

GUIDELINES FOR DE-ESCALATING CRISES

1. **Prevention beats intervention:** build goodwill by investing in rapport and trust, and by showing interest, genuineness, reliability, and reasonableness.
2. **Be aware of your own emotions:** manage them so they don't interfere with your judgement or behavior.

GOALS

1. Physical behavior is converted to verbal behavior (change hitting to talking).
2. Unsafe or inappropriate reactions are converted to safe and appropriate responses.
3. The crisis is understood and chances of recurrence are reduced.

DEMEANOR

1. Act how you want them to act: calm, reasonable and under control.
2. Speak normally, don't raise your voice.
3. Minimize unnecessary conversation and movement.
4. Maintain a calm, interested tone of voice and an empathic interest in the person's concerns, not just what you want.

VERBAL INTERVENTIONS

1. Speak in short, clear, precise sentences – one at a time.
2. Avoid choice of words that sound challenging or demeaning.
3. Don't minimize or exaggerate the problem – be “matter of fact, but concerned.”
4. Start with the desired ending – if you want the person to end up talking quietly, then start de-escalating by talking quietly together.
5. Offer the person something
 - a) Your time
 - b) Food or drink
 - c) Alternative outlets, safe physical activity
5. If you're not sure how to respond – don't. Silence is OK. Say that you need to “think about things for a minute”.
6. Use *dislocation of expectations*, purposely responding in a way that the person doesn't expect.
7. Use *altercasting*, suggesting a more acceptable role for the person: “I know you're mad, but I don't think you're the kind of kid who wants to hurt someone”.
8. Use *anticipatory fantasy*, describing possible outcomes if the person carries out his plan, and contrast these to what the person will want in the future. “You're right, you could hit him, but I will call your parents and you will lose your recess this week.”

STATE-SEEK-DO

1. State what you see – an argument
2. State what you hope to see – a peaceful end to the conflict
3. Seek the person's view – how does the person see things?
4. Seek the person's view of what would help the situation
5. Do use all possible parts of their suggestions
6. If no parts of the suggestion are possible, explain why and offer alternatives.

Adapted from materials created by Edward A. Herzog, RN, MSN, CNS

For more information see the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management Materials: Resource Guides: K-8 H-56, 7-12 H-4, Reference Index R-25-26, Admin 462-465

