

TIPS FOR THE TELEPHONE

Remember that facial expressions and body language comprise approximately 55% of face to face communication. Over the telephone, people “fill in the blanks” and often create their own mental image of how you look and what you might be doing. Do everything you can to create a positive perception in their mind. Also, take advantage of the fact that they can’t see you by using non-verbal techniques to ground yourself and stay relaxed.

Some specific tips:

- Sit in a relaxed position, feet on the floor. Smile (it will show up in your tone of voice and words.) If you need to become more assertive, stand up and stand with your feet on the ground, feet apart.
- Breathe regularly and deeply. You can even close your eyes to help you centre yourself and concentrate (- something not recommended for face to face encounters 😊.)
- Take notes to help you focus and to ensure you can summarize their key points. Notes can also help you make your points completely and effectively when it’s your turn to talk.
- Use the “hold” button when you need to gather information or regroup – though use it sparingly, as being asked to wait may trigger the client’s frustration. Make sure you tell them why you’re putting them on hold – and how it will help their situation.
- Prove to them you understand. In face to face encounters, you can demonstrate your attentiveness by nodding and making eye contact. Over the phone, repeat key words and even conversational terms such as “uh-hu” and “I see” to convey your understanding.
- If the caller is abusive or so angry that the conversation is going nowhere (even after you have set limits), then you may have to hang up. If you do, tell them briefly and firmly why you’re disengaging (“I won’t be sworn at”) and leave the door open for future communication by inviting them to call at a later time (“call me this afternoon”).