



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1 · MODULE 13: THE TEAM, THE SHIFT AND QUALITY · LESSON 45

The Hard Day: Serve With Craft, Ask for Support in Time

*A bad day is managed.
Structural exhaustion is corrected.*

In five lines

Tiredness can appear as a one-off, but it can also be the sign of insufficient rest periods, overload, understaffing or poor organization. These are not the same situation and must not receive the same response. A professional takes care of how the guest is treated, recognizes when their capacity is diminishing and communicates it before a mistake or an accident occurs. The person in charge assesses the risk, reorganizes the service and keeps a record when appropriate. If the exhaustion recurs, it stops being an individual problem: it is a problem of planning, prevention and leadership that management must correct.

The script, step by step

- 1. Tell a bad day from a structural problem.** A difficult night or a personal worry may require one-off support. Fatigue that recurs because of extended working days, insufficient rest periods, overload or understaffing requires a review of how work is organized. Calling the latter a matter of attitude only hides the problem.
- 2. Recognize the signs before the mistake.** Loss of attention, clumsiness, irritability, forgetfulness, difficulty making decisions or drowsiness are warnings. If they may affect safety, health, the treatment of guests or quality, you don't wait for an incident to happen: it is reported immediately to the person in charge — and if the risk is serious and imminent, the affected task is interrupted while the protocol is activated.
- 3. Communicate facts, not guilt.** Explain what you are noticing, since when and which tasks may be compromised. A colleague can provide one-off support, but must not silently take on a permanent shortfall. The response must be coordinated by whoever is running the shift.
- 4. Act and correct the cause.** The person in charge assesses, redistributes and arranges whatever relief or rest is due in accordance with working time, the collective agreement and the protocol, activating the prevention channel when appropriate. If the situation recurs, management analyzes working hours, rest periods, workloads, shifts and staffing levels. Protecting the service starts with not making it rest on exhausted people.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don't have...	How to hold the standard
Sufficient rest or staffing	You don't improvise an impossible normality. You inform the person in charge, prioritize the essentials, interrupt or escalate any tasks that could compromise safety and record the incident through the established channel — operational facts, with no unnecessary health data. Management must correct the cause; the team's willingness is no substitute for adequate staffing or adequate rest periods.

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
Communicate in time if tiredness compromises your capacity. Maintain a courteous manner while the person in charge organizes a safe response.	Hide the signs, promise you can carry on without assessing the risk or shift onto a colleague the permanent solution to an organizational shortfall.	Work, or ask someone to work, when fatigue compromises safety. Normalize inadequate working hours, rest periods or workloads as proof of commitment.

Common mistakes

- ◆ Confusing professionalism with enduring in silence: communicating a real limitation protects people and the operation.
- ◆ Treating all tiredness as a lack of attitude without analyzing working hours, rest periods, workload, health and organization.
- ◆ Solving a permanent overload through favors between colleagues: one-off support does not replace the line manager's responsibility.
- ◆ Waiting for the mistake or the accident before stepping in: signs of fatigue must trigger an assessment and a proportionate response.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**“A bad day is managed.
Structural exhaustion is corrected.”**

This lesson's exercise

During service, a colleague makes two slips, loses coordination and admits they have gone several days without recovering. The hotel is full and replacing them isn't easy. Explain what the colleague should do, how the person in charge of the shift should act and what management should review if the situation recurs. In the answer that follows, I share my decision.