Tips and Techniques for Dealing with Anger
By L. Douglas Mault

Venting

- When other people are angry, annoyed or upset, let them blow off steam. Help them get it off their chest.
- Reflect your understanding of what is bothering the other person.
- Listen and keep your cool.
- Express your empathy as opposed to sympathy, especially if you do not agree.
- Don’t be defensive and attempt rebuttals.
- Don’t offer excuses. You can offer reasons after the person has vented.
- Speak almost as loudly as the other person, but avoid a shouting match.
- Identify the source of the anger and begin to correct it.

Sectoring

- Deal with their anger or resistance in one specific area to help overcome multiple problems.
- Select one of their complaints—one you know you can handle, and deal only with that one if at all possible.
- If you deal with that complaint or significant portion successfully, the person will typically begin to quiet down. This will often reduce, if not eliminate, the other complaints or diminish the magnitude of the single complaint.

Communication Tips

- Know and understand your own attitude and response to overt anger.
- Let the angry person talk. This usually helps dissipate the anger more quickly.
- Remember that it is difficult, if not impossible, to communicate using logic and reason, with a person filled with strong, negative emotions.
- Accept his right to be angry and accept him as a person worthy of your attention.
- Allow the person the freedom to be wrong, even if you do not approve of, or agree with, the reasons for his anger.
- Show non-verbally that you are listening-nod affirmatively, maintain eye contact, listen attentively, be patient.
- If there is a quick solution, provide it.
- Speak helpfully. Do not display your anger as that will exacerbate an already agitated situation.
- Positive communication aimed at resolving the problem gives you a subtle but assertive type of power. This is much more productive than being negative, domineering or aggressive.

Do’s

- Look directly at the angry person.
- Give him your undivided attention.
- Observe facial expressions and body language to discern key points.
- Paraphrase the “complaint,” question or statement.
- If you don’t have the solution, admit it. Find out and get back to him.
- Be factual and accurate in relaying information.

Don’ts

- Don’t patronize by saying things such as “Oh, that’s a really good point.” Deal with the facts.
- Avoid countering with “Well, obviously . . .” or “Anyone with the brains God gave geese . . . .” Although the complainer should know the company’s policies, he may have situational amnesia.
- Don’t put your hands on your hips while you are speaking, especially when dealing with an emotional issue.
- Don’t point a finger at someone while you are speaking. It is scolding and domineering body language.

About the Author
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