

# Things not to say to an irate customer

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When a customer loses it, it's not a good idea to repeat, "I'm trying to help you." It's especially not a good idea if the "help" consists of saying, basically, "the payments you made are still due." It's a terrible idea to refuse to connect a distraught customer with a supervisor. It's really, really unwise to tell the customer that "a supervisor will only tell you the exact same thing."



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I have sympathy for customer service representatives - really, I do. I know that customers can be ignorant, demanding and ill-mannered. On the other hand, CSRs should be trained to deal with bad-tempered customers. Also, CSRs should be trained to avoid provoking pleasant and agreeable customers to the edge of meltdown - or beyond.

If your ears are burning, Elizabeth at Anthem Blue Cross, yes, I'm talking about you.

Here's the thing. Elizabeth is probably quite nice. She never raised her voice or behaved rudely. However, she said and did a bunch of things that drove one customer's blood pressure into the red zone and resulted in Elizabeth getting an earful.

This is Anthem's fault. Anthem should have given Elizabeth better tools to handle customer problems, and it should have taught her how to de-escalate a customer's anger rather than how to fuel an inferno.

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