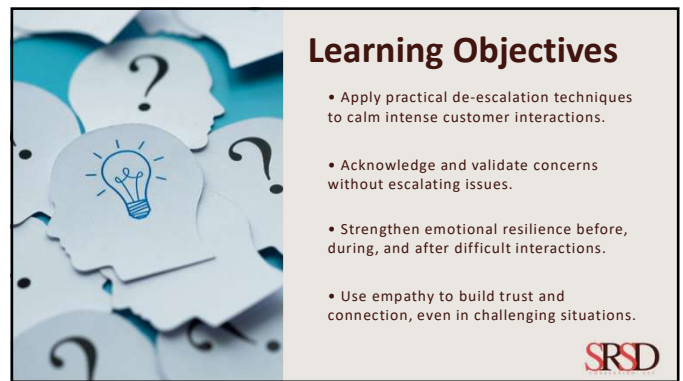
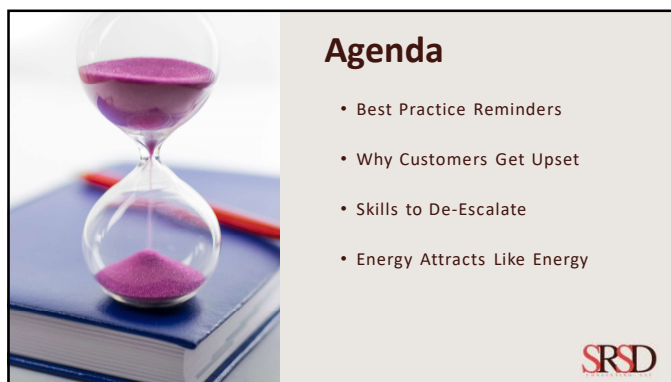




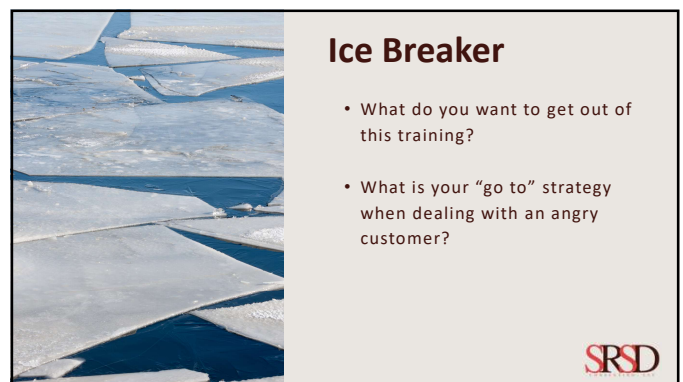
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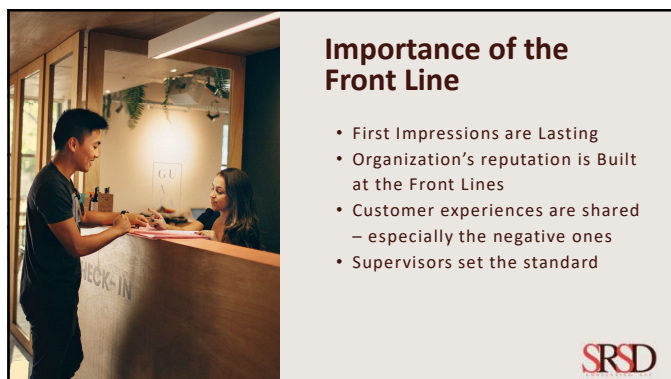
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5



6



Discussion

- What creates a positive customer experience?
- What creates a negative customer experience?



7

1. Verbal Communication

Productive

- Clear and Concise
- Respectful tone
- Active listening
- Solution oriented – what can be done
- Inviting questions
- Empathy

Unproductive

- Vague
- Overly wordy
- Dismissive or condescending tone
- Interrupting
- Negative or blaming language
- Close ended statements



8

2. Active Listening

- Giving full attention – no multitasking
- Listening for the emotions, not just the content
- Observing the non-verbal gestures
- Noticing shifts in their tone, word usage, emotional reactivity



9

3. Setting the Tone

Open with respect and kindness

- “I’d love to help you today, could I please have your account number?”
- “Thank you for that information”
- “Could you please provide your home address? Thank you.”
- “It will take me a few seconds to review your account, is it all right if I place you on a brief hold while I do so?”
- “I’m committed to helping you today.”



10

4. Acknowledge and Build Rapport

- “I completely understand why you’re calling — let’s work through this together.”
- “I appreciate you bringing this to our attention.”
- “That sounds frustrating — I’m here to help you find a solution.”



11

5. Clarifying and Showing Engagement

- “Just so I’m clear, you’re looking for [X], correct?”
- “Let me make sure I have this right...”
- “Thanks for explaining that — I want to be sure I’m addressing the right issue.”



12

6. Set Expectations

- “What I’m going to do now is [next step].”
- “This may take a few minutes — would you mind holding while I [action]?”
- “Here’s what you can expect next...”



13

7. Problem-Solving

- “Let’s see how we can make this right for you.”
- “I’ll be happy to [solution].”
- “One option we have is [solution] — would that work for you?”



14

8. Closure

- “Is there anything else I can assist you with today?”
- “Thank you again for calling — I’m glad we could work through this together.”



15

SCENARIO

A customer calls the water department, frustrated and upset about their latest bill, which is much higher than usual.

"This is ridiculous! I've lived here for 10 years, and my bill has never been this high! Clearly, you don't know what you're doing. I'm not paying for your mistakes!"



16

Small Group - Apply

1. Verbal Communication
2. Active listening
3. Setting the tone
4. Acknowledge and build rapport
5. Clarify and show engagement
6. Set expectations
7. Problem solving
8. Closure



17

Why Customers Get Upset



18



Discussion

- Have you ever lost your cool with a customer?
- What do you believe was the cause?

SRSD

19



SRSD

20

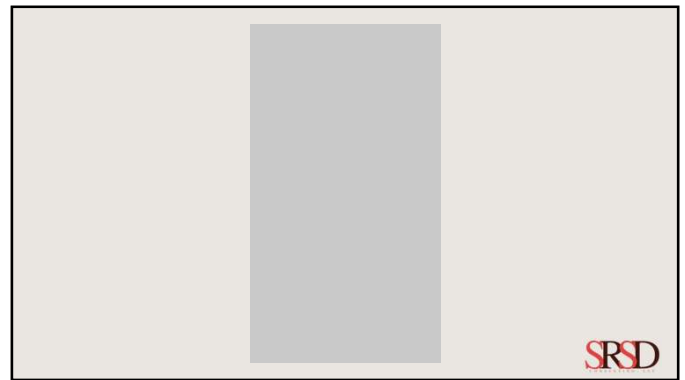


Small Group Discussion

- At what point did this interaction go bad?
- What should the clerk have done differently?
- How would you have handled this customer?

SRSD

21



SRSD

22



Small Group Discussion

- At what point did this interaction go bad?
- What should the clerk have done differently?
- How would you have handled this customer?

SRSD

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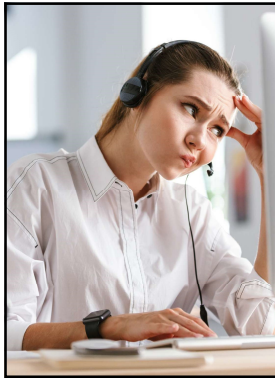


Discussion

- What causes customers to get upset?
- What causes them to escalate?

SRSD

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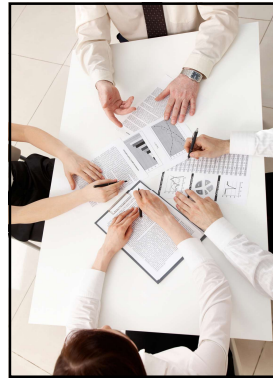


Why customers get upset

- Feel ignored or dismissed
- Feel misled or surprised
- Feel powerless
- Feel disrespected
- Feel frustrated by delays or incompetence



25



Discussion

- What are the signs the situation is escalating?
- How do we know when we've started to lose control?



26

Signs of Customer Escalation

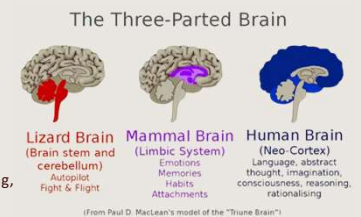
- **Change in tone or volume:** Their voice becomes sharper, louder, or noticeably tense.
- **Rapid speech:** They start talking faster, interrupting, or talking over you.
- **Short, curt responses:** Answers get clipped, like "Fine," "Whatever," "Just fix it."
- **Sighing, huffing, or heavy breathing:** Audible signs of frustration.
- **Repeating themselves:** They restate the same complaint or concern several times, often louder each time.
- **Demanding to speak with someone else:** "I want your manager" or "Who's your boss?"
- **Personalizing the issue:** Moving from "This policy is frustrating" to "You are unhelpful."
- **Body language shifts (in person):** Eye-rolling, clenched fists, crossing arms tightly, pacing, leaning in aggressively.



27

The Human Brain

- **Lizard brain:** automatic survival functions; process information quickly; reflex.
- **Mammal brain:** past experiences, creates associations across experiences; long memory.
- **Human brain:** reflection, reasoning, objectivity, challenges automatic reasoning.



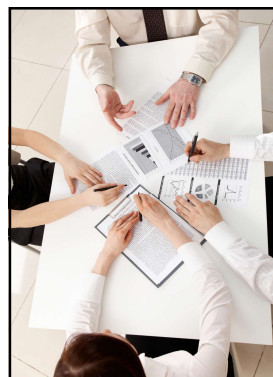
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What Causes a "Survival" Response

- Lash out at others when the following are at threat:
 - Security
 - Control
 - Approval
- A "survival" response is rooted in emotions, not rational thinking.
- We often provide a rational response to an emotional reaction.
 - Not effective!!!



29

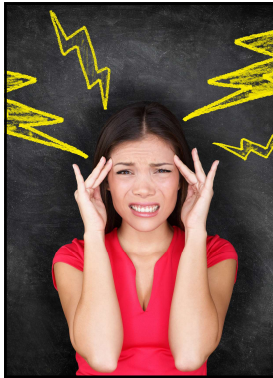


Discussion

- What's a time when you've been upset and irate?
- What was at threat for you?
- What kept you in a state of stress?
- What de-escalated the situation?



30



Customer Stress Response

- Tunnel vision
- My way or the highway thinking
- Cannot assess logic
- Heart rate increases
- Cortisol increases
- Fight – flight – freeze



31



SKILLS TO DE-ESCALATE



32

De-escalation requires

- Control of your own emotions
- Respectful and adaptive communication
- Tactical patience
- Can't change them – can only control our behavior and thoughts
 - Acknowledge, Validate, Empathy



33

Parasympathetic Response

- Two Divisions of the nervous system
 - Sympathetic – triggers the “fight or flight” response
 - Parasympathetic – promotes a “rest and digest” state
- Parasympathetic Response
 - Heart rates slows down
 - Breathing becomes deeper and slower
 - Muscles relax



34

How to Activate the Parasympathetic Nervous System

- Emotional validation
- Use a calm, regulated tone and pace
- Reinstate control (options)
- Offer a seat or water
- Demonstrate empathy



35



Skill #1: Acknowledge

- Acknowledging
 - What you're saying is...
 - So, when you _____, _____ happens.
 - Let me see if I get this...
 - What you're telling me is that...
 - I'm hearing you say...
 - Let me give that back to you so we can make sure I got it.
 - In other words...



36



Skill #2: Validate

- Normalize
 - "It's ...understandable"
 - "It's...perfectly normal"
 - "It makes sense..."
- Name the feeling
 - "you might feel ...(insert)"
- Acknowledge the situation
 - "given the fact that...(insert)"



37

Validation Phrases

- I realize how frustrated you are about this.
- I can see why you are upset about this.
- It sounds like this has been a really challenging situation for you.
- I can see your point on this.
- I'm sorry to hear you're feeling this way.
- Thank you for sharing that with me.
- I'd feel the same way in your shoes.



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Skill #3 Empathy

- I realize this must be frustrating for you.
- I want to get to the bottom of this just as much as you do.
- This is obviously a horrible time for you.
- I can see where you are coming from.
- If I were in your position, I'd feel the same way.
- I know you want to resolve this situation.
- I'm sorry you've had to deal with that.



39

SCENARIO

A resident calls the Public Works Department upset because their trash and recycling were not picked up on their scheduled day. They are frustrated because it's the second time in a month, and now they have overflowing bins. They expect an immediate solution and may express dissatisfaction with the department's reliability.



40

SCENARIO

A resident comes to City Hall arguing that their water bill has doubled compared to previous months. They insist there's no leak and accuse the billing office of making a mistake. The customer service rep must calmly explain billing practices, investigate usage history, and possibly schedule a meter inspection—all while managing the resident's anger.



41

SCENARIO

A small business owner is frustrated because their building permit application has been pending for weeks with no clear updates. They feel the process is inefficient and fear losing customers because of construction delays. They demand to speak to a supervisor and criticize the city's handling of business needs.



42

Summary to De-Escalate

- Make sure you are paying attention to the customer.
- Deal with the customer's anger quickly.
- Stay calm and don't lose your cool.
- Listen to your customer.
- Acknowledge and validate the customer.
- Demonstrate empathy.



43

De-Escalation Not Successful

- Keep physical distance from the customer.
- Give them space.
- Do not touch the person.
- Call the police.



44

**Energy
Attracts
Like
Energy**



45

Discussion

What thoughts do you
have about your
customers?



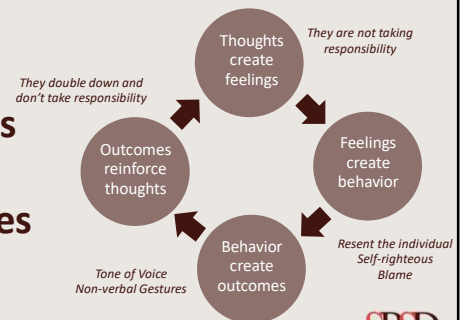
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Thoughts Create Outcomes

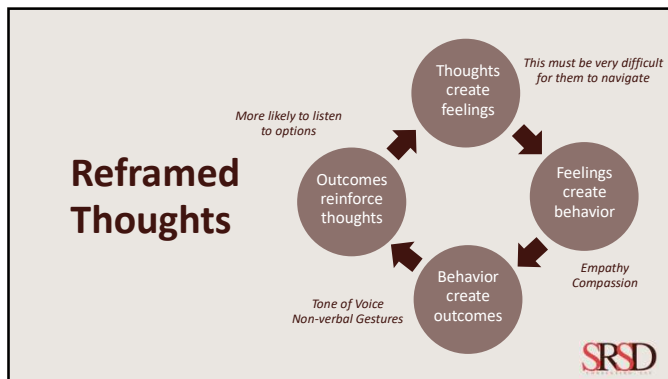


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Thoughts Create Outcomes



48



49

Our Behaviors Maintains Their Stress Response

- Raising our voices
- Getting defensive
- Interrupting
- Placing blame
- Over-explain before they feel heard
- Dismiss their emotions (e.g. “calm down”)

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The Challenge for You

- Don't allow their energy to pull us in.
- Be grounded in our energy to activate a parasympathetic response in the customer.
 - Parasympathetic response – “calm down”, opposite of a stress response

SRSD

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Mental Fitness and Emotional Resilience

- Develop your mental fitness and emotional resilience skills to not allow ourselves to be pulled into their survival response.
- Listen without judgment or blame.
- Resist the urge to point out where they are wrong.

SRSD

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Daily practices

- Learn to activate your own parasympathetic response
 - Awareness
 - Box Breathing
 - Body Sensing
 - Stretching and Body Movement

SRSD

53

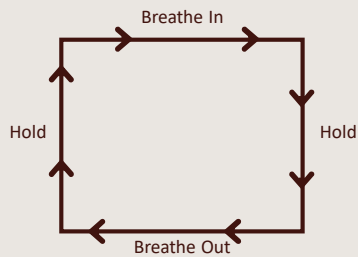
Increase awareness

- What thoughts am I having about this situation?
- What feelings am I having about this situation?
- What options do I have in how I act?
- What is the result I want in this situation?
- What do I need to do, to create that result?
- What would this situation look like at a higher level?

SRSD

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Box Breathing



55

Stretching and Body Movement



- Stand up!
- Think of something that is irritating you.
- Share that thing with your partner while you....
 - Move, stretch, twist



56

Wrap up – Reflection

- What questions remain?
- What is your top key takeaway?
- How will you keep this front of mind?



57

BONUS PHRASES



58

Giving bad news

- I know this is not what you want to hear but we can't provide the solution you want.
- I understand that this is not the outcome you were hoping for, and I'm sorry for any inconvenience it may cause.
- While I wish we could do more, we cannot accommodate your request.



59

Use of Inappropriate Language

- I'm sorry. I can't help while listening to that language. If it stops, I can help.
- I'm trying to help you, but the language is getting in the way.
- Limit response to "I see" or "Um-hm"
- I can see you are understandably upset. I'd like to help you and to do so, I kindly ask that you refrain from using inappropriate language during our conversation.



60

Want to talk to a manager

- I'd appreciate a change to help you first. That's why I'm here.
- I'd be happy to connect you with a manager, however, I am confident I can help you. I ask that you give me a chance to help first.



61

Customer options

- I'd like to present some potential solutions for your consideration.



62

End circular conversation

- We realize this is frustrating
- Explain the city policy
- We won't be able to



63

I'm sorry without admitting fault

- I'm sorry for the misunderstanding this has caused
- I'm sorry we didn't deliver the level of service you expected.



64