

# Diffusing Conflict

## **Instructor Notes:**

- Display welcome slide as participants enter the room to reassure they are in the correct place.
- Be sure to welcome participants to class – introduce class members and all trainers present.
- Be sure to start on time.

## **Discussion Points:**

- Remember, enthusiasm and positive energy are critical.
- Class participants are embarking on a challenging journey which begins here.
- For some, this may be the first time in a classroom in a very long time, making them feel slightly intimidated. Be sure to make participants feel welcome.
- Review emergency exit locations and facility specific policies, including cell phones and smoking.

**Time Recommended: 1 hour**

## Section Overview

- As a professional operator, managing environment of your vehicle is critically important
- Providing a safe, conflict-free ride for your passengers is one of your primary roles
- Your passengers expect you to prevent any incident from escalating

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### **Instructor Notes:**

- Use the points on this slide to introduce the content of today's training.

### **Discussion Points:**

- None

## Objectives

*By the end of this section, participants will know and understand:*

- The effects of your attitude
- Operator's roles and goals
- Passenger's expectations
- Situations that trigger conflict
- Techniques to de-escalate potential conflict
- Tips to avoid conflict

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### **Instructor Notes:**

- Do not teach from this slide.
- These objectives will be reviewed at the end of today's training session to ensure participants understand the material and learning has taken place.
- Cover the outcomes with participants and continue to the next slide.

### **Discussion Points:**

- None

## Attitude

- How our attitude is perceived is more important than facts
- We choose our attitude every day
- We cannot change other people
- "Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."

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### Instructor Notes:

- Read the quote provided below.
- Emphasize how important a positive attitude is in providing a safe and comfortable, conflict-free ride.

### Discussion Points:

- Attitude does play an important role in your outlook on day-to-day living.
- Attitudes are contagious. When someone around you is positive, it will hopefully give you a positive outlook. Same thing goes with being around someone with a negative attitude. Do you like being around that person?
- We are in charge of our attitudes

### Quote from Charles Shinboll:

#### ATTITUDE

*"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, the education, the money, than circumstances, than failure, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I respond to it. And so it is with you... we are in charge of our attitudes."*

### Ask the group:

- Do you think your attitude plays a big part in your daily activities?
- Have you been around someone who has a negative attitude? How did that affect your day?
- Have you been around someone who has a positive attitude? How did that affect your day?

## Operator's Role

**As operators your role is to:**

- Provide a safe ride
- Keep a schedule
- Navigate through traffic
- Provide positive interaction
- Follow manifest / trip sheet / schedule / use MDT / radio



***How you choose to fill this role has an impact on your day.***

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### **Instructor Notes:**

- Operators keep a schedule, navigate through traffic, interact with passengers and follow manifest/trip sheet/schedule, and use MDT, and radio.
- An operator's attitude determines how they will fulfill their role.

### **Discussion Points:**

- As an operator, what you do is important work that impacts people's lives. The way you communicate with your passengers has a huge impact on not only your personal safety, but job satisfaction, customer service, and organizational and community perception.
- You have the power to choose your mindset and attitude towards service to others, and this choice impacts how you are perceived and treated.
- The decisions you make either enhance or lessen your ability to communicate in a powerful and effective way.
- Think about this for a minute. You are driving your route. You are observing 6 seconds of following distance. A car cuts you off. You make adjustments and resume your 6 seconds of following distance. Another car cuts you off and this time gets dangerously close to your front bumper. You sound your horn and throw your hand up in the air. You are right on his bumper now. Come on man! What are you doing? The driver of the car brakes hard. You have to do the same thing. Except you can't stop like he can and a couple of your passengers fall out of their seats and you hit the back end of the car. What if you would have just resumed your 6 seconds of following distance? How could things have been different?
- Operators have a lot of things to deal with on a daily basis.
- It is important to remember how our attitudes affect our ability to deal with these responsibilities effectively and professionally.

## Passenger Expectations

### Passengers expect:

- Safe, conflict-free ride
- On-time arrival and departure
- Clean bus environment
- Positive interaction with Operator



*How you choose to fill this role  
has an impact on your day.*

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### Instructor Notes:

- Impress upon the participants how important it is to meet the passenger's expectation not only daily, but for each and every ride.

### Discussion Points:

- Passengers generally have only a few expectations – safe, peaceful. and on time.
- If you add positive interaction, the ride actually becomes enjoyable!
- The successful bus ride meets both the needs of operators (safety) and the passengers (comfortable and convenient)

## What Triggers Conflict

- Fare collection
- Seat location
- Bringing unauthorized items
- Claims of unsafe driving
- Passengers giving operators directions or wanting to change destinations
- Others?



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### Instructor's Notes:

- Discuss with participants these situations that could trigger conflict with passengers.

### Discussion Points:

- Through the course of a day, there are many things that could arise that trigger conflict with passengers.
- Knowing some of the most common triggers can help us better understand how to deal with them.
- Some common things that trigger conflict are:
  - Fare collection
  - Food or drink on the vehicle
  - Vulgar language
  - Service interruptions
  - Other passengers
  - Seat location on vehicle
  - Bringing unauthorized items on the vehicle
  - Passenger injuries
  - Claims of unsafe driving
  - Passengers giving operators directions or wanting to change destinations
  - Environmental factors - it could be hot or cold outside
  - Passenger's disabilities
- ***Discuss location-specific situations that trigger conflict.***

## How Do YOU Resolve Conflict?

- Ignore it and work through it?
- Remain calm?
- Listen?
- Respond in a professional manner?
- Contact Management/Dispatch?
- Avoid continued conflict?



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### Instructor's Notes:

- We all have different ways of handling conflict – ignore it, let someone else handle it, or give it right back to them.
- As trained professional operators, we should handle these conflicts in a professional manner.

### Discussion Points:

**Ask participants:** *What methods do you currently use to resolve conflict.*

- Wait for some responses. (Examples given on the slide)
- You control how you respond to a situation.
  - You can be emotional or you can be non-emotional.
  - How you respond is probably how the other person will respond.
  - No one or no situation should control how you respond.
  - You are your own person.
- Do not instigate the conflict but respond in a way to resolve the conflict.

## Emotional Response to Conflict

- When the way we FEEL dictates our response
- When we do not think clearly about facts
- Emotional responses may sometimes cloud real issues



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### Instructor's Notes:

- Emotional responses to conflict can sometimes cloud the issues at play.
- Highlight the importance of remaining calm and controlling emotions within their response to conflicts with passengers.

### Discussion Points:

- Passengers commonly say “the other operators do it” or “the other operators let me do it”.
- Your response may be something like “I’m sorry we caused this confusion today by giving you conflicting information, but for safety reasons you will need to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Do not allow passengers to coerce you into doing something unsafe just because they say the other operators do it..
- Use the safety training we provide to influence a safe decision.

### Consider This:

- Consider this: you are having a discussion with your buddy about Sunday’s football game. It was a close game with some very important missed plays and opportunities on the part of your favorite team. Your buddy is giving you grief about how poorly your team played and how much better his team is; especially since they won the game. You get angry and yell that it was pure luck on the part of his team and they are terrible players anyway.
  - Do you think that is an emotional response or a non-emotional response?
    - Definitely emotional.
  - How could you have responded differently without allowing your feelings and emotions to get involved?
    - Considering only the facts of the situation and remaining calm allows you to respond in a non-emotional manner.

## Conflict Resolution

**Successful conflict resolution depends on your ability to:**

- Manage stress while remaining alert and calm
- Control your emotions and behavior
- Pay attention to feelings being expressed
- Be aware of and respectful of differences

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### **Instructor's Notes:**

- Successful conflict resolution depends on your ability to:
  - Manage stress while remaining alert and calm. By staying calm, you can accurately read and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication.
  - Control your emotions and behavior. When you're in control of your emotions, you can communicate your needs without threatening, frightening, or punishing others.
  - Pay attention to the feelings being expressed as well as the spoken words of others.
  - Be aware of and respectful of differences. By avoiding disrespectful words and actions, you can resolve the problem faster.

### **Discussion Points:**

- Not controlling emotions and behaviors could escalate a situation to a dangerous, possibly physical confrontation.
- Everyone has a right to their own opinion, and when people believe someone is going against their beliefs or opinions, they could get defensive.

### **Ask participants:**

- *Why is it important for you to be able to control your emotions and behaviors?*  
Wait for responses.
- Prompt participants to give responses such as:
  - You are the face of the company
  - You should conduct yourself professionally
  - Doing so should avoid escalation of the situation

## De-escalation Tips

1. Take a deep breath to prevent yourself from being provoked
2. Respect personal space
3. Maintain respectful body language and voice tone
4. Listen carefully to identify real issue
5. Be clear, speak simply, and offer a positive choice
6. Offer options and flexibility whenever possible
7. Allow time for silence and decisions

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### Instructor's Notes:

- Taking care of passengers by using techniques that indicate compassion, consistency, and fairness reduces the likelihood of conflict.
- The foundation of solid communication is making yourself be heard and expressing yourself clearly.
- While these are elements of good communication, the real core of communication is understanding where the other person is coming from – how they FEEL.

### Discussion Points:

1. Take a deep breath – control your own emotions to avoid being provoked into escalating the conflict.
2. Respect personal space – maintain 1.5 to 3 feet of space between you and the passenger to avoid perceptions of aggression.
3. Maintain respectful body language and voice tone – remember that sometimes your body and voice tone speak very loudly and often may not communicate what you want!
4. Listen carefully to identify the real issue – the passenger may not be communicating clearly what really is bothering them, or they may feel you don't care. Listening carefully allows you to identify what is really causing the conflict and take steps to de-escalate it.
5. Be clear, speak simply and offer a positive choice – when someone is angry it is difficult to focus on exactly what you are saying and what they should do to end the conflict. Offer a positive choice using simple and clear communication with the passenger.
6. Offer options and flexibility whenever possible – when you meet resistance from a passenger, offer them alternatives, such as “You may not want to sit up front in this seat, but I can let you choose a seat anywhere in the first 2 rows.”
7. Allow time for silence and decision making – time is your friend. In the midst of a conflict, passengers may find themselves unable to think fast enough and become overwhelmed. This could lead to acting out behaviors which escalate the conflict.

## Words to Avoid

### What Not to Say:

- What is your problem?
- Stop it, or you will be removed from the vehicle
- Sit down
- That's it! I'm calling my supervisor!
- Knock it off, or else!
- Pay now or you can't ride!

Let's see what an inappropriate exchange between an operator and passenger looks like in the next video

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### Instructor's Notes:

- How we respond to certain situations can escalate things further.
- It is important to remember what things not to do, so we can prevent things from escalating.

### Discussion Points:

- Remind participants to never say things such as:
  - What is your problem?
  - Stop it, or you will be removed from the bus
  - Sit down
  - That's it! I'm calling my supervisor
  - Knock it off, or else!
  - Pay now or you can't ride!

### Ask participants:

- Ask participants *What other things should we avoid saying so we don't escalate the situation?*
- Wait for responses.
- Prompt responses such as "I'm in charge of this bus", "I'm calling the cops!", "Man, get out my face", etc.

**Note:** A video will play as soon as you click to the next slide. It portrays an unacceptable exchange between passenger and operator which escalates unnecessarily.

## Words to Use

### What to Say:

- How can I help you?
- Please take your seat
- I will need to speak with my supervisor for additional information
- Please stop doing that



EXCUSE ME

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### Instructor's Notes:

- How we respond to certain situations can de-escalate tension.

### Discussion Points:

- It is our job to prevent problems, not create them.
- Using proper tone of voice and choice of words can be the difference of preventing a problem, or creating one.
- **Things you should say:**
  - How can I help you?
  - Please take your seat
  - I will need to speak with my supervisor for additional information
  - Please stop doing that

## Conflict Avoidance Tips

- Remain positive
- Remain calm
- Positive body language
- Be patient and tactful
- Control pride and ego
- Show empathy and understanding



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### Instructor's Notes:

- Discuss tips to avoid conflict.

### Discussion Points:

- Some conflict-avoidance tips are:
  - Remain positive. Positives go further than negatives.
  - Remain calm – Getting upset only upsets passengers further.
  - Positive body language. Using open hands, keeping a smile on your face, keeping enough personal space between you and the other person shows them that you are not a threat.
  - Be patient and tactful.
  - Have the ability to control pride and ego. Sometimes when other people are upset and it seems they are blaming us, it is easy to get defensive. Remember it's not personal. Most of the time the passenger is upset at a situation not with you.
  - Show empathy and understanding – show that you care. Sometimes people just want to be heard, and showing that you care can de-escalate a situation.

## Notify and Document

- Always notify Dispatch when conflict arises
- Make every attempt to prevent escalation
- Document incident – including names of witnesses
- Initiate video if applicable



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### Instructor's Notes:

- De-escalating the situation is only part of resolving the conflict.
- Knowing when to and how to report the situation increases the likelihood that the situation will not be repeated.

### Discussion Points:

- Just contacting Dispatch and documenting does not resolve the conflict.
- You need to deal with it (resolve it) so that it does not escalate into a bigger problem.

### Ask participants:

- *When do you think we should notify Dispatch and document a situation that occurs?*
- Wait for responses.
- Answer:
  - Immediately

**Note:** *Discuss local policies and procedures for reporting.*

## Scenario 1

### Passenger yells at operator because bus is late



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#### Instructor's Notes:

- We are going to roleplay a common situation that could lead to conflict.
- Ask for two volunteers.
  - One to play the part of the passenger
  - One to be the operator
- Instruct the volunteers to make up any relevant details as needed to enhance the role playing experience.

#### Discussion Points:

- Read the scenario to the entire group (Allow 2-3 minutes to role play the scenario).
- **Ask participants:** What do you think about the scenario?
  - Did the operator handle the situation appropriately?
  - Were both parties satisfied with the outcome?
  - What, if anything, could the operator have done differently?

#### Proficiency Points:

- Operator should empathize with passenger and communicate understanding of their feelings – apologize even when not your fault or unavoidable!
- Body language should be welcoming and not unapproachable.

#### Successful Outcome:

- Passenger boards the vehicle, takes a seat and operator continues on route without conflict.

## Scenario 2

### Passenger demands operator drop him/her off before other passengers



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#### Instructor's Notes:

- We are going to roleplay a common situation that could lead to conflict.
- Ask for two volunteers.
  - One to play the part of the passenger
  - One to be the operator
- Instruct the volunteers to make up any relevant details as needed to enhance the role playing experience.

#### Discussion Points:

- Read the scenario to the entire group (Allow 2-3 minutes to role play the scenario).
- **Ask participants:**
  - *Did the operator handle the situation appropriately?*
  - *Were both parties satisfied with the outcome?*
  - *What, if anything, could the operator have done differently?*

#### Proficiency Points:

- Operator should use a relaxed and non-threatening tone of voice.
- Body language should be welcoming.
- Passenger should be given options or a way out.

#### Successful Outcome:

- Passenger is dropped off at the correct destination and operator continues on route.

## Scenario 3

### Passenger attempts to bring unauthorized item onto vehicle



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#### Instructor's Notes:

- We are going to roleplay a common situation that could lead to conflict.
- Ask for two volunteers.
  - One to play the part of the passenger
  - One to be the operator
- Instruct the volunteers to make up any relevant details as needed to enhance the role playing experience.

#### Discussion Points:

- Read the scenario to the entire group. Allow 2-3 minutes to role play the scenario.
- **Ask participants:**
  - *Did the operator handle the situation appropriately?*
  - *Were both parties satisfied with the outcome?*
  - *What, if anything, could the operator have done differently?*

#### Proficiency Points:

- Operator should use a relaxed and non-threatening tone of voice.
- Be patient and don't take any passenger remarks personally.
- Offer positive choices.

#### Successful Outcome:

- Passenger boards the vehicle without the unauthorized item and the operator continues on route.

## Scenario 4

### Passenger is angry because operator won't follow his/her driving directions



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#### Instructor's Notes:

- We are going to roleplay a common situation that could lead to conflict.
- Ask for two volunteers.
  - One to play the part of the passenger
  - One to be the operator
- Instruct the volunteers to make up any relevant details as needed to enhance the role playing experience.

#### Discussion Points:

- Read the scenario to the entire group (Allow 2-3 minutes to role play the scenario).
- **Ask participants:**
  - *Did the operator handle the situation appropriately?*
  - *Were both parties satisfied with the outcome?*
  - *What, if anything, could the operator have done differently?*

#### Proficiency Points:

- Operator should use a relaxed and non-threatening tone of voice.
- Offer the “why” to the passenger – adults need to understand why when being asked to comply with a rule or limitation. Explain the procedures and why it may be unsafe and inconvenient for everyone if the assigned route is diverted.
- Be empathetic but clear in setting the limitation.

#### Successful Outcome:

- Passenger allows operator to continue on route without issue.

## Scenario 5



**Passenger demands to be dropped off at a different location than scheduled**

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### **Instructor's Notes:**

- We are going to roleplay a common situation that could lead to conflict.
- Ask for two volunteers.
  - One to play the part of the passenger
  - One to be the operator
- Instruct the volunteers to make up any relevant details as needed to enhance the role playing experience.

### **Discussion Points:**

- Read the scenario to the entire group (Allow 2-3 minutes to role play the scenario).
- **Ask participants:**
  - *Did the operator handle the situation appropriately?*
  - *Were both parties satisfied with the outcome?*
  - *What, if anything, could the operator have done differently?*

### **Proficiency Points:**

- Operator should use a relaxed and nonthreatening tone of voice.
- Be patient and reassuring – but let passenger know you have rules you must follow as well, and you are not allowed to change the drop-off.
- Carefully explain to the passenger how to handle this for the next time so you will be allowed to change the drop-off.
- Allow the passenger to know you understand how this must feel – disappointing etc.

### **Successful Outcome:**

- Passenger exits the bus at an acceptable location without creating any additional conflict and operator safely continues on route.

## Scenario 6

**Passenger rips paper to soothe herself while riding everyday and leaves it on the floor**



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### **Instructor's Notes:**

- We are going to roleplay a common situation that could lead to conflict.
- Ask for two volunteers:
  - One to play the part of the passenger
  - One to be the operator
- Instruct the volunteers to make up any relevant details as needed to enhance the roleplaying experience.

### **Discussion Points:**

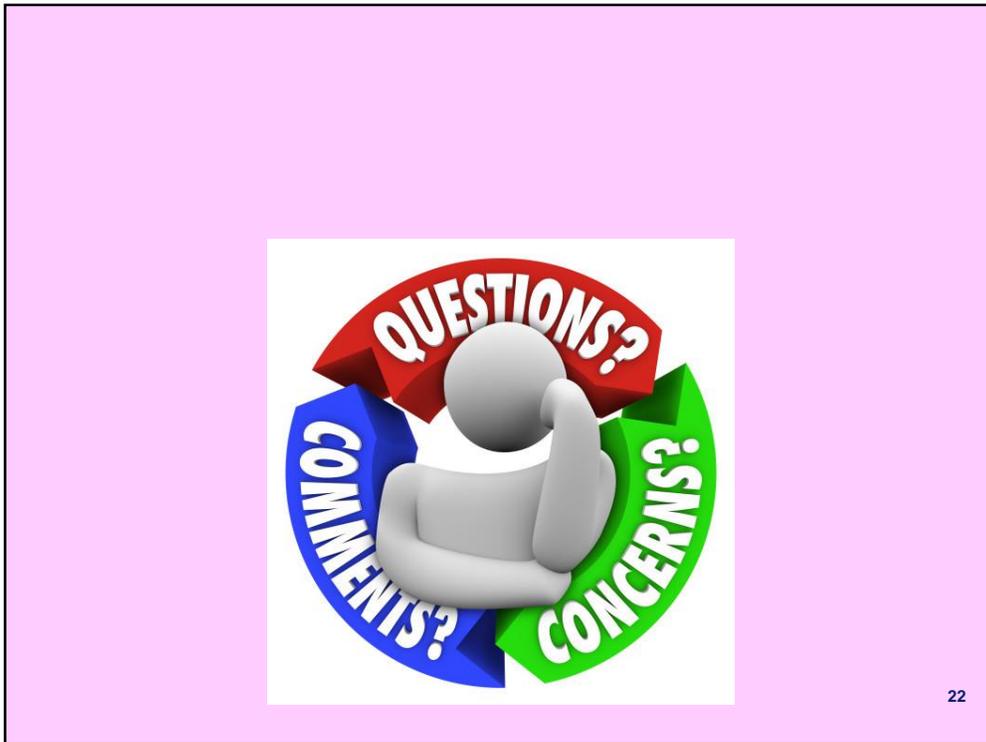
- Read the scenario to the entire group (Allow 2-3 minutes to role play the scenario).
- **Ask participants:**
  - *Did the operator handle the situation appropriately?*
  - *Were both parties satisfied with the outcome?*
  - *What, if anything, could the operator have done differently?*

### **Proficiency Points:**

- Operator should use a relaxed and non-threatening tone of voice.
- Body language should be welcoming.
- Passengers who have cognitive or mental disabilities may engage in self-soothing behaviors to prevent them from engaging in disruptive behavior.
- As long as the behavior is not creating an unsafe environment for other passengers or the operator, the behavior should not be treated as disruptive or as a conflict.
- Escalating the situation could turn it into something it doesn't have to be.

### **Successful Outcome:**

- Passenger continues to rip paper to self-soothe and operator safely continues on route, understanding that this is not a scenario that should create conflict.



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**Instructor Notes:**

- Use this opportunity to evaluate the learning based on what questions are asked from the participants
- If there seems to be an area that lacked general understanding – take the time to clarify the main points
- It is important to be sure everyone is comfortable with moving on to the next section of this training

**Discussion Points:**

- None

## Review

1. How can your attitude impact your work?
2. What is your role as an Operator?
3. Name two passenger expectations.
4. What are two examples of situations that could trigger conflict?
5. Identify two techniques to de-escalate conflict.
6. Name one tip to avoid conflict.

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### Instructor's Notes:

- Review the content of this section by checking the objectives.

### Discussion Points:

#### 1. What are the effects of your attitude

- Your attitude determines how you respond to situations.

#### 2. Understand your role/goal as an operator

- Provide conflict-free ride
- Keep a schedule
- Navigate through traffic
- Provide positive interaction with passengers
- Follow manifest / trip sheet / schedule / use MDT / radio

#### 3. Understand the customer's expectations

- Safe, conflict-free ride
- On time arrival and departure
- Clean bus environment
- Provide positive interaction with operator

#### 4. Name 2 examples of situations that could trigger conflict?

- Fare collection
- Seat location on vehicle
- Bringing unauthorized items on the vehicle
- Claims of unsafe driving
- Passengers giving operators directions
- Passenger wanting to change destinations

#### 6. What are 2 techniques to de-escalate conflict?

- Take a deep breath to prevent yourself from being provoked
- Keep from responding to rude remarks
- Letting things go can be difficult - but wise
- Use nonthreatening nonverbal cues
- Avoid overreacting
- Leave the person a way out

#### 7. Name 1 tip to avoid conflict?

- Remain positive
- Remain calm
- Positive body language
- Be patient, tactful
- Have the ability to control one's own pride and ego
- Don't take it personal
- Show empathy and understanding

# Summary

- You have a choice every day regarding attitude
- A safe, comfortable, and conflict-free ride meets the needs of passenger and operator
- Successful conflict avoidance depends on your ability to stay positive and calm
- Documenting an incident supports prevention

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## **Instructor's Notes:**

- Use this slide to wrap up the training content and summarize the important learning points.
- Simply cover the points on this slide and move to end the session.

## **Discussion Points:**

- None

**Thank You**

**This Section of training  
is now complete**

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**Instructor's Notes:**

- None

**Discussion Points:**

- None

