**5 Secrets for Dealing With Impossible**

 **To Please Older Healthcare Customers**

Older customers and clients sometimes get a reputation for being crotchety.  While most older customers and clients are polite and don’t make waves unless there are major mistakes with services or products, it helps to understand why some are more difficult.  Since one-third of Americans are 50+, it helps everyone to embrace strategies on better serving older customers and clients.  Here are 5 tips:

1. **Be sensitive to the senses**.  Recognize that their sensory perception may not be as good as yours.  Perhaps you told the client four times what the price of a service is.   Now she is irritated because it’s more expensive than she thought.  Since most older customers and clients experience some change in hearing, make sure to carefully enunciate when speaking.  Showing a price tag or giving a quote in writing can help avoid this problem.
2. **Slow down.**Reflex and reaction times are diminishing for older customers and clients.  Unless the customer is in a rush, take your time explaining products and services to older customers and clients.  This will result is less frustration for older customers and clients which typically means fewer complaints and less time spent resolving them down the road.
3. **Recognize that health conditions can impact mood**.  Sometimes when older customers and clients are challenging, it may be because they are dealing with pain or discomfort.  Health conditions like arthritis or diabetic nerve pain could be exacerbated by standing in line for a long time.  Providing chairs in a waiting area could go a long way to improving moods.  Try to be empathic and patient if you suspect there could be physical discomfort with older customers and clients.
4. **Remember dementia is possible.**While most older customers and clients you encounter will not have dementia, getting older is a top risk factor for conditions like Alzheimer’s disease.  For example, if an older client repeatedly comes at the wrong time for an appointment, it may be that she is struggling with memory impairment.  Contact your local police department or Adult Protective Services if you believe this customer is at risk to herself because of memory impairment.
5. **There might just be a good old-fashioned personality disorder.**DSM-5, the “bible” of psychiatric illnesses asserts that 9% of us have a personality disorder.  Older customers and clients who regularly demand excessive attention, seem to thrive on drama, or throw temper tantrums may just have a personality disorder.  Best practices in dealing with older customers and clients with personality disorders include carefully documenting your efforts to help the person, making sure a manager and/or coworkers are aware of the situation, and resisting the impulse to engage in a power struggle.

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