

Difficult customers

Rude, overly demanding, frustrated and impatient customers are hopefully few and far between, but it is essential to know how to handle these situations when they do occur

Dealing with angry or unhappy customers is a part of all public-facing jobs and pharmacy is no different. It's never nice or easy to handle these situations, but knowing what to say and, importantly, how to say it, can help to solve the problem. Often, the reason for a customer's difficult behaviour will be out

of your control, but occasionally, it may be a direct result of the pharmacy's actions (e.g. not ordering the right product, or providing a sub-standard service). Either way, the following seven tips will help you to navigate difficult situations and hopefully resolve them.

01 **Let your customer communicate how they feel.** Giving them the time and space to air their feelings and 'vent' often helps them to move towards a resolution.

02 **Say sorry.** Even if you believe you and the pharmacy are not at fault, apologising for the situation will show the customer that you support them and care about the problem.

07 **Accept that problems will occur and people will complain.** What you take from this ultimately determines what value it brings to you and the pharmacy. Allow yourself to learn from difficult customers in a way that helps strengthen your overall service.

03 **Listen carefully to receive and correctly interpret what the customer is saying and get all the facts.** This will be important to resolving the situation and passing on the customer's key points to your manager and pharmacist. Maintain eye contact and adopt open body language too.

06 **Fix the problem at hand if it's possible and within your remit.** Try to be flexible to accommodate the customer and resolve the situation before it escalates and creates a scene in front of other customers. The main goal is to leave your disgruntled customer feeling satisfied that they have experienced valued customer service. One of the main reasons for this is that any customer who becomes upset and loud about it, is likely to be the same type of person to talk about this experience with friends, family and other potential customers.

05 **Keep your voice calm and steady (even if the customer is shouting at you) and explain how you're going to deal with the situation.** For instance, if you need to refer to your pharmacist or manager, explain to the customer why you need someone else involved.

04 **Never argue with the customer, despite what they are saying to you.** If you do lose your temper, you won't be able to resolve the situation.

