

Defusing Hostile Clients



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Module I: Introduction To Defusing Hostile Clients

- Tactics that usually defuse hostile clients
- Tactics that don't always work
- Tactics that aren't cookbook
- Tactics that aren't cookie cutter

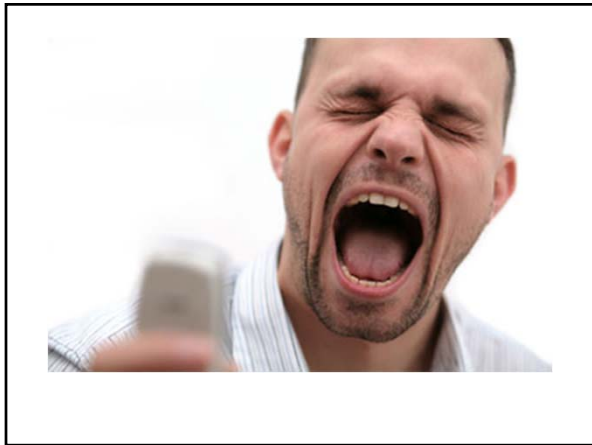
Acknowledgement

Virtually all of the written material in this webinar comes **with permission** directly from Robert Bacal's 1998 edition of *Defusing Hostile Customers*.

About Robert Bacal

Robert Bacal has taught thousands of people and authored several books and workbooks.

Robert Bacal has been a government employee.



Challenging phone situations

Swearing
Yelling
Threatening

CARP stands for

Control

Acknowledgement

Refocus

Problem-Solve



What are the forms that verbal abuse takes?



What are the forms that
verbal abuse takes?

Persistent Swearing

What Are The Forms That
Verbal Abuse Takes?

Yelling

What are the forms that
verbal abuse takes?

Sexist Comments



Scenario 1

Client: You have it in for me. Every time I call you, you give me grief and fob me off on other workers who know nothing. If you were competent, this stuff wouldn't happen. The commissioner is a good friend of mine, you know.

Scenario 1

Worker: You have no right whatsoever to talk to me like that. I do the best I can to help my callers even though I get very little support from management or my callers.

Scenario 1

Client: I'm a taxpayer. I pay your salary, and your incompetence merits how I am talking to you.

Scenario 2

Client: You have it in for me. Every time I call you, you give me grief and fob me off on other workers who know nothing. If you were competent, this stuff wouldn't happen. The Commissioner is a good friend of mine, you know.

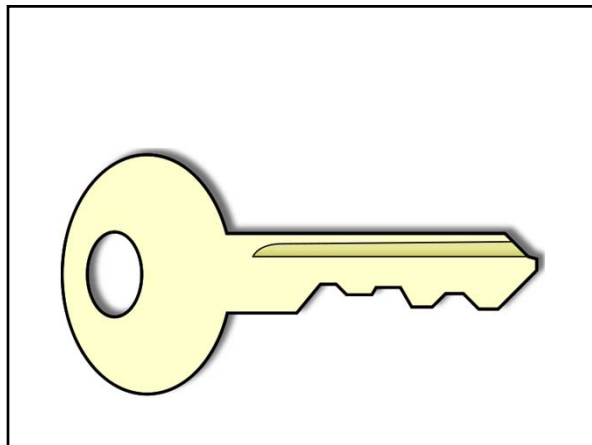
Scenario 2

Worker: Mr. Franklin, you sound really upset about our client service.
Client: You bet I'm upset, and I don't expect you to do squat about it.

Scenario 2

Worker: To help you, I'll need some information. Could you please give me your social security number?

Client: My number is 468-33-4451.



Don't do these things

Rule 1: When attacked, respond defensively.

Rule 2: When attacked, counterattack.

Bad Rule 1
When attacked, respond defensively

Defensive statements almost always have the word **I** in them, or the word **we**.



Summary

Don't respond to the bait.

Avoid defensive statements, no matter how tempting.

Don't counterattack.

**What do angry people
want on the phone?**



They Want Choices



Example 1

I'm sorry but Mrs. Jones is away from her desk at the moment. I will take a message and she will call you back.

Example 2

I'm sorry but Mrs. Jones is away from her desk. Would you like me to give her a message to call you back at a particular time, or would you prefer to call again after 3:00 when she will be available.

What do you think is the most common error CSOs make when dealing with a hostile client?

Summary

Angry clients want you to fix their problem, but often it isn't possible.

Luckily, they also want:

- Helpfulness and effort on your part
- To feel they have choices
- Acknowledgement of their situation and feelings

How do angry situations on the phone escalate ?



How do angry situations on the phone escalate ?


The escalation/
crisis cycle is a
process

If you could do one thing to stop escalation, what would it be?



Why Is This Bait?

What's Wrong With You?
You're Totally Wrong. I Know
That I'm Right. Give Me Your
Supervisor's Phone Number!



Effective or ineffective response; why?

That's not my job,
and there's
nothing that I can
do about it.

Effective or ineffective response; why?

I can understand that you are
upset about not getting your
check yet, and I'll do the best I
can to help you. Would you like
me to suggest some of the
things that you could do?

Summary

Even abusive clients want help, choices, and acknowledgement.

Don't take the bait.

Don't be defensive or counterattack.

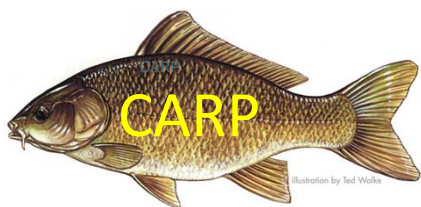
Summary

Don't make **I** statements.

Do make **we** statements.

Do remain positive and calm.

Module II: Overview Of The Defusing Process



The "C" in CARP stands for control

When you communicate with an irate client, they will often take the floor, refusing to listen to you.

How do irate clients take the floor on the phone?



The "R" in CARP stands for refocus

Refocusing involves making the transitional bridge from dealing with emotions to dealing with the **actual problem.**



The “P” in CARP is for problem solving.

Refocusing is the transitional bridge to rational problem-solving. Then, you can get and give information, suggest alternatives, and be, and appear helpful.

Twelve principles of defusing

Principle 1: Dealing with the feelings first	Principle 7: If you lose control, you lose period
Principle 2: Avoid coming across as bureaucratic	Principle 8: What you focus on, you get more of
Principle 3: Each situation is different	Principle 9: Don't supply ammunition
Principle 4: Strive to control the interaction	Principle 10: Don't ask questions you don't want to hear answers to
Principle 5: Begin defusing early	Principle 11: Avoid inadvertent errors
Principle 6: Be assertive, not aggressive, or passive	Principle 12: Avoid high-risk, high gain behavior

**Principle 1:
Deal with feelings first**



Principle 2:

**Avoid coming across
as A bureaucrat**

Not talking like a bureaucrat

What does not talking
like a bureaucrat mean
for your everyday work
on the phone?

Principle 3:

**Each situation
is different**

Principle 4:

**Strive to control
the interaction**

Principle 5:

Begin defusing early



Principle 6:

**Be assertive,
not aggressive
or passive**

Principle 7:

**If you lose control
of yourself, you
lose, period**

Principle 8:

What you focus on, you get more of



Principle 9:

Don't supply ammunition



Principle 10:

Don't ask questions you don't want to hear answers to

Principle 11:

Avoid inadvertent errors

**Isaac Asimov's Table
From HealthPartners Training**

What You Said	What the Client Perceived
To be honest with you	Up until now, I have been lying to you, but now ...
Trust me . . .	I am much smarter than you are.
Again . . .	Didn't you hear me the first time?
Basically . . .	Since you are dumb.
Obviously . . .	Are you that stupid?
As I said before . . .	Weren't you listening?

**Principle 12:
Avoid high-risk, high-gain behavior**



What's wrong with this statement?

It's not my job to do that. You'll have to talk to someone else.

What's wrong with this statement?

I'm sorry you are in this situation. I know that if it were me, I would be at my wits end. I guess you're feeling pretty upset, aren't you? I'm sure glad I'm not in your situation.

Summary of Module II

Control: You want to control the conversation so that they stop talking and start listening.

Acknowledge: Show that you understand his or her emotional state and the situation.

Summary of Module II

Refocus: Make the transitional bridge from dealing with emotions to dealing with the actual problem.

Problem-solve: After you've controlled, acknowledged, and refocused, you can give information, suggest alternatives, and be, and appear helpful.

Module III: The Art of Self Control



Tactic 1
Identifying your phone triggers



Tactic 1
Identifying your phone triggers



Tactic 1
Identifying your phone triggers



Tactic 2

Slow down your responses

Tactic 3

Take A Time Out



Self-talk strategies

Avoid negative self-talk

Self-Talk Strategies

**Use positive
self-talk**



Four Self-Talk Tactics

Tactic 4: I'm Better Than That

Tactic 5: I'm Not Getting
Suckered

Tactic 6: I Won't Pay The Price

Tactic 7: Put On Their Shoes

Tactic 8

Observing

Tactic 9

Preparing

**Tactic 9:
Preparing**

**If you think your client
might be hostile or
already is, try NOT to use
these self-talk
statements:**

**Tactic 10:
Humor in the workplace**



**Tactic 11:
Venting/Not Venting**



Summary of Module III

Identify your triggers.

Slow down your responses.

Take a time out.

Summary of Module III

Watch your self-talk strategies and make them positive.

Be prepared to handle verbal abuse.

The art of cooperative language

Type 1 language is confrontational language.

Type 2 language is cooperative language and the best language to use.

Type 1 language is  **confrontational language**

Type 1 language sends seven messages

What else is wrong with type 1 language?

How does using type 2 language affect your client?

Analysis of type 1 language

1. That's impossible.
2. We always send out this information to clients.
3. Did you throw it out?



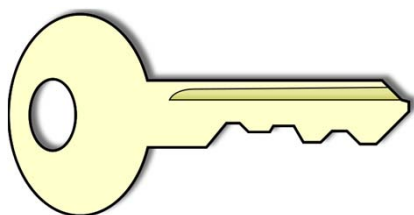
Analysis of type 2 language

1. It's odd you didn't receive the information.
2. We usually send out this information to clients.
3. Perhaps it just got lost somewhere.

Analyze these statements

1. Sir, I don't think I can help you with this.
2. If you want to pursue it, the best thing is to contact the Appeals Office.
3. Would you like the phone number or internet address?

The key is being able to assess a situation, and your client



**Avoid using hot phrases and words and
avoid repeating them**

I don't care
Whatever

Hot phrases and words



More hot phrases and words



Example of hot words exchange

Client: You wouldn't treat me this way if I weren't *black*. You just don't like *black* people.

CSO: Your *race* doesn't affect how we treat you. We deal with lots of *black* people here.

One answer

Your **background** doesn't affect how I treat you. We deal with people from **every walk of life**.



Using Questions

- The police officer asked:
 - Do you know how fast you were going?
 - Are you aware of how fast you were going?
- Why did the police officer do this?

**Why The Police Officer
Asked Questions**



**Replace Some Statements
With Questions**

**Asking Questions
Helps You In Three
Other Ways**

**Replace Some Statements
With Questions**

**Asking Questions
Helps You In Three
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**Rephrasing Uncooperative
Language: Exercise 1**

I Don't Care Who You
Know In Government

**Rephrasing Uncooperative
Language: Exercise 2**

If you read the brochure, you would know that you
need your birth certificate.



Sourpuss

**Rephrasing Uncooperative
Language: Exercise 3**

There's Nothing I
Can Do To Help You

Answers To Rephrasing Exercise 4

**I Don't Like
Your Attitude**

**Rephrasing Uncooperative
Language: Exercise 5**

**I Don't Discriminate.
Some Of My Best
Friends Are Black.**

**Rephrasing Uncooperative
Language: Exercise 6**

**Your Friend's Situation Has
Nothing To Do With This**



**Rephrasing Uncooperative
Language: Exercise 7**



You're Not The First
Person To Threaten
To Get Me Fired

**Rephrasing Uncooperative
Language: Exercise 8**

You obviously don't know
how things work around
here.

Summary Module IV

Type 1 language is confrontational
language.

Type 2 language is cooperative
language and is the best language to
use.

Summary Module IV

The key is being able to assess a situation, and your client.

Don't use hot words and phrases.

Replace harder sounding statements with questions.

Assignment

1. Pick CARP and at least one other topic we covered to concentrate on at over the next month at work.
2. Write CARP and the other topic on your Participant Guide.
3. Spend five minutes a day keeping a journal on how you used CARP and your other topic in your day-to-day work.
4. Be prepared to respond to an email I will send you in a month asking how the assignment affected your work.

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