

Tips for Managing Stress in Customer Service

Customer service professionals usually receive satisfaction from helping their customers. This is at the heart of what makes for customer service excellence—delivering a satisfying experience and feeling happy to do so.

But there's a catch. You can't deliver a consistently pleasing customer service experience unless you take care of yourself by understanding how to manage customer service stress. Doing so will help you enjoy your job more and establish a better relationship with your employer.

Most workers experience angry, rude, and sometimes even abusive customers from time to time. Learning proven customer service skills, like how to defuse conflict and perform self-care, can help increase your job satisfaction, reduce stress, and help you end your day feeling less shell-shocked. If this sounds good to you, let's dive into some solid information you can use.



Customer service nuts and bolts

The most successful customer service professionals are aware of several basic tenets that help keep customers happy, even when these patrons aren't thrilled with the product or service. Here are several basic tips to help you provide top-notch customer service and reduce stress.

Notice how these tips include courtesy, common sense, the golden rule, and a little bit of self-awareness:

- Remember, you will work with many customers *only once*. This fact alone should prompt an initial positive demeanor or tempering of your reaction to a difficult customer's behavior.
- Know your product. Above all, customers appreciate customer service professionals who can give them the correct information they need the first time.
- If a customer has a bad attitude, rarely is this because of you, personally. Typically, the company itself is where their dissatisfaction

lies. The intervention is to listen closely to determine the fix. Become "one" with your customer's desire to pursue a satisfactory outcome.

- On a "bad day," stay focused on the positive experiences you have had with customers in the past rather than dwell on the negative ones.
- Use cheerfulness as a strategy to affect a customer's attitude. Here's how: Focus on what you're passionate about in your customer service job. Practice sharing or expressing this passion as you interact with customers. If you carry grocery bags to a customer's car and the benefit is reducing customer stress, focus on how this relief benefits the customer. Link this fact to your desire to find happiness in the role you play. This is a key strategy to discovering more meaning in any job.
- If you work in a storefront retail establishment, acknowledge

customers waiting for help. Many don't mind waiting as long as they know you're aware of their need. Use the second it takes to check in with them if that wait lingers on. If you are harried and frustrated with coworkers, or pressured and have too many orders, resist using your customer as the scapegoat to cope with stress. Feeling ignored creates more customer stress by far than the act of waiting.

- Develop a "sixth sense" for when a question or a stressful situation will require a supervisor's help. If you suppress this feeling of needing help, pressure and stress will mount, and it will accumulate to create burnout.
- Purposely avoiding customers, not calling them back, or failing to research their needs are "red alert signals" that you need support, the employee assistance program, or new coping strategies. Seek this help if and when you notice these behaviors.
- Consider the above stress management strategies and how they can apply to coworkers, family members, and loved ones.