

It's time ... to listen to your customers

Sadie (14) and her cousin Amanda (15)

When my cousin and I walked into a store at our local mall, the salesperson asked us, "Have you shopped here before? Do you want any help picking out jeans?" We said sure, because I hoped she would show us some cool new jeans.

She then asked "Do you know what size you are?" I told her yes, but she still grabbed the store measuring tape and just started to measure us. This time I said "No, thank you," but she just continued. She pulled up my shirt to measure my waist. Then without even asking, she measured my inseam from the inside of my leg. Then, she did the same thing to my cousin.

It just didn't feel right that she measured near the crotch of my pants. I don't need someone to tell me that I need shorter jeans. I told her my size, but then she still wanted to measure us.

Honestly, she did not feel creepy, just really pushy.

So, we continued to look around and thankfully, she left us when we headed toward the dressing room. After we left the store, we had a better time. But seriously, the whole measuring tape thing weirded us out, so we talked to my mom when we got home.

Activity

Create a network map of WHO might be involved in this situation and WHAT they can do. Turn page over for answer key. For a sample letter to the store manager, see Page 3.

Answer Key

Directions

First, brainstorm the people who are in a position to say or do something.

Below, some examples:

- Other sales staff
- Store manager
- Other customers

Then, brainstorm what they might be able to do.

Note: Each person has a number of options.

Sample of suggested responses

For Sadie or Amanda

- Talk with one of Sadie's parents/guardians
- Talk with Amanda's parents or guardians
- Before leaving the store (or come back into the store after you have collected your thoughts) talk with the salesperson about how it felt
- Ask to speak with the store manager
- Write a letter to the store manager

For Sadie's or Amanda's parents/guardians

- Talk with Sadie and Amanda about what happened, assure them that their instincts were right, and what a more respectful interaction would look like
- Reinforce that they have a right to say no in the situation and ALWAYS have that right when it comes to their bodies
- Offer to help them write a letter or go back to speak to the manager

Other sales staff

- Say something to the sales person that did not listen to the customers' requests
- Ask for clearer guidelines about when and how to measure a customer

- Offer or ask for additional training about listening to what the customer wants
- Ask to review the protocols outline in the policy of measuring customers (e.g., don't measure a girl under the age of 16 without a parent or guardian around or allow the customer to hold the tape measure)

Other customers

- Step into the conversation with Sadie and Amanda when you notice that they are not being listened to
- Talk with the sales person afterward when she is alone
- Talk with the store manager about what you saw
- Talk with your family, friends, etc. about why that was not OK

Store manager

- Talk with the sales person that did not listen well to the customer
- Create clearer guidelines about when and how to measure a customer (if at all)
- Offer additional training about listening to what the customer wants

Sample letter to the store manager

Your address goes here
Your address goes here

Date

Store name
Store address
Store address

Dear Store Manager,

Over the last few years, I have shopped at your store many times, and I have never had a bad experience, until now. Last week, my cousin and I were shopping at your store at the _____ Mall. When we walked in, a member of your sales staff asked us if we had ever shopped there before, I said, "Yes." _____ offered to help us with some jeans. She asked if she could measure us, and I said "No, thank you." But _____ grabbed a measuring tape and without asking, she lifted my shirt to measure my waist and then the inside of my leg. She did the same thing to determine my cousin's size.

What bothered me was that even when I said that I did not want to be measured, the salesperson continued to measure us.

Your store's clothing is designed to appeal to teenage girls, and honestly I don't think that your sizing policy is appropriate. A salesperson should make us feel good about ourselves and about what we wear. In this case, we left feeling weird about the entire experience. As a result, we went to another store to buy our jeans. A simple change could have made a huge difference.

If your salesperson had asked to measure us before she took out the measuring tape, and if she had listened to our answer, it would have been much better. For some customers, this could be a very upsetting experience. I hope you will revise your inseam measuring policy and talk to your employees about respecting a customer's personal space. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Sadie Jones