There are several parts involved when developing and maintaining relationships with your team members.

Clear Expectations

Every partner in a relationship has certain expectations of other partners. Most expectations remain unspoken until they have been violated. One way to develop and maintain effective relationships is to make your expectations of one another clear.

Recognizing the Reciprocal Quality of Relationships

We can use the reciprocal nature of our relationship with others to establish interpersonal cooperation and trust. Remember two clichés: “It’s a two-way street,” and, “You only get back what you give.”

Understanding Different Communication Styles

We can communicate more successfully with others and establish more meaningful relationships if we not only understand others' styles, but can also attune our styles to theirs.

Recognizing the Power of Your Behavior

The secret to success is not very hard to figure out. The better you are at connecting with other people, the better the quality of your life. Is there a natural talent for getting along with people or is it something we can learn? The truth is that it’s a bit of both.

Connecting with other people brings infinite rewards. Connecting is what our ancestors were doing thousands of years ago when they gathered around the fire to eat woolly mammoth steaks.

Likeability Works

No matter what you do or where you live, the quality of your attitude determines the quality of your relationships—not to mention just about everything else in your life. The good news is that attitudes are yours to select. And if you are free to choose any one you please, why not choose a really useful attitude?

In face-to-face situations, your attitude precedes you. It is the central force in your life—it controls the quality and appearance of everything you do.

Power Talk

Phrases for Customer Service Success

Ten Most Helpful Phrases

1. I care.
2. I’d like to understand. Help me to understand.

3. How are things with you?
4. Let's define the problem.
5. This is what I heard you say.
6. Let me put this another way.
7. How can I help you? Can I do anything to help?
8. What would you do?
9. Thank you.
10. Silence, with concern.

Ten Least Helpful Phrases

1. You shouldn't feel that way.
2. Why did you do/say that?
3. That's not important.
4. I know exactly how you feel.
5. I know what you are going to say.
6. How come you're not as good as...?
7. Do you want to know what I think? Here's what you should do.
8. I told you so.
9. Any phrase that contains the words always, never, all the time, everyone or permanently.
10. Silence without concern/indifference.

How to Feel Powerful in Your Position

What comes out of our mouths can strengthen our relationships with our customers, or weaken our place in their heart. Along with our knowledge, skills, abilities, and a willingness to provide excellent customer service, the words we use with our customers are so powerful that they can build or destroy relationships.

Power Talk examples:

- "That may be so, but...." can be changed to "That may be so, and..."
- Instead of "I disagree," how about, "I understand. Let's consider another viewpoint."
- Change, "I think I got that," to, "Let's verify that."
- Change, "I'm so sorry, I'm afraid I've forgotten your name," to, "Hello I'm....."

Whether at work or in your personal life, people who make things happen learn how to phrase their words so they are encouraging and decisive. We can project positive expectations, both in ourselves and in others, by remembering some basics of good communication.

Project Positive Expectations

If you're going to say...	Try instead...
I'll have to	I'll be glad to
I'll try	I will
I'd hate to	I want to
I can't	I haven't yet, and I can
If you can	When will you
This is a terrible problem	This is a challenging opportunity
I'm never any good at ...	I'm improving at....
I'll spend time/money	I'll invest time and money
That's impossible	That can be done

Give Credit Where It's Due

If you're going to say...	Try instead...
I really just got lucky	I planned well and worked hard
I've never done this before	This is an opportunity to learn
I'm getting too old	I feel good. I have lots of experience.
They did a good job	You did a good job!

Rebound from Failure

If you're going to say...	Try instead...
I failed	I learned
I can see negative consequences	I can see positive consequences
I'm a loser	I'm a winner

Accept Responsibility	
If you're going to say...	Try instead...
They make me so mad	I feel mad when
I don't have enough time	I can manage my time
It's the other guy's fault	It's my responsibility
Someone else will do it	I will take care of it myself
I can't change things	I choose to make the best of what is

Dealing With Stress

Stress can be positive and negative, but too much negative stress can take a toll on our mental and physical health. When we channel the energy from stress in positive ways, we can accomplish things that we never imagined. When a lot of negative stress builds up, we can have trouble getting our work done, feel unusually tired, and lose our usual motivation. If stress seems to be wearing you down and you are having trouble bouncing back, you may need to consult your doctor. For the usual day to day stressors that we encounter, here are some quick, easy ways you can lower your stress levels quickly.

Deep Breathing

Loosen your clothes, close your eyes, mentally relax your body, and take ten or more deep breaths. Your goal is to breathe into the bottom of your lungs (where the oxygen is readily absorbed), not the usual upper lung breathing we do. Put your hand on your stomach and feel it move as you breathe in in order to make sure you are getting the air in good and deep. We call this **diaphragmatic breathing** because you are using your diaphragm muscle to breathe. When people are experiencing anxiety they are most often breathing into the upper area of their lungs rather than the bottom.

Each time you exhale, count silently: “one,” after the first breath, “two,” after the second breath, etc., up to at least ten. If you lose count, or find yourself working on thoughts as they pass through your mind, start your count over again. When you are finished, you should feel more calm and relaxed. (Your blood pressure will go down temporarily, too.) If you're in a meeting, on the phone, or dealing with a customer, count in your head.

Visualize

Use positive imagery to boost your mood and enhance your visible performance. In your mind, picture a place that you love. Feel the sunshine on your face, or the breeze on your skin. See the things that you enjoy in great detail. If you are getting ready for a presentation or an interview, visualize yourself

performing it perfectly, so that when you get to the event your mind thinks you've done it before. (This is a technique used by athletes and peak performance coaches.)

Music

Music has the power to soothe or to give us energy. It actually has healing power, too. Find a type of music that relaxes you, and play it when you need to calm down. When you feel tired and listless, play some rousing music (rather than relying on caffeine or other stimulants) to give you a pick-up.

Acupressure and Massage

Holding a fingertip to the point of most pain or tension and pressing very hard into the offending muscle for up to a minute can avert a headache or relieve tension. Have a friend or spouse learn how to do massage therapy and/or acupressure on tense muscles, since daily treatment is better than once or twice a month.

Laughter

Laughter is the best medicine of all. A good belly laugh can lower blood pressure, slow your adrenaline, and reverse the stomach acid that comes with negative responses. Be on the lookout for jokes and cartoons you can share with family and friends. For a smaller dose, find a cartoon or picture that always makes you smile and post it near your desk. (Just make sure it's appropriate for all audiences!)

Replace Worry with Problem Solving

Focus on what you can do, and then go ahead and do it. Chronic worriers tend to focus on what they cannot do, what should be happening, or how things are going wrong. Replace worry with problem solving so that you identify where you can step in. Then, stop waiting for the perfect time and just get on and do it.

Meditation

The purpose of meditation is to free your mind from its normal busy activities. There are several different techniques that can be used. Some people use a word as a focal point (a mantra), while others suggest you focus on a color, your breathing, an abstract concept, or an object.

Here is a good process for meditation. Sit quietly with your eyes closed and relax all your muscles from head to toe. Become aware of your breathing. Breathe through your nose easily and naturally, in and out... Begin to silently repeat the word you have chosen or focus on the color you have chosen. In and out... Let distracting thoughts pass through your mind. Continue doing this for 15 to 20 minutes.

Resilience

Each stressful experience that you have prepares you to deal with one in the future. The more resilient you become, the less of an impact each of these events has on your mind and body. Many of us go to great

lengths to avoid stress, and although avoidance initially feels like you are doing alright, the reality is that stressful things come up in our life all the time. The better we are at handling them, the more resilient we become, and the healthier we can be.

Each stressful experience can lead us into a cycle of confusion and even anguish. If we stay with those feelings, however, things actually get worse. But if we make a decision to deal with those circumstances by problem solving and adapting, we develop resilience. This means that we can enjoy life more and be more successful.

As you encounter more stressors in life (and we all do), we can rely on the experience we've had in dealing with negative circumstances in order to cope. We get more effective at managing that cycle of confusion and anguish, problem solving, adapting, and moving on.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *How to Deal with Difficult Customers, By Dave Anderson, 2013*
- ✓ *Dealing with Difficult Customers, By Roy Lilley, 2014*