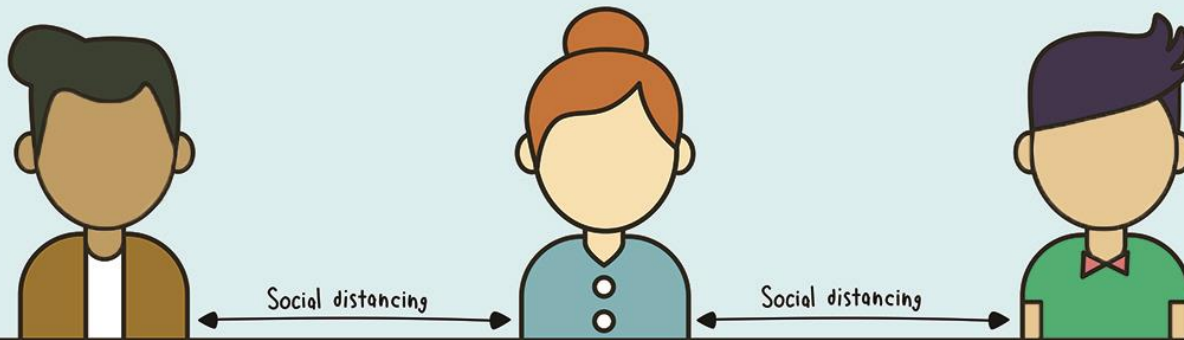


# *MentorNJ Presents*

## **The Reality of Now: Library Customer Service in a Pandemic**



**With Joanne P. Roukens, MLS**  
*Wednesday, May 27, 2020*

This program is NOT advocating for opening libraries sooner than would be safe for staff and the communities they serve.

It's about applying the principles of good customer service in the new environment we will face when libraries reopen.

It will not cover legal issues, personnel issues or health/sanitation procedures in any detail.



# *Joanne P. Roukens, MLS*

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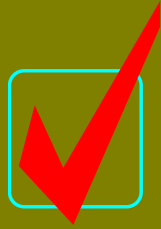


**<https://librarylinknj.org/MentorNJ>**



## Online meetups organized by library staff

- Meetup Monday
- Tech
- Juggling Librarianship and Parenting
- Adventures in Administration
- Self-care
- Youth Services



# Overview

- Our new reality
- Mutual care
- Best practices for reopening
- Delivering service

# After This Program, You Will Be Able To:

- Identify steps to get services ready to open
- Describe good customer service
- Apply behaviors that ensure good customer service
- Share ideas and strategies on being a customer focused library

# The Reality of Now



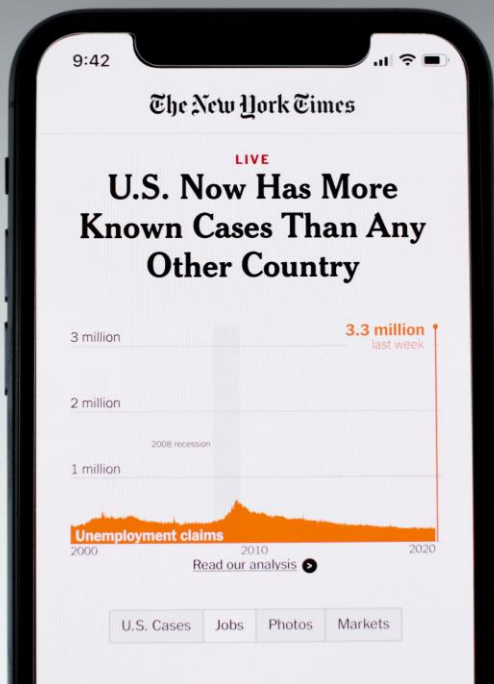




# What is Your Current Employment Status?

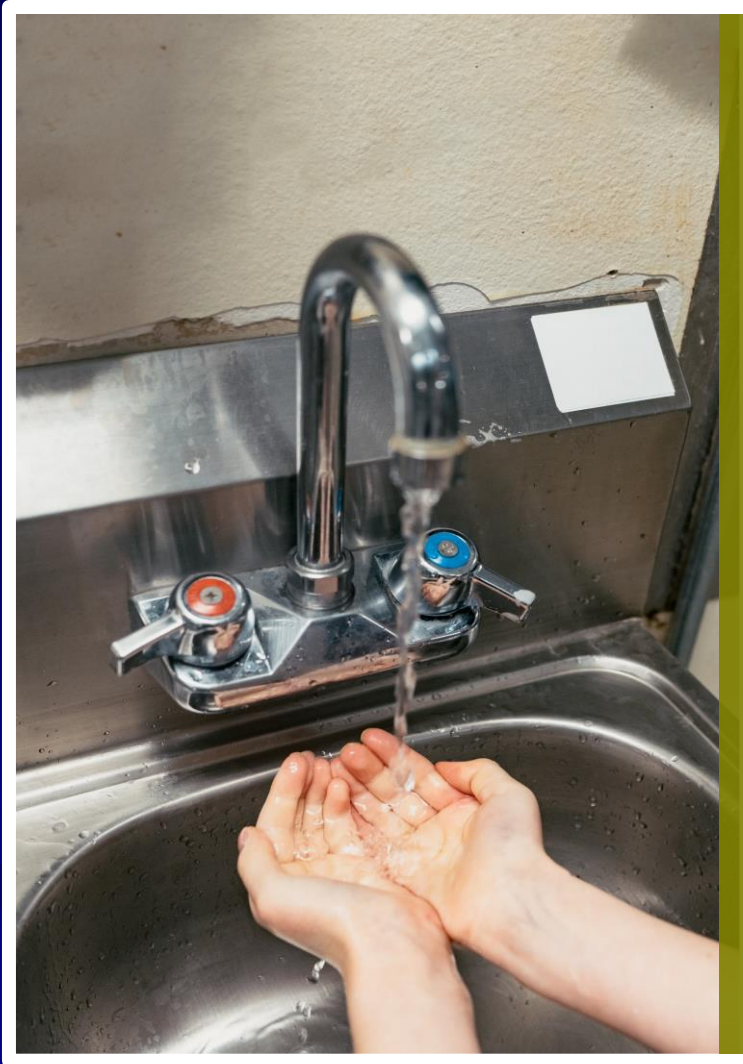
- Working from home
- Working in the library building
- Working from home and in the building
- Laid off/Unemployed
- Furloughed

# Our Reality



- Fear
- Uncertainty
- Death
- Job loss
- Paying the bills
- Parenting

# Our Reality



- Caring for elders
- Overwhelmed
- Less staff
- Slashed budgets
- High health risk
- Privacy concerns

# Our Reality



- Public health
- Non-compliant people
- Working conditions
- Job creep
- Collections

# Our Reality



- Libraries closed
- Virtual services
- Social media
- Outreach
- Working from home
- Working harder

# Our Reality



- New skills
- New habits
- New rules
- New risks

# Reopening Our Libraries



- NJLA Webinar
- TOPCATS Best Practices




# Who & What Are TOPCATS

- LibraryLinkNJ (LLNJ) convened the **Taskforce On Post COVID-19 Alignment, Trends and Strategies**
- Explore issues, strategies, and solutions
- LLNJ, NJSL, NJLA, NJLTA
- Staff from libraries across the state

# TOPCATS Best Practices

- **Phase 1: Libraries Closed to the Public**
- **Phase 2: Libraries Prepare for Opening**
- **Phase 3: Libraries Operate with Limited Services**
- **Phase 4: Libraries Open with Expanded Services**
- **Phase 5: Libraries Operate in a New Normal**

# Reopening Our Libraries



WELCOME  
TO THE  
LIBRARY

Each Phase: 3 sections

1. Safety & security
2. Library operations
3. Services, programming and *customer support*

# Internal & External Support



**Our Public  
Trusts Us**

**There is no  
more important  
asset than staff**

# Mutual Care

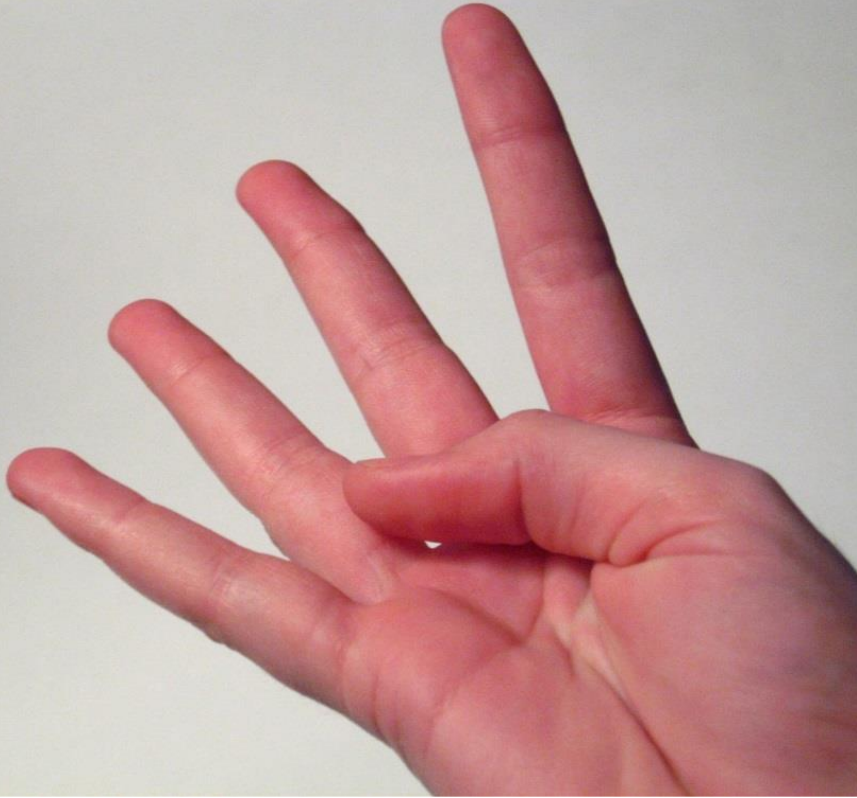
- Management's No. 1 job – PROTECT STAFF
- Human beings more important than services
- MUST - Staff feedback and inclusion
- Validate people's real concerns
- Morale = safety

# Mutual Care

- Total support of staff dealing with library users who don't comply with health and safety measures
- Decisions have very serious consequences
- Emerge as stronger and healthier than before – a better workplace

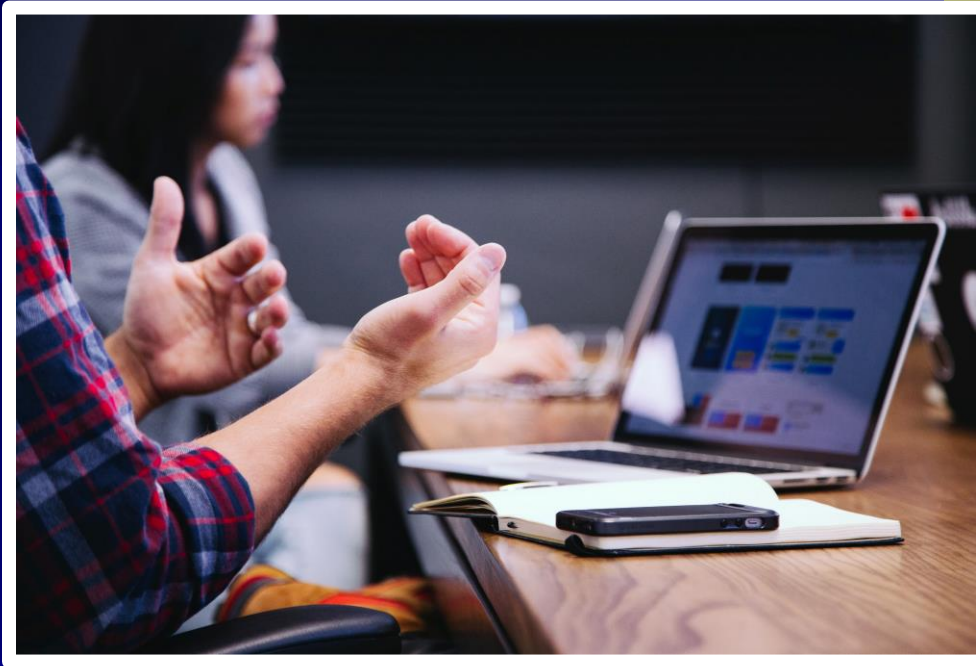


# Good Service - Four Behaviors



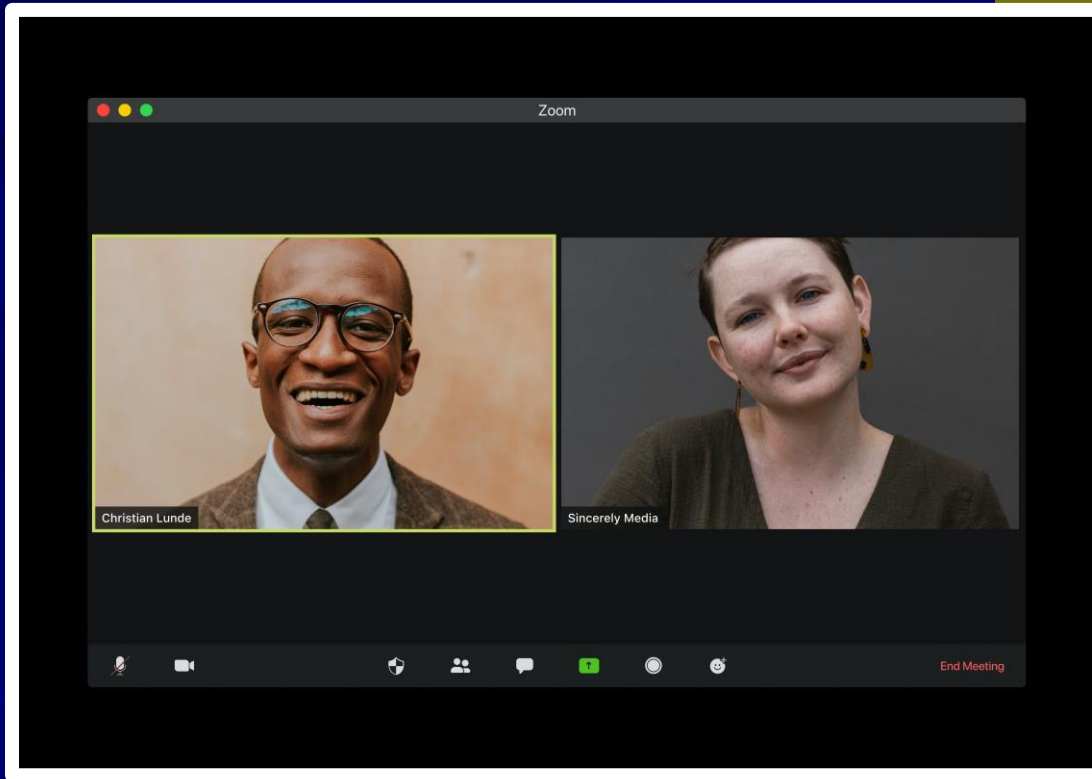
1. Approachable
2. Attentive
3. Helpful
4. Considerate

# Communication



- Administration
- Staff
- Library users

# How Are We Communicating



- Zoom
- Phone
- Email
- Social media
- In-person

# Three Steps



1. Ask
2. Respond
3. Satisfy

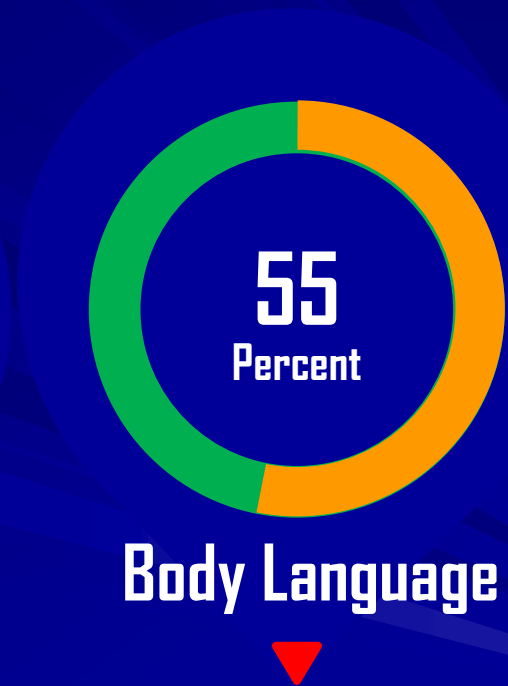
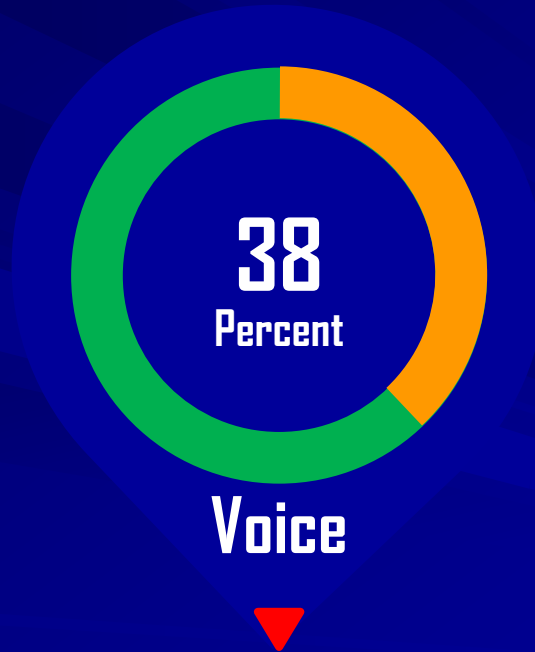
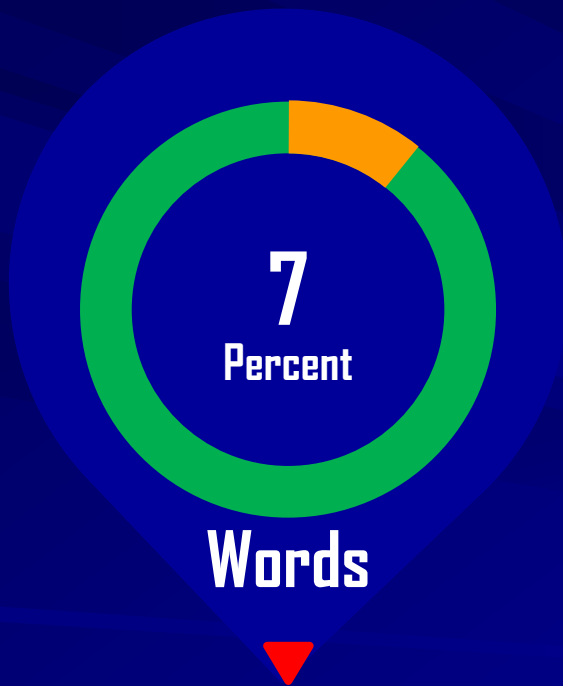
# Face-to-Face Communication



- Through our words
- Through our voice
- Through our body language

-

# Face-to-Face Communication



Conveying the Message

# Digital/Virtual Services



- Webpage
- Chat
- Messaging
- Social Media
- Email

# **Difficult Situations & Complaints**

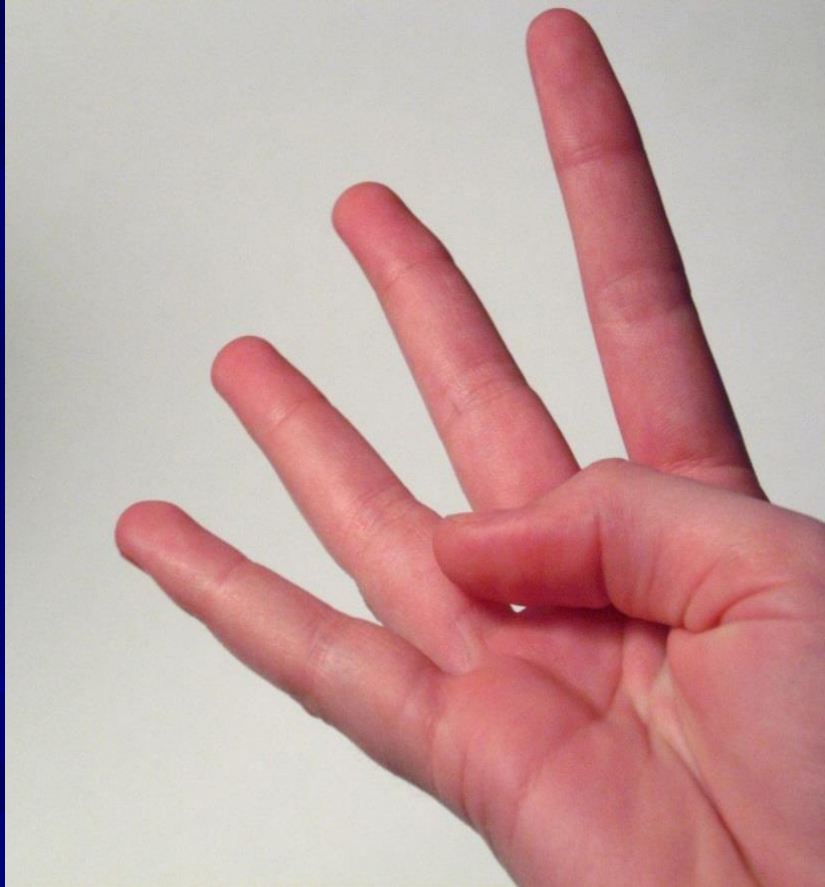
**Every problem that can be found in  
the world at large can be found in  
a library.**



# First Impressions



# Four Steps to Saying No



1. Express regret
2. Give the reason
3. Explain what you will do next
4. Offer alternatives

# LED Method

1. **L**isten
2. **E**mpathize
3. **D**iffuse

# Empathy Fatigue



- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion
- *Many of us are here already – staff & management*

# Help One Another



- Post rules
- Communicate
- Keep alert
- Be consistent
- Work out intervention

# Hurdles



- Physical building
- Information access
- Policies and procedures
- Collections
- Attitudes

# Policies and Procedures

*The Reality of Now – ever changing*

- Review at least once a month
- Reflect the developing now
- Policies are **not** for the 10%
- Positive, not negative
- Support the staff and patrons

# Being Inclusive



- Personal barriers
- Health issues
- Living circumstances



# A User Focused Library

1. Asks current users their expectations
2. Asks how you can communicate
3. Asks what services they need

# A User Focused Library

4. Creates a system to provide the service
5. Gives them what they need
6. Refers them to services you can't provide

*And repeats this with non-customers!*

# How Are We Going to Do This?



- AAHC
- Ask,  
Respond,  
Satisfy
- Face-to-Face
- Support

# Curbside Service - Planning



- Stay at home order lifted
- Health & hygiene
- Staff input
- Detailed/flexible
- Staff training

# Curbside Service - Planning



- TOPCATS
- Many others

# Curbside Service – Policies & Procedures



- No. 1 Goal – health & hygiene
- Board Approval
- Communicate
  - Staff
  - Local officials
  - Public

# Curbside Service - Where, When & How



- Safety & hygiene
- Equipment
- Shelter & weather
- Staff comfort
- Make choices, parameters

# Curbside Service - Signs



- Helpful
- Clear, large, colorful
- Welcoming
- Not too many
- Withstands weather



# Curbside Service - Face-to-Face



- Staff PPE
  - Personalize
    - Photograph
    - Button
    - Name tag

# Curbside Service - Face-to-Face



- Verbal
  - Greeting – smile!
  - “Welcome! How can I help you today?”
  - Yes, No, refer
  - Thank them

# Curbside Service - Face-to-Face



- Body Language
  - Wave!
  - Nod
  - Hand gestures
  - Stance/posture

# Curbside Service - Problems



- Express regret
- Give a reason
- Explain what you will do
- Offer alternatives

# Curbside Service – Learn, Adjust

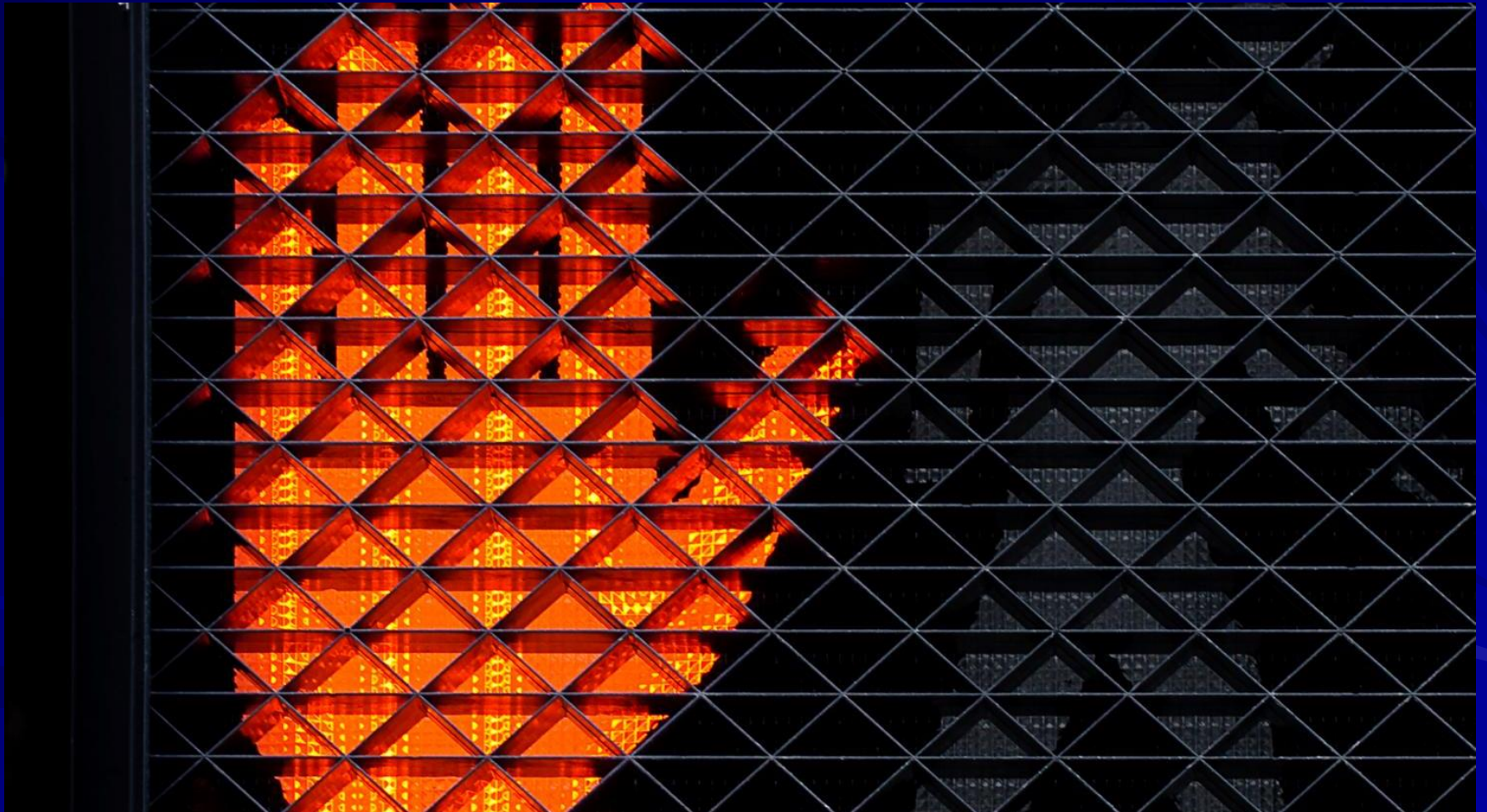


- Observe
- Gather feedback
- Evaluate
- Change
- Try again

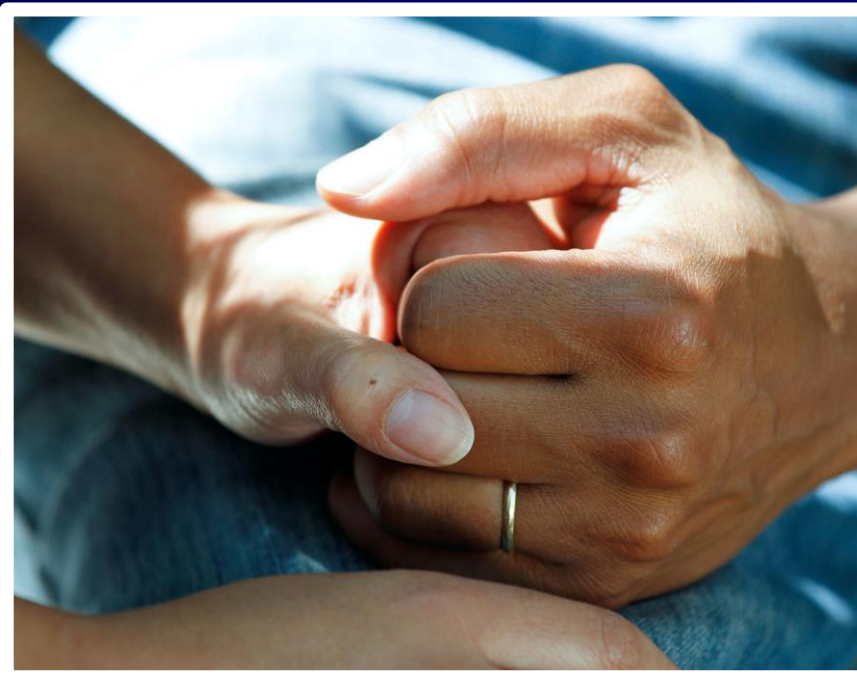


**There is no magic  
wand to make people  
“behave,” and comply**

**You will need to turn people away if they violate the law and library rules**



# Focusing on Health



- Physical & emotional
- Self-care
- Well being
- Silence is damaging



# Focusing on Each Other



- Teamwork
- Recognition of new dangers
- Tell staff they are appreciated

# Focusing on Emotions



- Respected & valued
- Heard & understood
- Trusting & being trusted
- Being involved

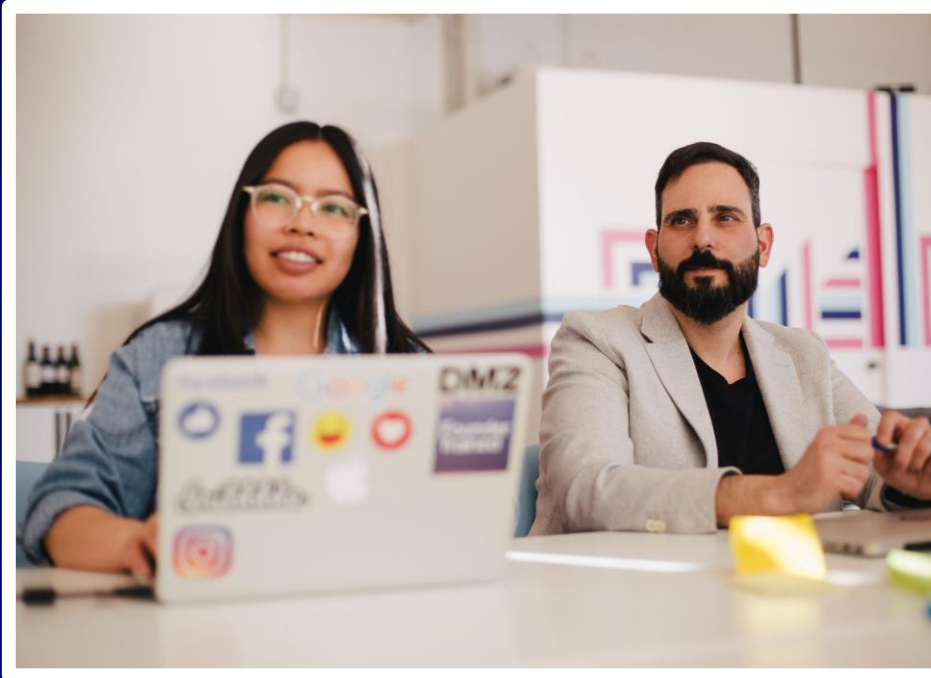
# We All Need

- Respect
- Patience
- Convenience
- Acknowledgement

- Approachable
- Attentive
- Helpful
- Considerate

# Questions & Sharing

# Review



- Mutual care
- Reality of now
- Reopening
- Service considerations
- Care & support



## ***Joanne P. Roukens, MLS***

**Joanne served as the Assistant Director for LibraryLinkNJ, The New Jersey Library Cooperative (LLNJ) from 2010 - 2019. A very proud member of the Library Gods & Goddesses Trivia Team, her contribution is expertise in classic film, literary detectives/classic mysteries, British history, and food. Joanne is still waiting to apply her deep knowledge of royal tiaras in a competition.**

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