

Student De-escalation Exercise & Techniques

Be Calm | Listen Actively | Validate Facts & Feelings | Work to Resolve | Get Help

Remember:

- Avoid escalation – Be proactive – Use these techniques
- *Less* authoritative – *Less* controlling – *Less* confrontational → *MORE* control
 - Give the client a sense of control
 - Empathy and acceptance are key to successful de-escalation
- Your response directly affects whether or how the situation escalates or defuses
- Your personal safety –
 - Maintain proper distance (situation dependent; 3+ feet, 6+ feet)
 - Notice any -
 - Non-verbal cues | Body language | Tone of voice
 - Signs of:
 - Impending escalation
 - Medical emergencies
 - Impending violence
 - Be prepared to move beyond de-escalation
 - Call security or 911 (or have someone call)
 - Avoid being trapped in the area if possible
 - *Accept, Barricade, or Leave* when necessary - or *Engage* (the last resort)
 - Remain positive – you can work to help this person and know what to do

De-escalation Techniques:

- **BE CALM**
 - Control your breathing | a few deep breaths can help you remain calm
 - Body language
 - Nonthreatening nonverbals are crucial
 - Body language will support or negate your words
 - Neutral body language & movements
 - Neutral facial expressions & tone of voice
 - Calm voice
 - Supportive | Validate their feelings
 - Confident | Professional
 - Empathetic | Non-judgmental
 - Build rapport | Be genuine
 - Gain trust
- **LISTEN ACTIVELY, RECOGNIZE/RESTATE AND EVALUATE**
 - Active listening and observing
 - What is observed? Why are they upset?
 - Let them speak – do not interrupt them
 - Techniques
 - Introduce yourself
 - “Hi, my name is _____. What’s yours?”
 - “Nice to meet you.”
 - Active listening: what you know, have learned or have seen about the situation

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Student De-escalation Exercise & Techniques

- Indicate you are listening - "Uh-huh . . . I see . . . okay . . . really . . ."
- "I see that you are upset about _____, _____, and _____"
- "I want to make sure I understand. You said that _____."
- "Help me better understand _____."
- "I care, and I want to help you."
- "I appreciate your help and cooperation as I work to assist you."
- "I want to make sure you are safe and get everything you need."
- Recognize feelings
 - Observe and listen closely to what is really bothering them
 - "That must be very frightening to have _____ happen."
 - "That is so stressful. Being upset is very understandable."
 - "Sounds like a _____ day."
 - "That's a lot to deal with."
 - "It's hard to know what to do when that happens."
 - "Yes, everyone ought to be treated with respect."
 - "It is understandable that you would be upset when that happened."
 - "I can't imagine being in your shoes. Let's see if I can help."
 - Build self-confidence and self-image
 - "You are very strong to have _____ under these circumstances."
- **WORK TO RESOLVE** the situation
 - Genuinely seek to help
 - Focus on resolving the problem.
 - Actively explore how you can correct/fix/alleviate the issue.
 - Build hope that they know you are working to assist them.
 - Bypass challenging/power struggle questions
 - Focus on what you can do to address the problem – bring them back to the issue.
 - Set limits if needed
 - Disruptive, defensive, or belligerent behavior → set clear & simple limits
 - Provide clear choices and the consequences of each.
 - Offer the preferred choice FIRST and with positivity
 - Know what is/is not negotiable and why – some flexibility can help diffuse situations.
 - "You have every right to be angry, but it is not okay to threaten me."
 - Silence can be helpful – even powerful
 - Give the client a chance to think about what is happening and how they want to proceed.
 - Give the client time to make decisions. Avoid rushing which can increase stress and anxiety.
 - Offer alternate behaviors
 - "Would you like some water or a cup of coffee?"

Be calm | Positive | Reassuring | Accepting | Genuine | Validate | Slow down
Keep a safe distance | Be empathetic | Redirect back | Avoid arguing | Ask for help

Student De-escalation Exercise & Techniques

What to AVOID

- Multiple staff trying to help – one person at a time is less stressful
- Dismissive, closed, or threatening body language - for example:
 - o Arms folded | Hands on hips | Finger pointing
 - o No eye contact or rolling your eyes
 - o Loud sigh or indication of being irritated
 - o Closed fist or stiff hands | Hands in pockets or behind back
 - o Facial expressions showing disapproval, dismissive, or other indicating insincerity
 - o Arms/legs/torso taking up space (spread out)
- Judgmental, or otherwise, statements - for example:
 - o “Oh, that’s crazy”
 - o “Your pain can’t be *that* bad”
 - o “Why are you so upset about that?”
 - o “That doesn’t make any sense.”
 - o “That’s silly.”
 - o “Why can’t you just wait your turn?”
 - o “Don’t you think others want to be first, too?”
 - o “I know the food is bad. Be happy you have food.”
- Criticizing | Threatening | Minimizing | Arguing | Name-calling
- Minimizing | Ridiculing | Deceiving | Power Struggles
- Validating hallucinations – but do validate the emotions
- Offering too many choices
- Taking things personally