

Keeping calm when you need to say no

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Sometimes you won't be able to say meet people's expectations. They may for example be demanding a booster vaccination or conversely be seeking a health exemption from vaccination.

This can be particularly challenging when the person is of high status or power, is someone you know well, or when they are absolutely convinced that they are right.

Tips that can help you to keep calm and communicate

- Take guidance from your organisation and the Unite Against COVID-19 website to ensure you are confident in terms of the boundaries of what you can and can't offer.
- Always be respectful in voice, actions and body language to maintain and enhance the mana of the other person. Wait until they have finished speaking – don't be tempted to interrupt them, even if you know that what they are saying is factually wrong.
- Speak calmly and confidently – keep your tone of voice and rate of speech calm and deliberate. People may express strong emotions,
- Be kind and empathic, extending manaaki. The person will have a strong belief about what they want and will likely be frustrated and/or disappointed when it is not possible. Phrases such as "I'm sorry that we can't..." or "I would love to be able to, but..." express empathy.
- Being assertive is about listening to their point of view, seeking to understand, then using simple, direct and concise language to state what you know to be true.
- If possible, tell them why you need to say no. Help them understand that the rules are set across New Zealand. If you are not sure about why something is not possible, ask your supervisor, so that you can confidently explain the reason when asked.
- Sometimes, investing a little time helping a person understand the 'why' or the 'why not' can save you time – if they go out and spread the word, it can save you having the same conversation with others.
- Some people will be angry or frustrated that you are not saying yes to their demand. If their behaviour becomes abusive or aggressive, state clearly that the behaviour is not OK and set limits around what is acceptable. The *Keeping calm and safe – tips for de-escalation resource* offers some useful tips.

COVID-19

- It's okay to ask for help from your shift leader if the situation gets hard to manage or you feel like your ongoing relationship with the person will be significantly damaged. You are part of your community and it is important that you can sustain relationships beyond the vaccination programme.