

Delivering Effective Customer Service While Keeping Library Staff and Patrons Safe in the New Normal

Presented for LibraryLinkNJ

The New Jersey Library Cooperative

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OUR AGENDA

Take what you need, from the materials, me, your co-workers and bosses. Apply the tools as you need to.

What are the challenges we face as we return from a Work From Home status to back to working in and around our library buildings?

What safety and security challenges do we face in the wake of more national and local protests in our parks, public spaces, and near our government buildings?

How can library managers and supervisors monitor the work culture for conflict, communication, and morale issues?

How to respectfully request that patrons and other visitors follow Covid-19 safety protocols.

OUR AGENDA

How do we agree to disagree and have patience and empathy with our patrons or co-workers who have strong feelings about national issues that differ from ours?

Safety and security protocols coming and going and while working in publicly-accessed buildings?

Personal and professional stress management?

What does the future hold for government providers and what new ways can we provide service to patrons?

ON-GOING MASK RULES

Many states have mandated face masks:

“inside of, or in line to enter any indoor public space; obtaining healthcare services; driving or riding in public or rideshare transportation; while outdoors and unable to maintain six feet distance from others.”

“May not be required at restaurants with six-foot social distance protocols (staff excluded), or dining outdoors, exercising outdoors, all while using social distance.”

ON-GOING MASK RULES

“Employees must wear face coverings while performing work indoors or off-site;

While interacting with any member of the public;

Working in a space visited by the public, even if no members of the public are there;

Working where food is made or distributed;

Working or walking in common areas, hallways, stairways, elevators, parking areas;

In any room or enclosed area where social distancing is not possible.”

According to a SHRM.org article from June 24, 2020:

“Employers can insist that workers and visitors to their premises wear masks and can bar anyone who refuses.”

“You have the right to exclude them if they do not comply with your standards,” said labor law attorney Bryan Hawkins, from Stoel Rives in Sacramento, provided businesses accommodate those who claim they cannot wear masks due to a disability. “The goal is to alleviate anxiety among employees and customers.”

“California Localities Take Different Approaches as State Reopens”
by June Bell

OUR GOALS

Keep all library employees safe, even with varying degrees of patron compliance.

Remind library staff and the patrons about “The (same as before) Coronavirus Rules.” (Use parking lot signage too.)

Maintain or regain employee and public trust.

Help all library employees demonstrate patience, empathy, flexibility and support, starting with each other and then the public.

Remember the Lifeguard Model.



CHALLENGING SCENARIOS

Patrons or others refuse to wear a face covering and try to gain entry into a public building.

Patrons refuse to follow social distance guidelines.

Employees refuse to serve patrons or others who make entry with no face coverings.

Patrons wearing face coverings challenge or argue with other patrons who won't.

No supervisors, security guards, or police are present.

Employees feel fearful working near uncovered patrons or who will not follow social distance guidelines.

Patrons who want to bait staff into political debates.

SOME EARLY QUESTIONS

What is the “business impact” at our library?

Do we rationalize unacceptable behavior?

Is our goal “peace” or “justice”?

What should asking for help mean?

How do we align with our patrons?

Do your job or do your job safely?

How do we truly show empathy?

If there are no consequences. . . ?

When can we disengage?

Assertiveness and acting skills? Patience? Praise?

WHO COMES TO OUR LIBRARIES?

People of all ages; their family members or relatives.

Information seekers, readers, browsers, students.

Vendors and contractors; officials; attorneys; electeds.

People with an agenda; “justice seekers”; 1A videos.

People who are angry or in physical or emotional pain.

Entitled people, who don't care about our Code of Conduct or your requests to comply.

People with temporary or chronic homelessness.

Mentally ill people.

Substance abusing people.

People with language barriers.

REMINDERS FOR SUPERVISORS

Tell staff not touch patrons for any reason other than self-defense. Don't have staff "escort" them out of the building.

Monitor the employee culture and step in to explain new or changing policies to all sides.

Use praise for staff; step into help them do parts of their job; boost morale.

Thank patrons for their patience and compliance.

Rehearse a "standard speech" in your mind, that you may have to say over and over to angry patrons.

Intervene with arguing patrons and use separation, space, requests to move away, and distance.

REMINDERS FOR SUPERVISORS

Keep the optics in mind. Your actions and the actions and words of your staff may be recorded, analyzed, and criticized by various “1A groups” or the media.

Don't allow staff to argue about political beliefs and who is “right or wrong” in these situations. They need to stay, neutral, polite, and service-oriented.

Consider your security options beyond just calling the Police or Sheriff. Limit their involvement to the most serious situations involving violence or injury.

Focus on your short-term and long-term goals: safety, peace, compliance, service to all, and continued business operations.

REMINDERS FOR STAFF

Realize much of what you do in a public building may get photographed, recorded, or taped by certain patrons or the media. Do not lose your temper.

Allow patrons to vent. Don't take it personally. They are mostly mad or frustrated at the situations and who you represent, not who you are personally.

Validate their concerns by using neutral or empathy-building statements: "I hear you. I can see you're upset. There are some things I can do to help you."

SOME SERVICE TOOLS

Everyone wants to show they are in control of their lives. Don't lecture or embarrass them, especially in front of others. Help patrons save face.

Check your body language and tone for empathy and patience. Don't get frustrated or condescending.

Recognize the concept of on-going Moments of Truth.

Use Service Blueprints to fix reoccurring problems that irritate patrons (and staff).

Just Another Day for you; Important Day for the Patron.

Just Another Service Interaction for You; Significant Service Interaction for the Patron

Use the G.R.E.A.T. service tool.

G.R.E.A.T. CUSTOMER CARE

Greet the patron with eye contact.

Reassure the patron as to your interest in helping.

Explain what you will do to or for the patron.

Act accordingly, using your skills, policies, or protocols.

Thank the patron for his or her cooperation.

INTRODUCE / EXPLAIN / ASK

Introduce yourself. Try to get the patron's name.

Explain:

“I noticed that”

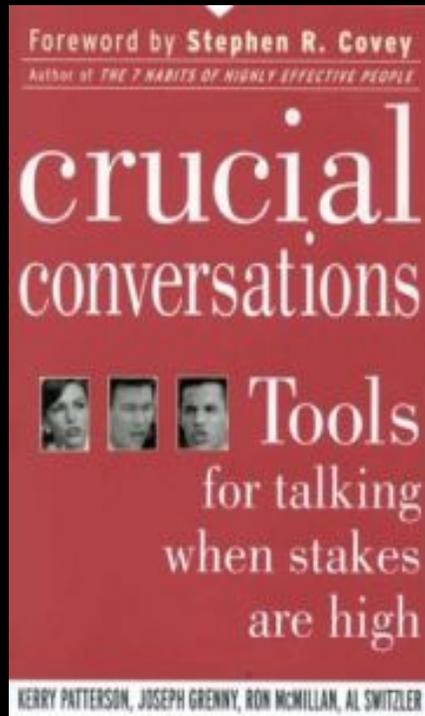
“The reason I'm here is”

“I'm sure you already know this, but”

Ask: “I need to ask you to” or “Could you do more of this or less of that?”

Crucial Conversations

by Patterson, Grenny et al. (2002, McGraw-Hill)



Opinions vary.

Stakes are high.

Emotions run strong.

DR. GEORGE THOMPSON'S VERBAL JUDO™

Listen actively

Empathize

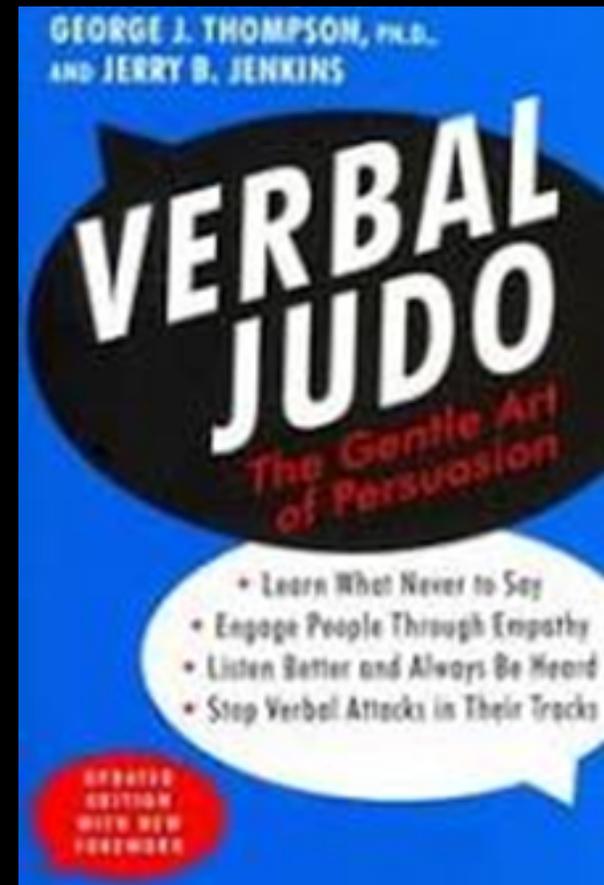
Ask questions

Paraphrase

Seek solutions

V ≠ J

Validate ≠ Don't Justify



PHRASES THAT MAY WORK:

“You can’t do that if you want to stay here.”

“Our insurance won’t allow that.”

“Let’s talk about what I can do for you.”

“I know you want some information about what’s happening.”

“I can see you’re upset.”

“I want to give you an update or tell you about the waiting time.”

“I’m sorry. I’m not trying to make you mad.”

“You could be right.”

“Please help me do my job for your safety.”

“I know you’re not trying to scare the other people here.”

GETTING ALONG IN THE OFFICE



What is “cubicle/workspace etiquette”? Always ask; never assume. Agree on mutual privacy.

What about cell and speaker phones, spicy foods, scents, music, gum, cursing, and loud voices?

What is the solution for dealing with people that drive us crazy at work?:

Direct, Non-Personal, Immediate, Feedback

PERSONAL PROTECTION

Stay in **Condition Yellow**. Slow down your breathing.

Pay attention to personal space; use an offset stance.

Use careful eye contact.

Change the ratios of confrontation.

Develop and memorize your code words. (“Mr. Armstrong”)

Use proxemic barriers or invite the person to sit with you.

Use physical movement and the Assertive Whisper.

Use “Secret Service Hands.”

PROFESSIONAL STRESSMAKERS

Workload / Work schedule.

Interactions with co-workers, bosses,
patrons, others.

Harassment, feeling bullied.

Burnout, de-motivated.

E-mails, calls, meetings.

Can't say no?

PERSONAL STRESSMAKERS

Family and In-Laws

Spouse / Partner

Kids

Conflicts

Money and Bills

Car and Home Repairs

Illnesses and Pain

Toxic "friends"

Depression

EAP SERVICES

Marital or relationship problems

Grief from a death or loss

Blended families

Substance abuse

Financial problems

Legal problems

Gambling addictions

Medical problems

Elder care support

Depression or mental health concerns

Suicidal thoughts

Pet care or loss

Personal stressors

Work stressors

Smoking cessation

WHY WON'T EMPLOYEES USE EAP SERVICES?

Stigma about reaching out for help.

Fear of peers or bosses finding out.

Concerns about confidentiality.

Reporting concerns.

Don't know how to access the resource.

No knowledge of the existence.

OTHER RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP EMPLOYEES COPE . . .

Clinical referral from MD or healthcare plan.

Referral from a trusted friend.

Pastoral counseling.

Online therapy via Zoom?

Support groups.

THE B.R.E.A.D.S. STRESS "CURE"

Breathe: Slow and deep.

Relax your Body: The best results come from a 10-minute session, at least once per day.

Exercise: At least 30 minutes, three to five days a week.

Attitude: Relentlessly positive.

Diet: Go light on feel-good foods, manage your blood sugar throughout the day.

Sleep: Develop pre-sleep rituals; try to get 7 to 8 hours.

OUR FUTURE . . . ?

Another lockdown period?

Limited in-person services to patrons? Continuing shift to on-line resources?

PPE and Plexiglas barriers will become the norm?

We will always have staffing, budgetary, and patron challenges. (We're the Library!) Be flexible, patient, and creative. Look for more outside-the-box options.

Remember Teddy Roosevelt and modify his words:
"Do the best you can, with what you have, where you are."

How about this? "Do the best you can, with **who** you have, where you are."