# How to Deal with Difficult Situations Part I

If you've ever worked in customer service, then you've dealt with difficult situations. The way you handle them in the food industry and tech roles are pretty similar. But before we dive into that, we're going to take a step back and talk about the science behind what's happening in these situations. Let's say someone's yelling at you, rather it's about a overcook steak or broken computer, your reaction to either will probably be similar. Your palms might be sweating, your hands might shake, or your mouth goes dry, tunnel vision might kick in. These are all normal physiological reactions that happen in response to a perceived threat. This is part of our biological makeup dating back to the time when people hunted for their food. When you're being chased by a cougar you needed your senses to be at high alert in order to keep yourself alive. Even though someone yelling at you isn't the same as the cougar attacking you, it can feel similar in the moment. Your brain is releasing a mix of chemicals and hormones to heighten your senses and keep you alert. Unfortunately, a side effect is that you may have trouble focusing on specific tasks. Not ideal. It's in times like these that you might go on autopilot where your body has a physical reaction and it's hard to focus. It's super important to recognize these moments and put a plan in place to reboot yourself out of the situation. Sometimes I feel this way when I'm teaching a class and someone is ignoring me. They just don't pay attention. I used to call them out on it, the fight response, but this never ended well. Sometimes they had a good reason for being on their phone and calling them out never made them listen more. Now when I feel myself in that situation, I noticed that my pulse increases. When I realize it's happening, I make sure to look around and focus on people who are more engaged in the lesson and make eye contact with them. Soon I feel my pulse slow down. Some of your experiences in IT support might trigger similar reactions. Once you've identified this reboot action, write it down. Remember, your brain isn't always working well in the heat of the moment, so it helps to have something to remind you what to do. It could be anything from squeezing a stress ball to looking away to taking a deep breath. The first couple of times, it may not work, so give it time. When you have a difficult situation, take a moment to think about what went wrong. How are you feeling? What was your reaction? Why did you raise your voice? After a while, it becomes second nature to catch yourself in de-escalate situation. To really hold yourself accountable, tell a co worker what you're trying to do. Give them a recap of the interaction and ask them for their feedback on the interaction. You might get some great tips. But here's the bad news. Things aren't over once you get yourself back on track. That's when the hard work starts. Every situation is different and you'll learn the best strategies from experience and peer feedback. To get you started, I'll run through some tried and true techniques. Keep in mind that it's fine if you don't get these right the first time. It takes practice, reflection, and feedback to really nail it, so don't give up. The hardest and arguably the best technique is to identify where the interaction went wrong in the moment and redirect the conversation. This is really tough because it means remaining calm enough to objectively look at the interaction and understand what could have caused it to escalate. At first, try this once the interaction is over.

You started your chat with the user and it's really pleasant and problem-solving is happening, then suddenly the tone turns dark. What caused it? Where is the misstep? Looking back, you might notice that the user didn't understand the question about what happens when he tries to sync his phone and the tech just kept repeating it. The user gets annoyed and then starts typing in all caps, a clear sign they're irritated. In this case, the cause seems obvious. If the user didn't understand the question, then they probably got frustrated when the same question was asked over and over. If the IT support specialist had noticed this, they could have reframe the question and broken it down further.

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