

Aggressive interactions at work



Aggressive behaviour is any behaviour that attempts to dominate, intimidate or threaten another person, including both words and actions.

What aggressive behaviour have you experienced in your post office or when delivering parcels to members of the public?

Here are some common actions that can be considered aggressive:

- Shouting
- Standing too close
- Walking away
- Physical domination
- Hostile tone or increased pitch
- Verbal threats (e.g., to harm someone or property)
- Throwing things/ causing damage (e.g., throwing a parcel)
- Inappropriate comments
- Harassment
- Abusive letters, calls, or messages
- Emotional abuse

Vulnerable people who behave aggressively

While aggression should never be tolerated, separating aggressive behaviour from the person is important.

People may behave aggressively due to illness, personal hardship or other unique challenges they are facing.

For example, disability, financial stress, work related stress, or emotional distress might lead someone to behave aggressively. While we may not be able to identify the reason, being mindful of these triggers can help to distance ourselves from the experience, and the person behaving aggressively.

As a first step it can be helpful to respectfully ask the person to stop the unwanted behaviour. They may not be aware that they are behaving aggressively, especially if they are going through their own personal challenges.



Become familiar with the list of aggressive actions here and begin to pay attention to how you respond to these situations.

My reaction to threats & tolerance

Naturally, humans react to situations we find threatening. If someone is behaving in an unwanted way, it is important to objectively assess the situation.

Acknowledging your own personal triggers and reactions is important. We all respond differently to situations we find uncomfortable and threatening. Sometimes, **the way we respond can influence how an aggressive interaction plays out.** Paying attention to what is in our control – our own reactions – may minimise the risk. See page 2 for some helpful tips.

We often have different tolerance levels to those around us. What we find aggressive, may not be identified as aggressive by another team member. Talk with your team about violence and aggression in the workplace and together, prepare by developing an **Aggressive Behaviour Action Plan.**

Aggression should never be tolerated. Always talk with your team and workplace if you feel unsafe. You have the right to feel safe at work, be it in your Post Office or when delivering parcels to the community.

Preparing for & Managing Aggressive Interactions

1.

Planning

- Know what aggression is and what it looks like.
- Know and practice your Aggressive Behaviour Action Plan.
- Know your own triggers.
- Create an Exit Strategy with your team (and practice it regularly).
- Know what to do – code words, exit points /escape paths, safety procedures, CCTV cameras, duress alarm.

TIP: If you're delivering parcels, prepare by ensuring that there is a clear exit path; can you easily go back the way you came?



2.

During an incident

- Focus on slowing your breathing. (Maintain a calm and concerned look).
- Keep your escape path clear and close.
- Protect your personal space (aim for 1.5 metres distance).
- Use confident body language and tone.
- Listen attentively and acknowledge.

TIP: Show empathy, clarify their needs, show you're listening (e.g., nod, “mm hmm”).

- If possible, use natural obstacles (have something between you and them. e.g., a fence, plant, counter, or shelf).

Do not..

- Make promises.
- Make threats back, or tell them to “calm down” – this may provoke them further.



3.

Think: Is this working?

If YES

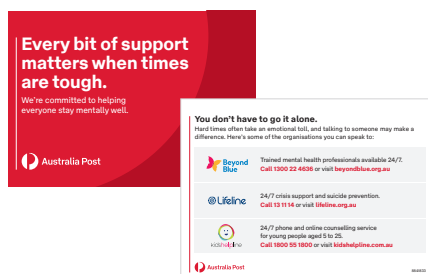
Step 1: Explore what is needed and how you can facilitate this. (e.g., do they need you to follow up a parcel?).

Step 2: Before they leave, repeat any agreed actions for clarity.

If NO

Retreat & engage help

- Create space between you and the aggressor.
- If possible, place yourself in full view of CCTV or a more public view.
- Raise both hands in a surrender position and tell them to “Please stop” or “Please leave the Post Office now”.
- Remove yourself from the area; exit to your designated safe place (e.g., locked room, inside your vehicle).
- Call Emergency on 000.



“We are constantly hit with one adversity after the other, most of which we have no control over. But the four things we have total control over is how we react, how we adapt, how we breathe, and how we take action.”

Diamond Dallas Page

Customer support

It is not your role to counsel or care for customers. Instead, listen to their concerns and provide them with a Customer Support Card.

SAP Code: 8841833.

Supports for you

Managing Customer Aggression Online Learning Tool

Located via the EPOS terminal (LPO's)

Workforce Assistance Program (WAP)

1300 687 327 / convergeinternational.com.au

BeyondBlue

1300 224 636 / beyondblue.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service

1300 659 487 / suicidedcallbackservice