

## **Dealing with Difficult Callers - Webinar Summary**



On Wednesday, November 25th, 2020, we held a webinar for our members to come together and share their experiences with inappropriate and difficult callers. Here is some of the information that we gathered;

- There has been an increase in difficult callers since the beginning of the pandemic - both aggressive and sexual in nature.
- Repeat offenders are common and circulate through many of our members' helplines. They often change their name and story to mask their identity to volunteers.
- There is a diagnosis for individuals who call strangers and helplines for illegitimate reasons - *Telephone Scatologia* or *Telephone Scatophilia (TS)*.
- The best advice for volunteers is to hang up if they cannot steer the conversation back into an appropriate territory.
- Power structures were discussed, many times the caller tries to take power away from the volunteer through manipulation and trickery - sometimes a stern voice and clear boundaries can solve this problem. This will be at the discretion of the volunteer, and if they are uncomfortable, they always have the option to hang up after advising the caller they would be hanging up if the behaviour does not stop.

### **Information and Resources**

Donna Martin from Sarnia Distress Center was kind enough to share a document that she created at Family Counselling Center Distress Line Sarnia Lambton, it can be used to identify bogus callers and suggests how to manage them. We also identified a diagnosis for this type of behaviour, *TS*. The guide on how to handle difficult callers can be found here:

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KG3bwzUYYfWCTtGtK3tA1x1JITgUUfO7/view?usp=sharing>

*TS* is a paraphilic disorder characterized by repetitive calls to strangers or helplines. These callers can be overt or covert with sexual or obscene content and the disorder can be linked to exhibitionism or voyeurism. Here are some resources on *TS*;

- [http://www.antonioacasella.eu/archipsy/KAFKA\\_2009.pdf](http://www.antonioacasella.eu/archipsy/KAFKA_2009.pdf) - this is a study done on Not Otherwise Specified paraphilic disorders. Information on *TS* can be found on pg. 2.
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/in-excess/201710/the-psychology-obscene-telephone-calling> - this study by Psychology Today is an easier, shorter read. There are more statistics in this report as well. Paragraph 5 details the 3 most common forms of *TS*, with helpline phone calls being mentioned in paragraph 6.

Other Resources you may find helpful:

- <https://englishwithkirsty.com/2017/11/14/how-to-end-conversations-with-difficult-callers/> - this article is about ending difficult phone calls with customers but can be applied to

helplines. Some great steps to take before hanging up and how to do so respectfully but firmly.

- <https://multichannelmerchant.com/blog/5-ways-alleviate-frustration-tough-customer-interaction/> - this article is about self care after dealing with a difficult customer. Again the focus is on customer service but it includes great tips on how to calm down after a stressful call.

### **Request For Feedback**

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