Act II Effective Communication Strategies

Scene 2. Defusing Conversations with Empathy

Objectives for this scene

Objectives

- Classify characteristics of empathy
- Demonstrate empathy as a strategy to defuse emotional customer interaction

Purpose and importance of concepts

WHY

- Fosters caring towards customers
- Generates productive relationships
- Increases trust and cooperation
- Builds bridges between people
- Prevents emotional issues
- Makes it easier to solve problems

WHAT: representing the skills.

Feelings About the Conversation

- Upset, stressed out longer than the conversation lasted
- Physical signs of increased breathing or tensed body
- Sense of overwhelming loss of control

Have you ever found yourself reacting this way?

- Return the comments with angry statements
- Feeling intimidated
- Trying to end the conversation as fast as possible so the customer leaves

NOW WHAT: Framing the skills

Learning the skills

FACTS and FEELINGS

Communicating with Angry Customers

- Even if our systems and procedures are effective and our communication skills are excellent, customers will get angry.
- Often we are making decisions about someone's livelihood, home, financial resources, or well-being– things that can dramatically effect a person.
- We cannot always say yes to our customer and they are not always right. These circumstances can lead to frustrated and angry customers.

A customer can become **frustrated** if they don't have the **right information**.

A customer can become **frustrated** when they believe that we have not provided **Information** or the **answer** they want to hear.

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Steps to Defuse

- Stop and think
- Understand the problem with **active listening**
- **Paraphrase** the customer's statement
- Involve the customer to solve the problem by **gathering data objectively**
- Fix the problem and offer **clear expectations**
- Or offer alternate solution to meet customer needs
- Follow up to increase **customer satisfaction**

Methods for Dealing with Angry Customers

- Showing empathy
- Using “I” statements
- State your desire to help the customer
- Listen carefully
- Maintain eye contact
- Pay close attention, but do not fake attention
- Try to slow the pace of the conversation
- Take a few notes to remember important facts
- Think carefully before you respond
- Use your voice to express interest and warmth

Methods for Dealing with Angry Customers

- Agree with the customer as often as you can
- Avoid interrupting or finishing a customer's sentence
- Avoid taking anger personally and resist emotion to fight back
- Try to be aware of your biases and prejudices; avoid letting them get in the way of serving a customer
- Look for ways to compromise, if possible
- Look for alternative solutions, if possible

Empathy Supports Communication Skills

- When you empathize with a customer, you demonstrate that you are listening and understand the problem or concern. This is a crucial part of reaching a solution or meeting customer needs. This technique is especially important if you are addressing a sensitive or difficult situation.

Empathy

- Recognize and acknowledge the customer's **feelings** based on **facts**
- Building block for relationship
- Reduces conflict with understanding
- Includes other person's perspective

Characteristics of Empathy

Question 1 of 1

Point Value: 10

Please indicate by selecting TRUE which of the statements demonstrate empathy.

- ☐ Don't be concerned about not qualifying, we'll find an alternative.
- ☐ It must be disappointing to learn that you don't qualify.
- ☐ I am sorry that you have been inconvenienced by the delay.
- ☐ I can hear that you are frustrated about the delay.
- ☐ It sounds like you are happy about the decision to relocate.

PROPERTIES

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Sympathy

- Indicates how YOU feel
- **Sympathy**: I am sorry for your loss. What can I do to help you during this difficult time?
- **Empathy:** I can see that you are feeling **sad** about the **loss** of your grandmother.
- **Sympathy:** A doctor may feel sympathy and understands a patient's illness and try to alleviate the pain, but she may not feel his/her distress and pain.
- **Empathy:** A cancer support group can empathize with the radiation therapy of a member and understand his/her fear because they have experienced the procedure as well.

Empathy or Sympathy

Question 1 of 1

Point Value: 10

An elderly lady calls city hall because she has broken her leg and cannot get to the bank to cash her pension check to pay her water bill on time. The city has given her notice that the water will be shut off in a few days. After hearing her concerns, you can say:

I just feel terrible about your predicament. This must be a pretty difficult time for you.	Empathy
It must be frustrating not to be able to get to the bank because of your broken leg. Let's see if we can work out a solution for you.	Sympathy

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Testing the skills

Go to the “Next Question”

SO WHAT:

Applying the skills

Results Page, click on “I’m done, Take Me Back”

Communication Strategies

Question 1 of 1

Point Value: 10

Please match the style and behavior with the communication strategy that best demonstrates courtesy and respect to that group.

Outgoing, friendly	Don't push for a decision, give them time
Reserved, quiet	Speak with energy, be careful not to focus soley on the process
Productive, in a hurry	Be knowledgeable, accurate and prepared
Precise, perfection	Set realistic expectations, give thorough information
Cautious, slow to make	Ask clarifying questions, listen

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