

Conflict

De-Escalation Techniques

+ Behavioral Signs of Agitation



<https://vividlearningsystems.com/safety-toolbox/conflict-de-escalation-techniques>

1.) First, calm yourself before interacting with the person.

- If you're upset, it's only going to escalate the situation. Calm down and then begin to look at the situation and how you can intervene safely.
- Take a deep breath.
- Use a low, dull tone of voice and don't get defensive even if the insults are directed at you.

2.) Becoming aware of your situation is also critically important. This can include:

- Other people in the room,
- Objects; such as chairs, tables, items on a table, and the space around you, like exits or openings, and if you are blocking the person so that they are made to feel trapped.

3.) Try to look as non-threatening as possible.

- Appear calm and self-assured even if you don't feel it.
- Maintain limited eye contact and be at the same eye level. Encourage the customer to be seated, but if he/she needs to stand, stand up also.
- Maintain a neutral facial expression.
- Place your hands in front of your body in an open and relaxed position.
- Don't shrug your shoulders.
- Don't point your fingers at the person.
- Avoid excessive gesturing, pacing, fidgeting, or weight shifting.
- Maintain a public space distance, which is 12 feet or more.

4.) Make a personal connection. Something as simple as asking, "What's your name?" can diffuse a situation quickly.

- People respond positively to their own name and can make the dialogue more personal.

5.) Listening to the persons concerns. Acknowledge the other person's feelings without passing judgment on them.

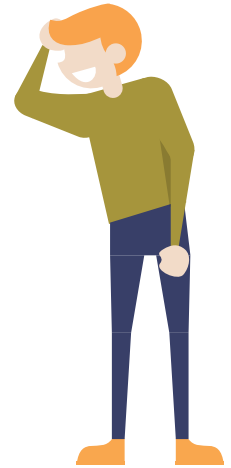
- Empathy needs to be shown during conflict situations. Even if you do not agree with the person's position, expressing an understanding why that person feels a particular way will help resolve the conflict.
- Clarifying, paraphrasing and open-ended questions all help to ensure that the person is aware you have understood their frustrations completely.
- Ask to take notes.
- Ask for their ideas or solutions.
- Help them talk out angry feelings rather than act on them.

6.) Shift the conversation to the future, create hope, and you make yourself less threatening.

- Using "what" and "we" helps include the person in those future plans.

7.) Get them to say yes.

- It is very hard for someone to stay angry towards you if they are agreeing with you.



Behavioral Signs of Agitation

- Rocking/Swaying
- Rapid Breaths
- Shaking extremities
- Pressured Speech
- Tenseness in the body
- Loud or Quiet
- Clenched fists
- Poor Eye Contact
- Pacing
- Skittish Behavior
- Defensive Statements
- Overgeneralizing "never" "always" "everyone"
- Black and White Thinking
- Blaming
- Obsessions/Preoccupations
- Refusing to Listen

Your Behaviors

- Be a Mirror: if you reflect calm, cooperative, normal tone, the person will mirror
- Neutrality: facial expression, Relax your body
- Non-defensive posture: Hands in front of body, open and relaxed
- Minimize gesturing, pacing, fidgeting – signs of nervousness and increase agitation in others
- Eye level with Client but don't force eye contact
- Modulate tone of voice to reflect empathy or no emotional response

<http://paetc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/De-escalation-PACE.pdf>

De-escalation techniques

- **Identify who you are and your purpose**

- **Active listening**

- o Use verbal and non-verbal acknowledgement of what the person is communicating.

- **Reflections**

- o "Tell me if I have this right." Then summarize what the person says.

- **"I'm confused, help me understand."**

- **Small words**

- o Use "civilian speak".

- **Be concise**

- o A person's attention/concentration is poor when they are feeling anger, stress, anxiety, or fear.

- **Do not threaten, argue, or try to reason**

- o Do not challenge delusions, hallucinations, or fears; try to acknowledge "their truth".

- **Set boundaries/rules**

- o Don't take personal responsibility for an organization's rules.

- o Re-direct if someone keeps going off topic.

- o "I understand the process seems confusing but it's what's currently in place and how we need to proceed at this time".

- **Do not respond to emotionally-charged questions or comments**

- o Remain neutral and re-direct.

- **Empathize feelings, not behavior**

- o "I understand you are (use emotion the person identified) but it's not ok to yell at staff."

- **Keep the focus on cognitive thoughts**

- o "Help me understand what you need."

- o "What has helped you in the past?"