THE CATALYST

Supporting the Mental Health of Retail Workers During COVID-19

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Retail workers have been on the frontlines since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic keeping our necessities flowing. These people are courageous. They are putting themselves out among the public, many are serving hundreds of people every day, often for low pay. Now, as we are beginning to reopen the economy, more people will be working again in retail, supporting our needs and our wants.

While many customers have been courteous, there are increasing reports of customers treating retail workers rudely, even to the point of violence. It's understandable that as customers we can be frustrated about not being able to get what we want or to return items we don't want or need when we want to.

Isolation and quarantine are hard for many people. We can feel helpless, anxious, and even angry when our freedom is taken away and when we are isolated from other people, especially those we love and those we enjoy spending time with outside of our homes.

But we must remember not to take our frustrations out on retail workers. Let's try to exercise a little empathy, so instead of reacting in frustration, we can respond with civility and respect.

Pause. Breathe.

Remember, that cashier, stock person, customer service rep, or supervisor that you are dealing with are facing many of the same frustrations we all are, plus:

- they may be under considerable financial stress, just trying to pay their bills
- many may have to face challenges with public transit just to get to and from work every day, and with the changes in public transit, that has become more difficult and scarier for many
- they may be serving hundreds of customers every day, not knowing who is a carrier of COVID-19
- they may be afraid of getting sick with COVID or bringing it home to their families; and
- they might afraid of losing their jobs.

So, let’s work together to support the mental health of our retail workers. Please join us in giving retail workers the civility and respect they deserve.

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