

# Psychology of The Angry Customer

## What Is Hostile and Abusive Customer Behavior?

### Hostile and Abusive Customer Behavior

There is a difference between reasonable expressions of anger (angry behavior) which is short lived and not aimed at you personally, and unacceptable behavior that we call hostile or abusive behavior. Not only are they different, but we may choose to handle these two different situations in different ways.

Hostile and abusive is intended, consciously or unconsciously, to have some or all of the following effects:

- Put you off balance
- Manipulate and control you
- Demean you in some way
- Cause you to feel guilty
- Cause you to experience other negative emotions Intimidate you

It's this kind of behavior that causes the greatest amount of stress for people who serve customers, because it involves ranting, insulting, and using intimidation tactics. Abusive behavior, because of the intent to elicit a reaction, involves pushing the buttons of customer service staff, making it more likely they will do something to makes the situation worse, not better.

While you may tolerate some degree of angry behavior without being concerned, hostile and abusive is something you do not want to accept. The primary goal, with abusive situations, is to cause the abusive behavior to stop. Once that occurs then you can work to reduce the angry feelings of the customer, and address his or her problem. You cannot help a person who is acting out or being abusive. It's virtually impossible. So, first stop the bad behavior (and we'll teach you how).

There are different "containers for abusive and hostile behavior, starting with verbal abuse.

### Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse takes many forms, from very subtle, to the more obvious, "in your face" behaviors. When we talk about verbal abuse we include the following:

- Persistent swearing
- Yelling
- Sexist comments (both explicit and implied)
- Racist comments (both explicit and implied)
- Irrelevant personal remarks (e.g. about your appearance)
- Threats (e.g. I'll have you fired)
- Intimidating silence
- Accusations of various sorts (e.g. calling you a racist)
- Comments about your competency, knowledge, dedication

These behaviors are intended to demean and control. As you go through this book, you will

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learn some ways to counter-control in the face of verbal abuse.

## Non-Verbal Abuse

Non-verbal abuse includes manipulative behavior via body language, facial expressions, gestures, and physical outbursts like pounding on a counter. Unwanted physical touch/contact fits in this category. Let's make no mistake about this. Non-verbal abuse is intended to send a message to you, such as "I don't like you", or "I'm fed up", or even "In my eyes you are worth nothing. Non-verbal abuse is also often used as an intimidation tactic. Here are some examples:

- Standing in your personal space
- Staring at you (long eye contact)
- Table pounding
- Throwing things
- Leaning over you (using height advantage)
- Fearsome facial expressions
- Loud sighing
- Pointing, other offensive gestures

[From If It Wasn't For The Customers I'd Really Like This Job: Stop Angry, Hostile Customers COLD While Remaining Professional, Stress Free, Efficient and Cool As A Cucumber. available at amazon by clicking here.](#)

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Author: Robert Bacal

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