

CALM: Listening Skills for Diffusing Anger



C CALM YOURSELF FIRST; DON'T GET DEFENSIVE

- Suspend all judgment.
- Commit yourself to calming the other person.
- Remember that resolution cannot happen as long as the individual is angry.
- Be as relaxed as possible.
- Display an open style of body language (e.g., keep your arms out at your sides rather than crossed on your chest, uncross your legs, use positive facial expressions).

A ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT THE OTHER PERSON IS SAYING

- Make eye contact.
- Ask the other person to tell you more about the situation.
- Show your concern for the other person's needs.

L LISTEN, ACTIVELY

- Let the other person voice his feelings.
- Listen for information the other person is sharing.
- Do not interrupt.

M MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND

- Clarify and summarize the other person's concerns.
- Use feeling words (i.e., empathize) that demonstrate your desire to understand the angered person.
- After summarizing, ask the other person if you have understood her position.

The angered individual wants to be understood. By demonstrating your intention to suspend judgment and understand the angered person, without being angered yourself, you can help defuse his or her anger. The CALM technique requires a conscious effort on the part of the listener to momentarily set aside his or her needs and to attend to the angered person's needs.

Source: Adapted, with permission, from Godfrey P, Davis B. 1987. *CALM: Listening Skills for Diffusing Anger* [handout]. Asheville, NC: The Mediation Center. The Mediation Center, 189 College Street, Asheville, NC 28801. Phone: (828) 251-6089; Web site: <http://www.main.nc.us/tmc>.