

SPEAK LIKE A BOSS LIBRARY

RESPONDING TO ANGRY PEOPLE



Staying cool under pressure is essential for most professions, especially for those in leadership positions. At some point, you are likely to deal with an angry person. Remaining calm is key to resolving the issue.

Anyone can learn to handle irate clients or staff. Responding to an angry person involves staying calm, acknowledging the other person's feelings, and presenting a suitable solution.

Step 1: Acknowledge the Other Person's Feelings

People often get angry when they feel that they're not being heard or treated properly. Simply acknowledging their feelings can help ease some of the tension. It also allows you to confirm the cause of the person's anger.

Start by stating that you hear what the person is saying. For example, you may lead with, "I hear what you're saying about..."

Acknowledging the angry person's point of view helps dissipate anger. You should also maintain a calm tone and avoid using aggressive body language.

Step 2: Allow the Other Person to Explain the Situation

Along with summarising the perceived problem, you should allow the angry person to explain it in their own words. Allowing the other person to explain the situation shows that you care about their opinion and truly want to resolve the issue.

Letting the other person speak also keeps you from rushing to resolve the problem too quickly. It helps you take the time to better understand the core argument that the angry individual wants you to hear.

Giving an angry person your focus and allowing them to speak also helps them run out of steam. They are likely to calm down a little as they explain themselves.

Wait until the person has calmed down before moving the conversation toward a solution. If the individual remains combative, they are unlikely to hear you out. Continue asking questions to keep the other person talking. Allow them to vent their anger until you feel confident that they can listen to your suggestions.

Step 3: Present a Solution or Set Boundaries

After acknowledging the problem and listening to the angry person explain what is upsetting them, reiterate their argument and present one or more potential solutions.

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Avoid sharing your opinion or feelings unless you are directly involved in the situation. Remain neutral as you explain the possible ways that you can resolve the issue.

You can also ask the other person for their input. For example, you may ask, "How do you think we can resolve this situation?" Involving the other person in the decision-making process increases the likelihood of agreeing on a solution.

If an amicable solution is not possible, you may need to set boundaries. For example, if the person refuses your offer or becomes increasingly irate, you may need to ask them to leave.

Phrases for acknowledging anger

1. I get the sense you're concerned about something. Let's talk about it now.
2. Your behaviour in the meeting gave me the impression you're annoyed about something. What is it?
3. It seems there's something bothering you. What is it?
4. What's behind that comment?
5. You've just said... That gives me the impression you're unhappy about.... Is that right?
6. I can hear you feel strongly about this. What are you most concerned about?
7. You sound upset. What has happened?
8. That sounds very upsetting. Let's talk about what happened.
9. What makes you feel so strongly about this?
10. Obviously we need to sort this out. What, exactly, is the issue?

Script planner: handling angry people

Hello, I understand that you're upset about acknowledge the problem in just a few words.

Is there anything I'm missing? Allow the person to explain the situation. I hear what you're saying. Briefly summarise their core argument.

I believe we can find a suitable solution. Explain how you plan on resolving the issue.