

## Tips to Provide Great Customer Service in Challenging Situations

When our students, families, and colleagues are upset or the situation is difficult, your response matters most. Use these 10 tips to stay professional, calm, and helpful.

1

### Stay Calm and Professional

- Take a deep breath and keep your cool.
- Don't argue, interrupt, or take things personally.
- Try to understand the reaction you are having to the situation.
- Speak clearly and respectfully.

2

### Listen Actively

- Let the customer share their concerns fully.
- Show you're listening: nod, say "I understand," or repeat back what you heard.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions.

3

### Show Empathy and Respect

- Acknowledge the customer's frustration. Say: "I can see why that would be frustrating."
- Treat every customer with kindness—even when it's hard.

4

### Ask Clarifying Questions

- Get all the facts before responding. Say: "Can you walk me through what happened?"
- Avoid assumptions.

5

### Identify whether this requires a Technical or Adaptive Response

- A technical response provides facts, instructions, or known solutions.
- An adaptive response addresses the underlying beliefs, fears, values, or concerns beneath the question.

6

### Take Ownership

- Don't blame others or make excuses.
- Say: "Let's see how we can make this right."

7

### Offer Solutions

- Focus on what can be done. Say: "You can leave your child's lunch with me, and I will have them come down between classes."
- Offer choices when possible: Say: "We can send a crew to you between 1 and 3 today or, if that is too disruptive, we can come next week after school."

8

### Follow Through

Do what you say you'll do. Keep the customer updated if it takes time to fix the issue or if things change.

9

### Know When to Escalate

If needed, calmly pass the issue to a supervisor. Say: "I'm going to get someone who can help with this right away."

10

### Reflect and Learn

After the conversation, ask yourself: "What went well? What could I improve next time?"