

# LEARN | Engage Clients Based on Their Coping Styles

Life events or market volatility can disrupt a client's sense of financial security. When you understand clients' specific coping styles, you can adjust your approach to help them manage uncomfortable emotions, increase their personal control and chase positivity.

## Two Common Client Coping Styles:



### Dragon

- Places others on the defensive.
- Prone to expressing anger and sarcasm.
- Displays a confrontational demeanor, sometimes in a muted fashion.

Dragons can make you feel anxious if you have not yet figured out how best to manage their combative behaviors, lessening the likelihood you can help minimize their inertia.

#### [Strategies to Engage a Dragon](#)

Seek to make the dragon an active participant in managing his/her portfolio. Empathize with the dragon, knowing that your empathy does not imply an apology or agreement.

#### [Sample Conversation During Times of Financial Uncertainty](#)

"I know you're angry and disappointed. Remember, the decisions we made about your investment portfolio were based on the best information we had at that time. Many people are upset in this kind of volatile market."

"It's important to realize that going forward, updated information will provide new choices that we can make about your investments. We can review this information together and consider what modifications might make sense."



### Ostrich

- Uses denial to deal with financial anxiety.
- May not open financial statements or check on his/her portfolio(s) for extended periods.
- Unlikely to contact you when his/her anxiety is high.
- Likely to put off responding to your calls or emails.

A lack of contact does not mean the client isn't worried about his/her portfolio. Taking such a stance will only intensify client frustration and anxiety.

### Strategies to Engage an Ostrich

The ostrich uses denial as a shield. If you attempt to remove this shield too quickly without addressing the person's underlying feelings, the ostrich will form an even stronger shield.

#### Try Addressing the Ostrich's Anxiety With This Proactive Two-Step Approach:

**1. Loosen the shield.** Repeatedly stress that you will maintain contact with the ostrich through good and bad markets – even more so when markets become volatile.

#### Sample Statement

“You can count on me to always stay on top of your investments and in close contact with you during good and bad markets as well as throughout your life's journey.”

This type of message helps prepare ostriches for volatility, while informing them you will ensure collaboration at all points of the relationship.

**2. Engage in a deeper conversation.** Proactively contact the client by phone or email to set up a longer conversation during challenging times. Since you have been preparing the client for potential uncertainty, he/she will be more likely to engage.



### Bottom Line

By becoming a source of strength, not a silent partner, you can help dragons and ostriches cope with financial uncertainty, reinforce resilience in your clients and ensure an ongoing productive relationship with them.

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