

A PLAN FOR OPENING



The most efficient way to manage conflict is to prevent it.

1. Use the majority of your preparation time on planning for your business to open safely. Here are some things to consider:

- a. Clearly communicate your expectations and rules. Make sure to distinguish between rules and expectations—color coding might help.
- b. Use proper signage with clear directions. Use rope, tape, or chalk to make visual cues. Designate staff to facilitate customers through the experience.
- c. Clearly communicate consequences in a friendly way. Expectations may be flexible, but be clear about what happens if a rule is broken.
- d. Make sure you have clearly outlined how people at your business should be interacting with each other and anticipate the need to manage conflicts between customers. Check out the “Keeping Things Calm” section below for some ideas.”

2. Plan for Success. Expect imperfection.

- a. Recognize that this will not go perfectly and some things won't work. Failure is not all or nothing. Think of your successful opening on a scale of 1-100 and try to do your best. Failure might be scary to think about and developing a solid plan can help ease your fears.
 - i. An example of this could be keeping your doors closed and serving people outside or saying, “We're only doing take away, but there's a great park with a view down the road where you can eat.”
- b. Think through some scenarios that might happen when you open and have a plan for them. Remember, you can always close temporarily, if you move outside your comfort zone.
- c. Decide on what scenarios would require that you close temporarily to diffuse a conflict.

3. Implement your plan and adapt.

- a. Review how things went and refine it. Find or create a group of business owners you trust. Meet with them regularly to review recent challenges and generate solutions.

Handling conflicts—listen, stay centered, get help if you need it.

Keeping Things Calm

1. **Actively listen** (*This deceptively difficult skill is the most important to master)

- a. Show understanding through **reflection statements**. When in doubt of what to say, focus on the person's desire, ability, or lack of ability.
- b. Don't jump ahead. Many people plan their response while the person is talking. Listen, give yourself time to process the information and then respond.

2. **Normalize their problem** if it is something that's common. If it's not common, acknowledge it's rare and you don't have a lot of experience.

3. **Maintain the relationship** with the customer. Here are some tips (from **DBT**):

- a. **Gentle**. Don't use verbal or physical attacks; No put downs; Avoid sarcasm; Avoid stereotypes and name calling. Be courteous and non-judgmental.
 - i. Tips for being nonjudgmental:
 - Cut through the anger and criticism by asking, "What is the object, action, or outcome the person is requesting?"
 - Identify what the object, action, or outcome represents to the person. Some good value words to remember when dealing with upset customers are: Respect; Independence, Freedom; Fun; Comfort; Honesty; Safety; Curiosity; Tolerance. Consult this **Basic List of Values** for more ideas.
 - Acknowledge the value. Let them know it is important and let them know whether you can or can't give it to them.
 - b. **Interested**. When the person you are speaking to is talking about something, act interested in what they are saying. Maintain eye contact and ask questions.
 - c. **Validate**. Show that you understand a person's situation and sympathize with them. Validation can be shown through words, body language and/or facial expressions. An example of this could be, "Yeah, this is really hard for everyone and it makes sense that you're disappointed."
 - d. **Easy Manner**. Be calm and comfortable during conversation, use humor, smile.

When Things Get Out of Control

1. Tips on getting people to do something (from [DBT: DEARMAN](#))

- a. Describe** your situation. This might sound simple, but is a specific skill of speaking without opinion or judgment. Example: “Currently we’re only offering outside service due to the mandate, but you want to come inside.”
- b. Express** why this is an issue and how you feel about it. You could say something like “I’m not sure about all the rules either, but I value my business so I have to follow them.”
- c. Assert** yourself by asking clearly for what you want. This isn’t puffing up your chest. An example is maintaining eye contact and making a direct statement.
- d. Reinforce** your position by offering a positive consequence if you were to get what you want. An example of this might be giving a discount or a dessert for the table. If you anticipate someone is going to be a problem you can reward other patrons or people in their party who are following the rules.
- e. Mindful** of the situation by focusing on what you want and ignore distractions.
- f. Appear** confident even if you don’t feel confident.
- g. Negotiate** with a hesitant person and come to a comfortable compromise on your request. An example of this might be referring people to alternatives such as a business who can give them what they want or a different activity (hiking, beach, kayaking).

2. If a customer just isn’t willing to listen to a rule:

- a.** Be firm on the boundaries and rules you set. This means knowing where you are on the balance of your risk tolerance.
- b.** Remove the reinforcer. For example, “Hey, do you mind if we come talk over here” helps remove the person from the energy or attention of the crowd, which might be reinforcing their disruptive behavior.
- c.** When it’s time to disengage with the person:
 - Know the resources you can call for help in your community:
[Call the Sheriff \(360-378-4151\) for managing conflicts that become unsafe.](#)
 - Don’t announce or threaten to call the police or give the person advance warning.
 - Disengage, do not antagonize them and keep an eye on the person if possible.

Visual assets for use

The Orcas Island Community Foundation has created a series of posters for businesses and organizations to use as they see fit to encourage mask-wearing in their establishments. There are seven posters both in English and Spanish with different messages. They are bright, cheerful, and easily seen from a distance. Download the pdf in [English](#) here or in [Spanish](#).