

# Working with Difficult Patrons

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*Missouri Library Association Preconference 2009*

Ken Werne

Johnson County Library





# About the Class

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- Goals for this Session
- History of “Working with Difficult Patrons”
- Class Overview



# **DEFUSE!**

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**D**on't loose your cool

**E**mpathize

**F**ind out the facts

**U**se courteous control

**S**tay assertive

**E**ngage the patron in the solution



# Don't Lose Your Cool!

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## Tool #1: Active Listening

- Restate
- Ask for Agreement
- Clarify
- Summarize



# **Don't Lose Your Cool!**

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## **Tool #2: Practice Positive Self Talk**

- Focus upon the issue
- Reflect and review



# Don't Lose Your Cool!

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## Tool #3: Avoid Blaming

- It is a time waster
- You appear negative & defensive



# Don't Lose Your Cool!

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## *Summary of Tools:*

- **Active Listening**
  - "Let me see if I understand you correctly..."
- **Practice Positive Self Talk**
  - "This is a challenge, let's see how well I can do."
- **Avoid Blaming**
  - "What can we do to correct this situation?"



# **Empathize with them**

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## **Tool #4: Use Calming Language**

- Lets them know you understand how important their concern is.



# Find out the Facts

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## Tool #5: Ask Permission to Ask Questions

- Use open ended questions
- How, What, Why?



# Find out the Facts

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## Tool #6: Share Information

- Explain the reasons behind a policy or procedure



# Find out the Facts

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## Tool #7: Apologize if Appropriate

- It is okay to admit that mistakes do happen.



# Find out the Facts

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## *Summary of Tools:*

### **Ask permission to ask questions**

- “Do you mind if I ask you a few questions to resolve this?”

### **Share Information**

- “To protect people’s privacy, it is necessary to..”

### **Apologize if appropriate**

- “I am sorry this has inconvenienced you...”



# Use Courteous Control

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## Tool #8: Use Bridging

- Brings someone back to the point courteously



# Use Courteous Control

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## **Tool #9: Disengage & Breathe**

- Give yourself and the other person a chance to cool down.



# Use Courteous Control

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## **Tool #10: Refer to Supervisor or Other**

- Shows you are taking the problem seriously
- If refer, give them and other staff complete info



# Use Courteous Control

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## *Summary of Tools:*

### **Use Bridging**

Patron: “Where have you been?” Staff: “Now that I’m here, what can I do to assist you?”

### **Disengage & Breathe**

- “Just a moment, let me check with someone else.”

### **Refer to Supervisor or Other**

- “This sounds like something my supervisor would like to know about.”



# Stay Assertive

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## Tool #11: Instant Replay

- Repeat message several times
- Helpful when a patron is argumentative



# Stay Assertive

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## Tool #12: Direct the Anger

- Give them a suggestion for something they can do to help change the situation



# Stay Assertive

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## Tool #13: Selectively Agree

- Find something to agree with “in part”



# Stay Assertive

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## Tool #14: Set Limits

- Do not let someone use abusive language or violate your personal space.
- Follow through



# Stay Assertive

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## *Summary of Tools:*

### Instant Replay

- “I understand you are upset, but I need you to keep your voice down.”

### Direct the Anger

- “I encourage you to share your concern with the manager.”

### Selectively Agree

- “You’re right, the library was closed, but the book drop was available.”

### Set Limits

- “I want to help you, but if you keep shouting I will hang up.”



# Engage Patrons in Solution

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## Tool #15: Gain Cooperation

- Begin your request for action with a statement of how the request will help them.



# Engage Patrons in Solution

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## Tool #16: Say “no” Courteously

- Explain what you can do, instead of what you can't do.



# Engage Patrons in Solution

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## Tool #17: Request Ideas about a Solution

- Ask the patron for ideas on how to solve the problem.



# Engage Patrons in Solution

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## Tool #18: Under promise & Over deliver

- Be a hero
- Follow through



# Engage Patrons in Solution

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## *Summary of Tools:*

Gain cooperation

- “To help you save time....”

Say “no” courteously

- “We will notify you as soon as we receive it.”

Request Ideas about a Solution

- “What could I do to make this okay for you?”

Over promise and Over deliver

- “I’m calling you back because I have good news.”



# Other Tips

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- **Scenarios**
- **Feedback**
- **Talk about Policies & Procedures**
- **Include communication do's & don'ts**



# Conclusion

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I can be contacted for more information at:

Ken Werne [wernek@jocolibrary.org](mailto:wernek@jocolibrary.org)