



MANAGING ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS



3 STEPS

COVID-19 has unquestionably added pressure alongside many other challenges people face. This increased pressure and stress can shorten tempers. When customers coping skills are exceeded, they may say or do things that can cause offence, stress, anxiety and perhaps even a desire for others to put them in their place.

'The CARM Approach' balances both de-escalation and assertiveness communication techniques to effectively navigate a customer's behaviours in a safe, planned and respectful way. **CARM Empathic Assertion®** ... *'when something needs to be said'*!



01 Rationale

- Actively **saying** and **doing** things that seek to **reduce pressure** and **emotional** states that otherwise create a **barrier to listening**, and result in increased levels of resistance and **defensive / lash out** type reactions
- Reducing pressure is achieved through **empathy** and efforts to protect others sense of self/ego (ie: **face saving**).

02 Rationale

- **Doing** and **saying** things that help promote recovery of rational, fair and objective thinking and behaviour.
- Achieved by adopting a **helpful demeanour** and engaging **persuasive language**.
- Incorporates **raising** the behaviour, **describing** the impact / effect and **suggesting** a way forward.

03 Rationale

- **Doing** and/or **saying** something that invites the customer to agree.
- This **agreement** becomes a **'person's word'** and this helps to **strengthen** their commitment to keep their behaviour "in check". (ie: To remain true to themselves).

1

REDUCE PRESSURE

- I can see that you're upset ...
- ...and I want to help you
- ... and I hear what you're saying. I imagine I might feel a bit the same in similar circumstances.
- I can see that you're stressed ...
- I don't think you mean to intentionally make things more difficult ...
- I don't think you mean to offend others intentionally ...
- You may not be aware ...

3

GAIN COMMITMENT

2

INFLUENCE CHANGE

- I'm trying to be fair & reasonable ...
- I'm really trying to just work something out with you ...
- ... and I'd like to think we can be respectful and mindful of each other as we try to work through this ...
- ... without any undue stress or pressure.
- Please...I'm asking you, as a reasonable person ... let's not let things get out of hand.

... the difficulty is ... when you ...

Describe the Behaviour

- ... use strong language ...
- ... raise your voice/ shout ...
- ... act aggressively, such as...

Describe the Effect

- It makes it very difficult ...
- ... to work out what the issue is
- ... to know how I can be the most help to you
- ... to understand what might be needed
- Others can become affected ...
- ... feel threatened
- ... feel uncomfortable
- ... become anxious or stressed ...
- Please, let's be mindful and respectful of each other

Seek Agreement

- Is that fair enough?
- Does that sound reasonable?

Please, if you're not happy with something, or you disagree with a decision, or you feel something was overlooked, then there other avenues to raise your concerns ... without causing harm

COVID-19

Please...whilst it's a very challenging time due to COVID 19, we just need to do the best we can by each other and help reduce the pressure off everyone.



Why Empathic-Assertion

- Within the context of de-escalation, when deciding if and when to raise a concern regarding another persons unreasonable or perhaps abusive behaviour, then you must carefully consider how to communicate this. How will the other person react?
- Whilst your goal is to influence the other person to alter something in their current behaviour to enable a more productive discussion, you also need to maintain a realistic perspective concerning any potential for an escalation in personal risk.
- **Key question:** “What could I say that might lead to the **“best and safest outcome”** in the current situation?”
- Being assertive whilst conveying empathy helps to reduce triggers that might otherwise provoke or inflame the other person whilst they are in a negatively affected state.
- Notwithstanding this, you still need to “weigh up” the potential implications and negative consequences that might arise if the other person were to react violently to any assertive approach.



Alternatives to assertion include:



Remaining tolerant towards the difficult behaviours and instead applying passive / **de-escalation** methods that are focused on achieving an agreeable outcome. OR...



Passive / **de-escalation** methods employed as a **“diversionary” interim tactic**. In other words, doing or saying things that keep the pressure in a situation at its lowest to enable you to remain safe while you safely and covertly **coordinate additional resources**. OR...



Disengaging – Removing yourself from the setting. Then, if needed, you can coordinate an escalated security response from a safe location.



Reducing Pressure

- In the first step, you are focused on **doing** and **saying** things that help a person feel less confronted, less challenged, less defensive and hence more open to feedback. It's an important pre-cursor when raising a concern about another persons behaviour.
- Typically this include **Empathic Acknowledgement** and **Saving Face**.
- **Empathic Acknowledgement**
 - Involves communicating something back to the other person to show that how or what they think or feel is important and you're paying attention to it. It can relate to their current emotion, their concerns, their opinions etc. It helps stimulate the other person to **think** and **feel more positively towards you** in this otherwise tense moment.
- **Saving Face**
 - Involves doing or saying something that is **mindful not to cause embarrassment** to the other person. It may, for example, involve suggesting somewhere quiet to hold further discussion. It's also about how you might explain something. For example, if another person seems confused, rather than saying *"What don't you understand about that? It's pretty simple"*...you instead may say *"I'd be happy to go over that again if there's anything I can clarify ... if that might be more helpful"*.

Some things to bear in mind:



Empathic-Assertive language and demeanour **invites cooperation**, doesn't seek to judge or be combative...but does provide a **non-threatening process** for voicing your concern/s.



It's OK to be assertive when upholding your personal rights or those of others. Done respectfully, you will be able to raise behaviour in a **fair, respectful and justifiable** manner.



Passive / de-escalation and **assertive** both have a place in managing conflicts and de-escalation/negotiation.



INFLUENCE CHANGE

Influence Change

- In the 2nd step, you will be **raising the problem behaviour**. This is where situations can escalate rapidly if not communicated well.
- You'll need to **describe the behaviour** so it's made clear...but you'll also need to **describe the impact or effect** in ways, and using language, that best encourage a positive response.
- **Persuasive** messages help engage a person to consider their situation from different perspectives.
- **Key question:** *“How can you enable your message to be **more appealing** to the other person?”*

Some things to bear in mind:



Be polite and signal your **positive intention**. Phrases like *“Please”* and *“It doesn't need to go down that path”* and *“I'd rather it didn't”* and *“I'd like to be able to continue to help you”* show you're trying to be helpful as opposed to challenging.



Make the **benefits/alternatives** the **attractive proposition** to **encourage avoiding consequences**. Benefits could include things like – to enable a productive discussion; to reduce confusion and better enable the other persons point to be understood; to enable the best solution to be found; to enable helpful options to be identified and offered etc.



Raise awareness – negative impact of behaviour. When raising behaviour, **reduce the sense of 'accusation'** within your language – it only primes more defensive responses. Instead of *“you're offending others”* ... Say instead *“Please...even though unintended.....the language you're using may offend others.”* ..



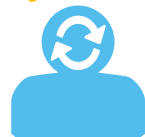
Gain Commitment

- In the 3rd step, you are **inviting the customer to agree to a change** in their current behaviour.
- Whilst this is a rather informal 'agreement', which may even be a **simple acknowledgement** such as *"sure"* or *"ok"* ... it nonetheless is their word.
- Extensive studies have shown that people feel internal pressure to *"do what they say they'll do"*... to remain true to their word. If instead they were to continue to behave in ways that were not consistent with what they've agreed to, it would create an internal state of '**cognitive dissonance**'.
- People are usually motivated to apply changes that will prevent or remove that dissonance.

Some things to bear in mind:



Remind a person of your **positive intent and efforts**. You could include statements such as ... *"I'm trying to be fair and reasonable".... "I'm really trying to help you"*



Invite agreement by connecting with **the other person's inner character**. Phrases like *"I'm asking you, as a reasonable person ..."* and *"I'd like to think we can be respectful and mindful of each other"* ... help to achieve that.



Seek commitment. Ask a closed question that looks for a simple acknowledgement. Use phrases such as *"Can we do that?"* or *"Does that sound reasonable?"* or *"Is that fair enough?"* or *"Is that a reasonable ask?"* seek a simple "yes" or "no" response.