

“Be our guest, be our  
guest, be our guest!”

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Just as we are all in the customer service industry, by being library staff, we are also all directly involved in outreach within our communities.

## What does five-diamond customer service look like in outreach?

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First, let's quickly define *outreach* –  
(noun) the extending of services or assistance beyond current or usual limits.

Second, good customer service is undeniably the **CENTER** of outreach. Without it, any service you may offer, most likely will not have a lasting impact!



# Top Notch Service in Outreach

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- Service Values
- Kindness Matters
- Go Above & Beyond (“Deliver the WOW!”)
- The Soft Hand-Off
- Delicate Circumstances
- Tips for Tough Interactions



**HELLO**

**HOW MAY WE HELP YOU?**

# Service Values Remain the Same

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- The patron always comes first.
- Be responsive to both the expressed and the *unexpressed* needs of the patron
- Our goal as librarians and library staff is always to find the right resources for the patron in a friendly and caring.
- Hospitality initiatives encourage care for guests to be genuine and the same goes for libraries.



# Kindness Matters

- The Beast looks intimidating and scary, but once Belle takes the time to get to know him, it's clear that his rough exterior is just a facade. He's really kind and gentle. He just needs someone to give him a chance to show it.
- Does this reference to *Beauty and the Beast* remind you of at least one patron interaction you have experienced?

“

*Always be a little kinder than  
necessary.*

”

- James M. Barrie

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**Customer service is all about the take away for the patron.**

# Go Above & Beyond

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- Going the extra step is part of the literal definition of outreach!
- Be the one to follow through on a patron inquiry from start to finish.
- Always keep patrons in the loop of what you are doing and how things are progressing.

# The Elusive Extra Diamond

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## The 6th Diamond of Customer Service

- In anticipating and fulfilling of each guest's needs, [the Ritz-Carlton] create[s] emotional engagement with the customer. And with "wow" experiences of exceptional customer service, the mystique of the Ritz-Carlton is created.



# The Soft Handoff

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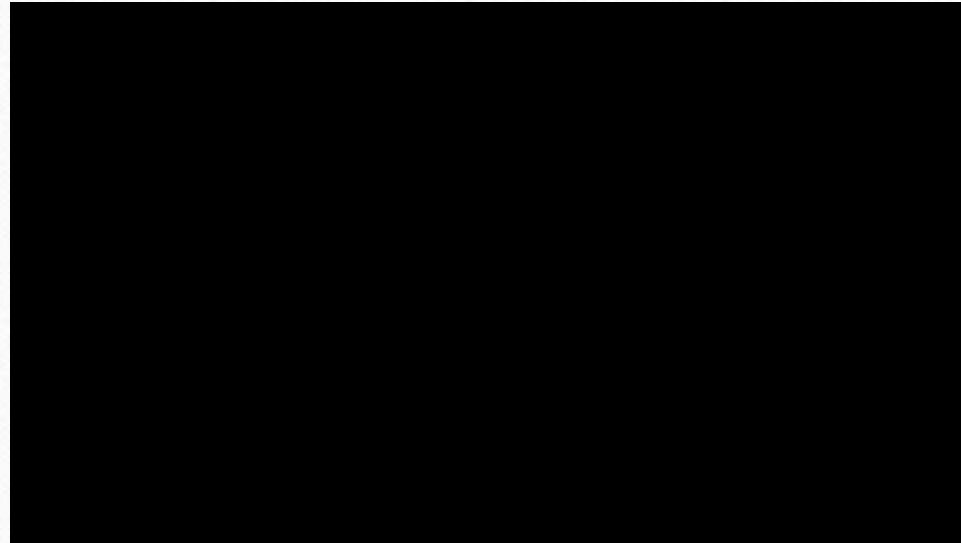
- Can any one explain what a soft handoff is?

A soft handoff is a transfer of care between a library staff member and a member of another organization or department, that can meet the needs of the patron. The handoff occurs with the patron's knowledge and presence. This transparent handoff of care allows us to engage in communication, giving them the opportunity to clarify or correct information or ask questions about their inquiry.

- Soft handoff's are fantastic for customer service because they make the patron feel supported, seen, and eliminates the margin of error in transitioning the patrons needs.

# Example of a Soft Handoff

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# Delicate Circumstances

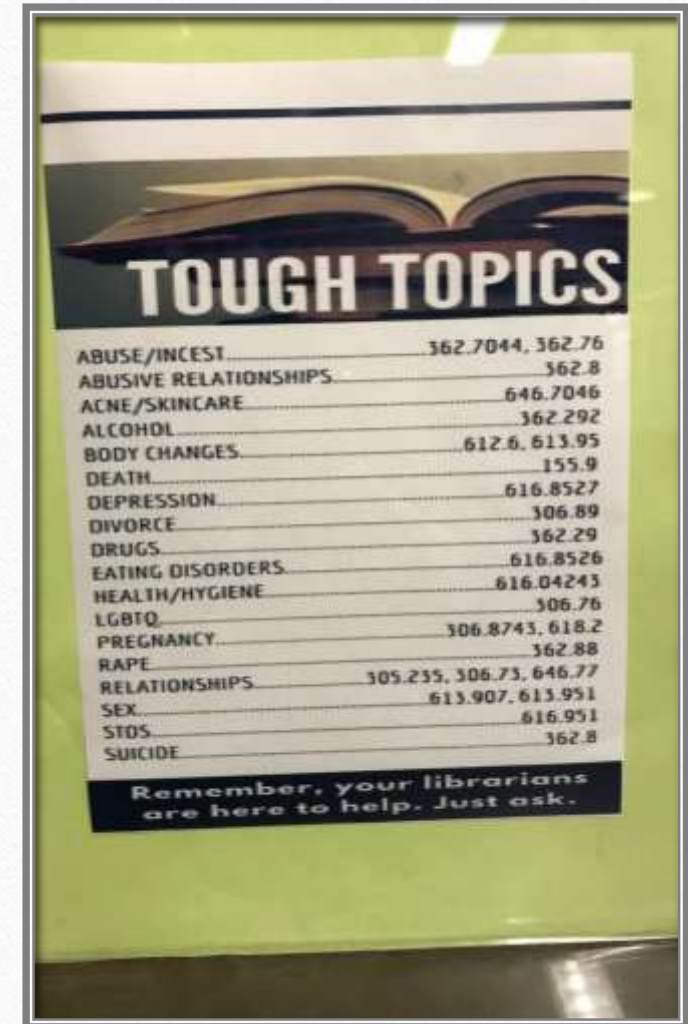
Libraries across the country are dealing with upticks in outreach services due to the effects of the pandemic in addition to general outreach needs.

At times we are approached with information needs regarding delicate circumstances.

Patrons seeking these resources deserve the same level of customer service that would be presented in any other interaction at the desk.

As professionals, we handle all inquires with dignity and kindness. Even if the topic is tough.

*Let's discuss some of the basics of customer service, as they would apply to examples of delicate situations ...*





## Patron Needs That May Throw Off Your Customer Service Game

**\*Don't Let It!\***

- Food Assistance
- Addiction Resources
  - Mental Illness
- Disability Advocacy
  - Health Issues
- Domestic Violence Issues
- Custody or Legal Issues

Any of these topics or situations can be sensitive and require a higher level of care but regardless of the circumstance you can let your customer service savvy shine!

# When Patrons Do Not Come to You at Their Best

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- “A chipped cup is better than a perfect one”
- On the surface, you might think Chip isn’t important (because he’s chipped), but he saves the day by rescuing Belle and Maurice from the basement so they can, in turn, save Beast. Perfection isn’t everything.
- There are times when patrons come to us with poor attitudes, they may not be in wonderful physical shape, or there might be other factors making for a difficult patron interaction.

# Tips for Tough Interactions

- Listen.
- Breathe.
- Pay attention.
- Lower your voice.
- Watch body language.
- Call for backup.



# Abusive Patrons

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- Do not take it personally if a patron is agitated – it very well may have nothing to do with you.
- That does not mean staff should take the abuse – good customer service is NOT about taking what a patron can dish out. We offer *unconditional respect with firm boundaries*.
- The best advice I ever received when beginning to work in outreach was about “constructive confrontation”. Let’s dive into that for a moment...

# Constructive Confrontation

Seems counter intuitive?

It works!

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A useful tactic to describe an “if then ...” approach. A request is stated as a reciprocal agreement.

Example: “If I can do xyz for you, then will you do abc for me?”

The reverse of the statement also works well to deescalate a heated situation, “If you don’t ... then I can’t”.





“If you want me to help you, then I need you to be respectful and not speak to me in that manner”

OR

“If you do not stop raising your voice, then I cannot help you”

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It is tough to not feel defensive when an abusive situation arises with a patron, however, with proper tools you can not only diffuse the situation, but the patron feels they are doing it of their own volition.

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# Final Touches

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As librarians and library staff we are all offering outreach and providing customer service every day!

Neither of these skill sets apply only to specific individuals in our institutions. They apply to all of us from the top down.

