

Dealing with Anger

When you meet with someone who is angry, you can use the effective listening tips to help defuse their anger. Nevertheless, when anger is directed at you it is much more difficult to respond definitively because your own emotions are involved.

To effectively defuse anger, keep in mind the needs of the angry speaker:

Needs	Reason/Response
To vent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An angry person needs to let off steam and release the anger that may have been brewing for a long time • Use your communication skills to allow the person to do this
To get the listener's attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An angry person wants to know that you are paying attention • Use your body language to show this
To be heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An angry person wants someone to listen to their point of view • Acknowledge the feelings you hear so that the speaker knows you appreciate how angry they are
To be understood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An angry person wants someone to appreciate how they feel • Try to empathize with their experience so that they feel you understand the situation • Acknowledge their right to feel the way they do

When you are listening to an angry person:

Strategy	Practical Application
Be attentive and patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep in mind that they become less angry as you let them express themselves
Be sincere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy and validation must be both honest and genuine
Be calm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to remove your own emotions from the discussion • Remember that an angry person may say inflammatory things in the heat of the moment but you do not have to react angrily