

# Creating a Positive Call Experience for You and Your Patients

## Lesson 2: Managing Difficult Calls- Supplemental Material

### Types of Difficult Callers

#### Stinging Ring

It doesn't matter what profession you work in, or what line of business it is, if you answer a lot of phone calls you are bound to have a difficult caller at one point or another – and possibly several. Successful people know how to handle callers in a manner that diffuses caller frustration while keeping everyone from losing their cool.

#### Types of Difficult Callers

There are many types of difficult callers, and each one requires some special tactics in order to keep emotions from escalating.

**1. Angry or Frustrated Callers** can be a challenge, but you can manage the conversation with three steps:

- LISTEN – so that you truly understand the problem or concern. Occasionally interject supportive words or short phrases such as “I understand”, or, “Yes, I see.”
- RELATE – apologize in a general or broad sense. You don't want to admit a mistake if you haven't made one, but you CAN offer a broad apology such as “I am sorry about the confusion”, or relate by saying “I understand how you must feel.”
- PROPOSE and Action Plan that will solve the problem. Based on what the concerns are, you can suggest a solution, or at least a step that will lead to a solution including “I would like to help you. How about if I...” or “I would like to help fix this for you, can I bring my supervisor in on this call to assist you?”

**2. Abusive callers** can really test your patience and tact. Nobody deserves to be abused, and that includes YOU! To deflect abusive callers:

- Give the client the benefit of the doubt by politely letting them know that you want to assist them, but that it is difficult when they are speaking in that manner.
- If that doesn't work, repeat what you said and ask them to please stop using that language. “As I said, I would really like to help, but I am having trouble focusing on the problem when you speak that way. Please stop so we can work this out.”
- On the third strike, inform the caller that you are no longer the person who can assist him, and let him know you are going to hang up and have a manager call him. Before you hang up, make sure you say “I am sorry, but I am going to hang up now” and then do it.

#### 3. It's In Your Hands

Overall, the result of dealing with a difficult caller depends on YOU. It is not always easy, but you need to remember:

- Someone else's anger is about them, not you, so do NOT take it personally.

- Put yourself in their shoes – even if you don't know what is really bothering them. Maybe they are sick, or scared, or tired. We all know how that feels, so have some empathy.
- Understanding and friendliness go a LONG way to help diffuse even the most challenging person. Make it a personal challenge to turn around even the most difficult callers.

**TL CONNECT...**

How do you handle difficult callers?

What experiences have you had where you changed a difficult caller into a happy one?