

# TIPS ON RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS



## 1. Use Respectful Language

Be respectful, inclusive and professional in communicating with your guests. The words you choose will impact the resolution of any issue. Be mindful of the words you use and how someone might interpret them.

## 2. Listen

Frequently, guest complaints are resolved simply because a person feels that they'd been heard and understood. Even when they are demanding something unreasonable, proactively listening without being distracted will go a long way to getting to a peaceful resolution.

## 3. Be empathetic and non-judgmental

Focus on understanding the person's feelings. Whether or not you think those feelings are justified, they're real to the other person.

## 4. Respect personal space

Be very aware of your proximity, position and posture when interacting with an irate or upset guest. Allowing personal space shows respect, keeps you safe and tends to decrease a guest's level of anxiety.

## 5. Keep your tone and body language neutral

The more a person loses control, the less they hear your words – and the more they react to your nonverbal communication. Relax your body and be mindful of gestures and facial expressions.

## 6. Avoid over-reacting

Remain calm and professional. While you cannot control the guest's behavior, how you respond to their behavior can affect whether the situation escalates or defuses.

## 8. Set boundaries

Unacceptable behavior should never be tolerated, as with physical or verbal threats or abuse. If the person's behavior is belligerent, defensive, or disruptive, give them clear, simple, and *enforceable* limits. Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences.

## 9. Allow silence

By allowing silence, you are giving the guest a chance to reflect on what's happening and what steps to take next.

## 10. Allow time for decisions

When a guest is upset, they may not be able to think clearly. Give them a few moments to process what you've said.

WorkSafeBC [OHS Regulation 4.27-31](#) explains the lawful requirements of prevention and response to violence in the workplace that employers must fulfill including risk assessments, policies and procedures, staff training, and incident response.