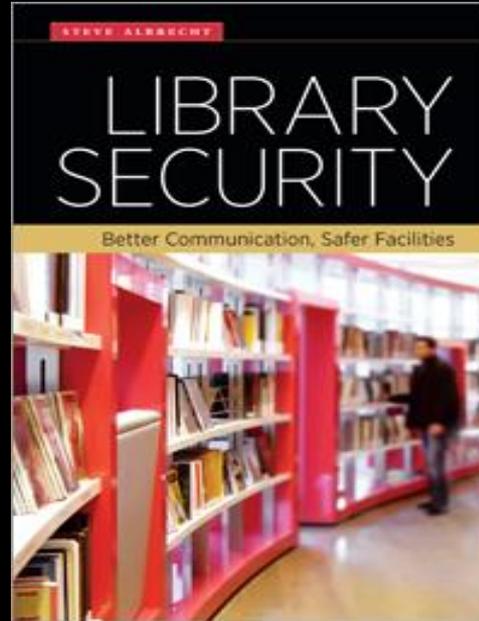


TOOLS FOR TENSE SITUATIONS & CHALLENGING PATRONS: An INFO2GO! Webinar



Presented for the Idaho Commission for Libraries by
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866-261-5150

www.DrSteveAlbrecht.com
www.Library20.com

MY LIBRARY TRAINING BACKGROUND

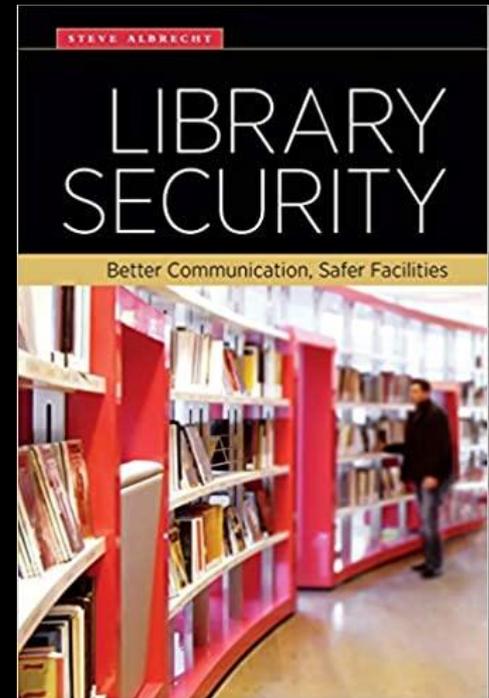
Started teaching library security workshops in 2000.

Started teaching webinars for ALA in 2010.

ALA published *Library Security* in 2015.
(New book, *The Safe Library*, for
Rowman & Littlefield.)

I have taught my classes live and online
to several hundred libraries in 25+ states.

I post two podcasts and two blogs per month at
www.Library20.com.



OUR AGENDA

Enforcing our Code of Conduct.

Communication, service, and security tools.

De-escalation books, tools, and approaches.

Setting boundaries with patrons.

Managing the Top 12 patron behavior issues.

(A.L.O.O.C.S.)

And Lots of Other Cool Stuff.

WHAT IS THE BEST THING TO SAY OR DO WHEN DEALING WITH CHALLENGING PATRONS?

It depends.

MY OPERATING PRINCIPLES WHEN IT COMES TO PATRON BEHAVIORS

People tend to follow familiar behavioral patterns. They will do things – positively and negatively – that keep them in their comfort zone.

We are all creatures of routine. We prefer systems, responses, and habits that have worked before. (A useful predictor of future behavior is past behavior.)

Disruptive behavior – without consequences – escalates.

Even negative attention is attention. (Try “extinction.”)

Keep our focus on “the business impact” issue.

Start slow and friendly; we can always get tougher.

“I don’t care what you look like; I care what you do.”

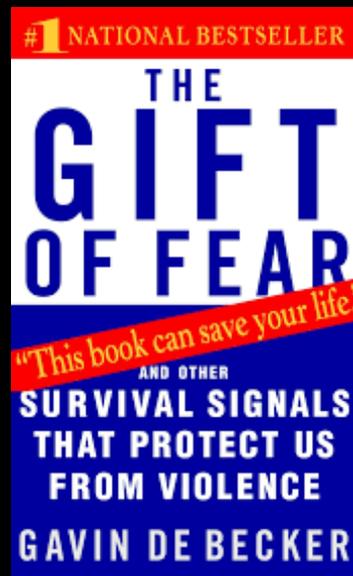
THE POWER OF INTUITION

It's "knowing without knowing why."

Human beings are the only creatures who ignore it, suppress it, or allow themselves to be talked out of it.

We all have examples where we wish we had listened to and honored our intuition.

It creates mental focus and physical reactions called "piloerections."



OUR TAKEAWAYS

For Library leaders: Take what you need to help you with coaching, training, new-employee orientation, refreshers. Be ready to model the ideas you like and help staff put the tools to use. Maximize your leverage to help your employees with challenging patrons and situations.

For Library employees: Take what you need from the slides, me, the Chat, and the scenarios. There is “no one best approach.” Adapt what you need to your specific workplace.

THE ESSENTIAL EIGHT

Are we being:

Firm, fair, legal,
consistent, assertive,
patient, empathic,
reasonable?

Are we focusing on
behaviors, not labels?

Can we accept the person
without accepting their
inappropriate behaviors?

LIBRARY

Please help maintain a safe and pleasant environment:

**NO FOOD, NO DRINKS
(WATER IS OK)***

Enjoy your snacks in the Bookmark Café or the outdoor library plaza.

NO CELL PHONES*

Switch off or silence your cell phones. Please take your conversation to the lobby or the outdoor library plaza.

**DO NOT MOVE LIBRARY
FURNITURE***

Library materials, equipment, and furniture are for all library customers' use.

**DO NOT LEAVE YOUR
BELONGINGS UNATTENDED***

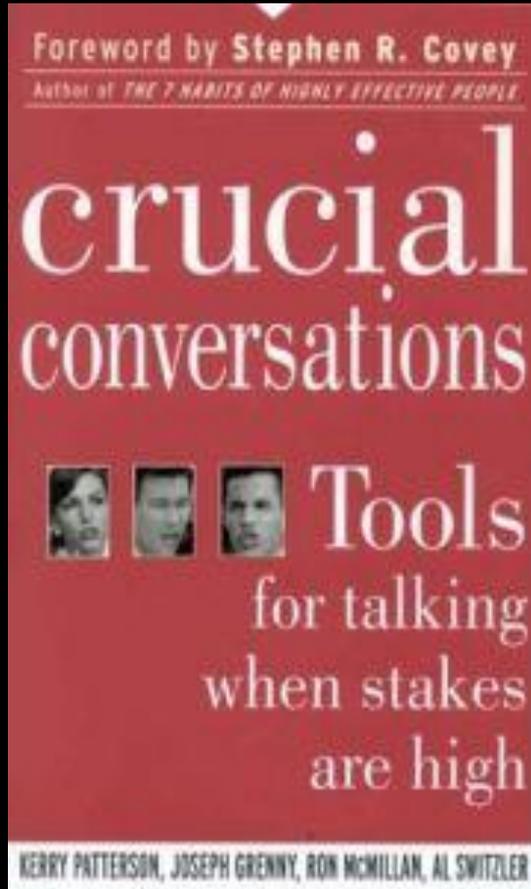
Safety first!

Your cooperation is appreciated.

*For more information, please see the San Leandro Library Rules of Conduct, approved by the Library - Historical Commission and the San Leandro City Attorney, June 2006.

Crucial Conversations

by Patterson, Grenny et al. (2002, McGraw-Hill)



Opinions vary.

Stakes are high.

Emotions run strong.

SOME EARLY QUESTIONS

What is the “business impact” at our library?

Do we rationalize unacceptable behavior?

Is our goal “peace” or “justice”?

What should asking for help mean?

How do we align with our patrons?

Do your job or do your job safely?

How do we truly show empathy and patience?

If there are no consequences. . . ?

When can we disengage?

Assertiveness, acting skills, space, praise?

SOME SERVICE TOOLS

Everyone wants to show they are in control of their lives. Don't lecture or embarrass them, especially in front of others. Help patrons save face.

Check your body language and tone for empathy and patience. Don't get frustrated or condescending.

Recognize the concept of on-going Moments of Truth.

Use Service Blueprints to fix reoccurring problems that irritate patrons (and staff).

Just Another Day for you; **Important Day** for the Patron.

Just Another Service Interaction for You; **Significant Service Interaction** for the Patron

Use the G.R.E.A.T. service tool.

G.R.E.A.T. PATRON CARE

Greet the patron with eye contact.

Reassure the patron you're here to help them.

Explain what you will do to or for the patron.

Act accordingly, using your skills, policies, or protocols.

Thank the patron for his or her cooperation.

INTRODUCE / EXPLAIN / ASK

Introduce yourself. Try to get the person's name.

Explain:

"I noticed that . . ."

"The reason I'm here is . . ."

"I'm sure you already know this, but . . ."

Ask: "I need to ask you to . . ."

DR. GEORGE THOMPSON'S VERBAL JUDO™

Listen actively

Empathize

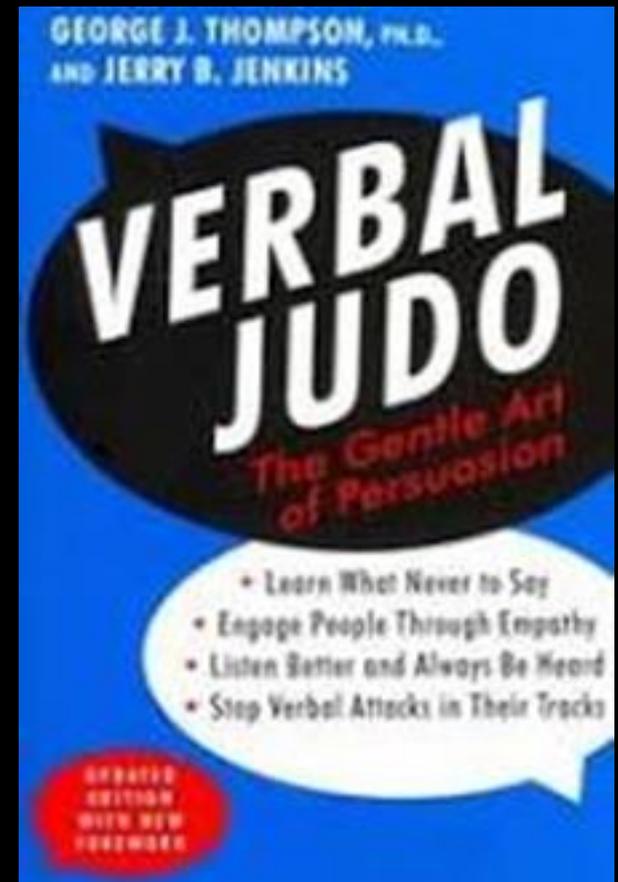
Ask questions

Paraphrase

Seek solutions

V ≠ J

Validate ≠ Don't Justify



PHRASES THAT MAY WORK

“You can’t do that if you want to stay here.”

“Our insurance won’t allow that.”

“Let’s talk about what I can do for you.”

“I know you want some information about what’s happening.”

“I can see you’re upset.”

“I want to give you an update or tell you about the waiting time.”

“I’m sorry. I’m not trying to make you mad.”

“You could be right.”

“Please help me do my job for your safety.”

“I know you’re not trying to scare the other people here.”

JUSTIFYING PHRASES THAT DON'T WORK

"You need to be quiet."

"That's not our policy."

"What **you** need to understand is . . ."

"I can't help you. I don't know who can."

"I'm going on my break."

"You didn't read the instructions or directions."

"That's just our policy. It's against our policy."

"You wouldn't understand . . ."

"It's none of your business why . . ."

"What do you want me to do about it?"

"I'm not going to tell you again or explain it again."

"Why can't you be reasonable?"

FIVE SECURITY TOOLS

Use space and distance, stand at an angle, no closer than arm's length. Use your proxemic barriers. Change the ratios of confrontation.

Use your acting skills. Speak assertively. Fake it until help arrives.

Shake hands and/or sit down with the patron.

Use Security Incident Reports as leverage and learning tools.

Use staff meetings to roleplay typical problem issues and problem patrons.

TEN "CRITICAL CORE" QUESTIONS

What does my intuition tell me to do?

What does common sense suggest I do (or not do)?

What is the impact on the business of *our* library?

What does our Code of Conduct allow or prohibit?

What do our policies and training say I need to do?

What is our usual approach to this situation, based on the work culture we've created here?

Are we following the Essential Eight guidelines?

Violation of local, state, federal laws (PC or W&I)?

Is it a medical issue? Mental health issue? Security guard issue? Police issue? Other agency issue?

Is there a creative, outside the box solution?

THE CHALLENGING 10

The Harassing Patron

The Entitled and Rude Patron

The Patron Experiencing Homelessness

The Mentally Ill Patron

The Substance-Abusing Patron

The Tweenaged Patron

The Patron Who Takes Videos

The Patron Who Protests Content

The Elderly or Disabled Patron

The Patron Who Hogs or Misuses the Internet

THE HARASSING PATRON

Behaviors: Physical, verbal, sexual, or racially harassing actions; creates a hostile work environment using intimidation, size, space-invading, fear, humiliation, embarrassment.

Reasons: Learned behavior; past behaviors that have worked; their need to keep people one-down to them; either unaware or don't care about gender, cultural, or diversity differences.

Tools: Tell them to stop, early. Report it. Call out the behaviors, enforce consequences, use supervisor interventions, suspensions, expulsions.

PATRONS HARASSING STAFF

70-30 Female to Male staff ratio in many libraries.

Introverts versus Extroverts on staff.

May not understand how they can and need to set boundaries with patrons.

Don't always understand the concept of "multiple channels of reporting."

May have had, seen, or heard about a less-than effective response from management.

We need to enforce real consequences.

Stalking, with real fear, is a felony in all 50 states.

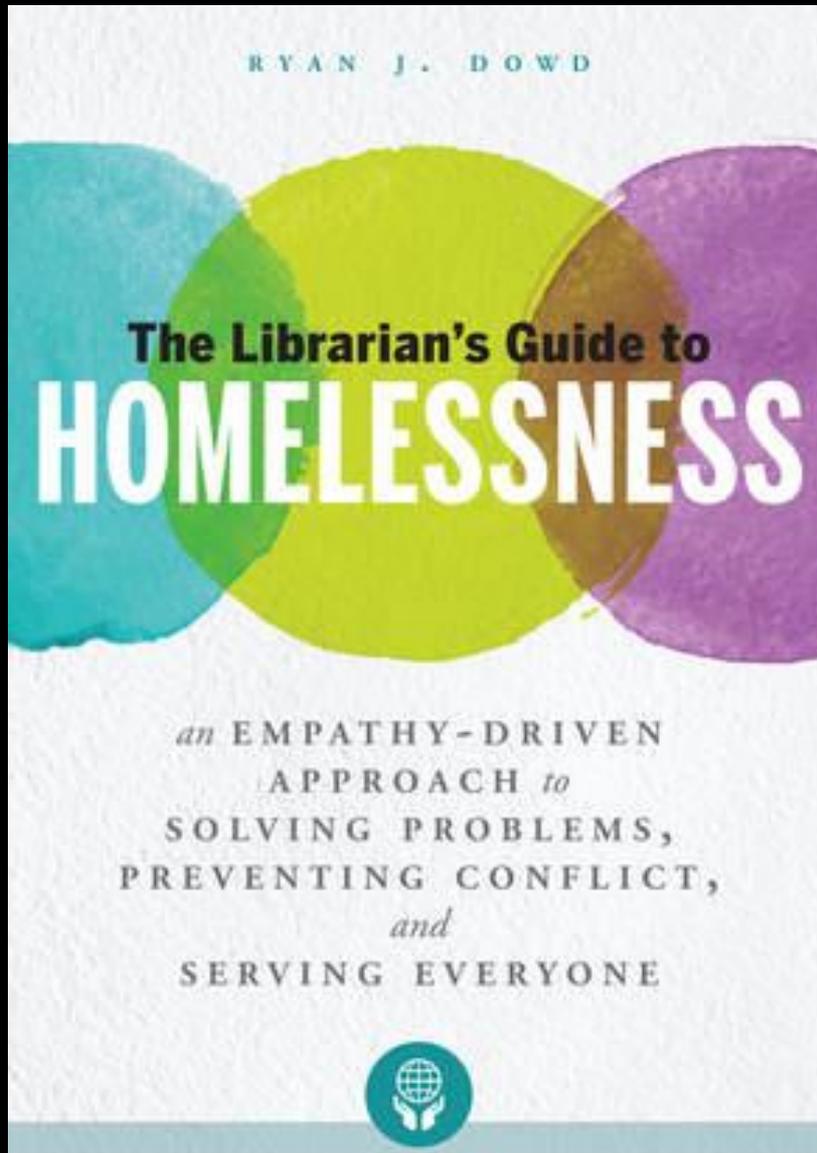
THE ENTITLED, RUDE PATRON

Behaviors: “I pay your salary!” is one of their favorite phrases or mindsets. They can be dismissive if you don’t help right away. They ignore the rules, refuse to cooperate; no patience for others. They use verbal or physical intimidations, aggressive behaviors; they can be sarcastic, rude, demeaning in conversations.

Reasons: It works for them in other life encounters. They have low self-esteem, which they mask with bravado.

Tools: Provide firm, fair, and consistent service. Acknowledge their impatience. Praise them when they act appropriately. Use alignment. Ignore their comments. Don’t argue or try to change their minds.

HomelessLibrary.com



Ryan J. Dowd
(ALA, 2018)

Fire Tools: Punishment-Driven
Enforcement

Water Tools: Empathy-Driven
Enforcement

SERVING PATRONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

From Ryan Dowd:

People who spend two weeks or less being homeless, with no major life issues: 50%

People who spend two weeks to one year being homeless, with one major life issue: 40%

People who spend 1+ to 20 years being homeless, with multiple life issues: 10%

HOMELESS, MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES SUPPORT

In my Perfect Library World, we will create working partnerships with public and private advocacy groups that specialize in dealing with your most challenging patrons:

City / County Homeless Shelters.

County Behavioral Health Services, Hospitals, or Clinics.

County Social Services.

Library leadership.

Police / Sheriff's / PERT leadership members.

Substance abuse treatment facilities.

Adult, Child, Elderly, Disabled Protective Services.

Housing Authority specialists.

Voc Rehab / Job Skills specialists.

Faith-based and grant-funded homeless outreach.

THE PATRON WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES (OR A TRAUMA BACKGROUND)

Behaviors: Serious untreated mental disorders. They can monopolize staff time and raise safety and security concerns. They can be fearful, anxious, confused, angry, delusional, unreasonable, uncooperative, and unwilling to follow the rules. They can be cyclical in their thinking and behavior. They can be victims or victimizers. Progress is slow.

Reasons: Undiagnosed, under-treated, under-medicated, wrongly-medicated, self-medicated.

Tools: Use careful tones; use space and distance; build rapport. Know the three-type criteria and get help from social services and police. Consider restraining orders for the chronically problematic.

THE PATRON WITH A SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER

Behaviors: Stimulant drug use makes them erratic, irrational, and confrontational. Opiate drug use makes them susceptible to overdose. They use alcohol and/or marijuana to cope with the rigors of withdrawal.

Reasons: Too many to list: failed relationships, history of abuse, pain management, family genetic history.

Tools: Try to recognize their drug of choice by the odors, pupil size, and behavior. Ask them to leave for the day. Get help from a staffer, supervisor, or the police. Be aware of potential medical issues. Narcan training?

Opiate Users Under the Influence

- Opiate narcosis – “on the nod.”
- Slacked, flushed face, dry mouth, slow movements and responses, slurred speech.
- Pinpoint pupils, droopy eyelids.
- Slow pulse.
- Itching, yawning, raspy voice.
- Fresh injection sites.
- Lack of awareness.

Serious Safety Hazards

☠ Bloodborne pathogens (lots of vomit)!

☠ MRSA!

☠ HIV/AIDS!

☠ Hepatitis!

☠ Fentanyl exposure!

☠ Needle sticks!

☠ Gloves, mask
must be used!



RESTROOM SECURITY

- More restroom checks (by staff, in pairs).
- Follow the “Broken Window Theory.”
- Camera system with posted signs near restrooms.
- More sharps boxes.
- Talk to known opiate users.
- Ban known problem users.
- Spread the word among street people.
- Get help from police, SAPs, social workers.

THE STUDENT / TWEENAGED PATRON

Behaviors: Rude to staff in front of their peers; more cooperative alone. Intentionally breaks or doesn't follow rules to see what they can get away with. May be the pack leader or a follower in groups.

Reasons: Trapped by peer pressure, hormones, immaturity, and the need to be in control or save face.

Tools: Talk to them away from the group if possible. Use the "Introduce-Explain-Ask" approach. Reward their compliance with praise. Send them out for the day if it's pervasive or severe. Choose the staff member with the best alignment. My two phrases? Call their parents?

THE PATRON WHO TAKES PHOTOS/VIDEO

Behaviors: Comes in alone or in a group to intentionally disrupt the business of the library. May have his/her own video camera, cell phone, or have designated others to take pictures or video of any potential confrontation.

Or comes in alone and takes overt or covert photos or videos of other library patrons (especially children) or staff.

Reasons: Attention, putting up videos on to various social media accounts, to make their political points. Or for more prurient reasons,

Tools: Neutral, friendly, polite, non-confrontational. Assess business impact. Have posted policies not allowing photos.

THE PATRON WHO PROTESTS CONTENT

Behaviors: Seeks to disrupt the library missions and daily operations, working alone or with a group, by removing circulated or curated materials they feel is inappropriate to their cause, beliefs, values.

Reasons: They just don't like it.

Tools: Neutral, friendly, polite, non-confrontational. Assess business impact of letting them have their say. The First Amendment has limits: hate speech, dangerous, inciting speech. Have a scripted answer, which has been vetted by library leaders, boards, attorneys, and electeds.

THE ELDERLY OR DISABLED PATRON

Behaviors: They may have significant mobility and/or cognitive issues, based on age or physical conditions. They can be angry, sad, depressed, entitled, impatient, out of touch with reality, or even victimized by their “caregivers.” (Watch for Sundowner’s Syndrome.)

Reasons: Age, accidents, congenital, diseases.

Tools: Be respectful and patient. Talk to them in an adult voice, using simple questions and answers. Provide enough space for wheelchairs, if necessary. Ask them how specifically you can help them. Be aware of potential abuse issues; contact APS, social workers.

UNEVEN INTERNET USE

Four possible approaches:

We filter and we enforce our policies.

We filter and we don't enforce our policies.

We don't filter and we enforce our policies.

We don't filter and we don't enforce our policies.

Worst cases: child pornography, unwanted exposure to pornography, malware, ransomware, machine hogging leading to fights.

THE PATRON WHO HOGS OR MISUSES THE INTERNET

Behaviors: They ignore time limits or the needs of other patrons. They monopolize the PCs, under the cover of doing “work.” Or they watch porn and delight in making staff, children, parents, or other patrons angry or uncomfortable.

Reasons: Selfish for the first type; odd, eccentric, narcissistic, predatory, compulsive, immature for the second. They seem to like antagonizing people.

Tools: Enforce your rules and Code of Conduct. Use discipline, including expulsion for repeated events. Call the police for actual or suspected illegal sexual behaviors.

“THOUGHT STOPPING”

Use Thought Stopping as a last-ditch, Hail Mary tool, once you have tried several other conversational approaches or behavioral diversions without success.

“Wow! I haven’t heard those kinds of curse words since I was in junior high!”

“I bet you know what I’m going to ask you to stop doing.”

Mastering the “double huh / “double what” approach.



PERSONAL PROTECTION

Pay attention to personal space; use a bladed stance.

Use careful eye contact, polite handshakes.

Stay in **Condition Yellow**.

Change the ratios of confrontation.

Develop (and remember) code words.

Use proxemic barriers or invite the patron to sit with you.

Use physical movement and the Assertive Whisper.

Use "Secret Service Hands."

KEEPING IT SPECIAL

1. Greet each patron immediately or when passing by.
2. Give each patron you meet your complete attention.
3. Make the first 30 seconds count for our patrons.
4. Play your part to be real, not phony or bored.
5. Show your energy with sincere friendliness.
6. Be the patron's problem-solver.
7. Use your common sense.
8. Bend the rules when the situation calls for it.
9. Make the last 30 seconds count for our patrons.
10. Take good care of yourself.

CLOSING THEMES

We can't pick our customers, but we can enforce our policies and continually create a safe and secure culture, together.

Every employee is in charge of service, safety, and security.

Certain employees align with certain patrons better than their colleagues. Encourage "acting skills" on the floor.

Train employees in "high-risk" customer service skills (a/k/a "Verbal Judo"), face-to-face, and over the phone.

Use role-plays during staff meetings to create better responses to common security situations.

CLOSING THEMES

Always assess the Business Impact.

Update, discuss, and post your Code of Conduct.

Stay firm, fair, consistent, assertive, and reasonable.

Change your vocabulary about certain patrons from “difficult” to “challenging.”

Create on-going working relationships with police, mental health, homeless, social services, and public or private agencies.

CLOSING THEMES

Develop creative answers to common patron questions, behavior problems, or complaints.

Document new, on-going, or chronic problems with Security Incident Reports.

Use more civil stay-away orders, both verbal and served.

Try a lighter touch first; you can always get tougher.

Have courage.