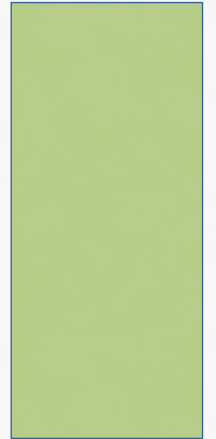




VERBAL DE-ESCALATION

HOW TO IDENTIFY AND DE-ESCALATE AN AGITATED PERSON WHILE KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE.

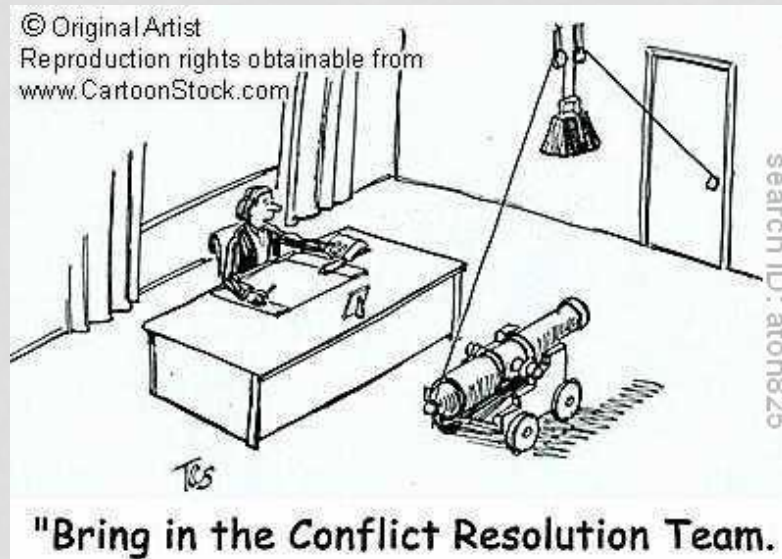


How do you manage conflict?

Personal strategy for managing conflict:

- Is learned in childhood
- Functions automatically
- Defaults to doing what comes naturally

Your safety may depend on your conflict management style.



Conflict Management Styles

Keep in mind that one style of conflict management is not necessarily better than another; each style has pros and cons, and each can be useful depending on the situation.

The following assessment is intended to help you identify your typical response to conflict, with the goal that when you encounter future conflicts, you will be aware of not only your instinctive reaction, but also the pros and cons of that reaction for the specific situation.

Furthermore, you will also be aware of the other styles of conflict management that you could draw on to resolve the situation, if one of the other styles is more appropriate for the current situation.

Conflict Management Styles Assessment

Please select response that best describes you on piece of paper. Be honest, this survey is designed to help you learn about your conflict management style. There are no right or wrong answers!

	1=Rarely 2=Sometimes 3=Often 4= Always
1. I discuss issues with others to try to find solutions that meet everyone's needs.	1 2 3 4
2. I try to negotiate and use a give-and-take approach to problem situations.	1 2 3 4
3. I try to meet the expectations of others.	1 2 3 4
4. I would argue my case and insist on the advantages of my point of view.	1 2 3 4
5. When there is a disagreement, I gather as much information as I can and keep the lines of communication open.	1 2 3 4
6. When I find myself in an argument, I usually say very little and try to leave as soon as possible.	1 2 3 4
7. I try to see conflicts from both sides. What do I need? What does the other person need? What are the issues involved?	1 2 3 4
8. I prefer to compromise when solving problems and just move on.	1 2 3 4
9. I find conflicts exhilarating; I enjoy the battle of wits that usually follows.	1 2 3 4
10. Being in a disagreement with other people makes me feel uncomfortable and anxious.	1 2 3 4
11. I try to meet the wishes of my friends and family.	1 2 3 4
12. I can figure out what needs to be done and I am usually right.	1 2 3 4
13. To break deadlocks, I would meet people halfway.	1 2 3 4
14. I may not get what I want but it's a small price to pay for keeping the peace.	1 2 3 4
15. I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself.	1 2 3 4

Scoring the Conflict Management Styles Assessment

The 15 statements correspond to the 4 conflict management styles. To find your most preferred style, total the points for each style. The style with the highest score indicates your most used strategy. The one with the lowest score indicates your least preferred strategy. However, all styles have pros and cons, so it's important that you can use the most appropriate style for each conflict situation.

Style Corresponding Statements: Totals

Collaborating (questions 1, 5, 7): _____

Avoiding: (questions 6, 10, 15): _____

Accommodating: (questions 3, 11, 14): _____

Compromising: (questions 2, 8, 13) _____

Conflict Management Styles

Collaborating:

Collaborating styles highly value both their goals and their relationships. They view conflict as a problem to be solved and seek a solution that achieves both their goals and the goals of the other person. They see conflicts as a means of improving relationships by reducing tensions between two persons. They try to begin a discussion that identifies the conflict as a problem and strive to resolve tensions and maintain the relationship by seeking solutions that satisfy both themselves and the other person.

Avoiding:

Avoiding styles tend to value avoiding confrontation more than either their goals or relationships. They often find it easier to withdraw from a conflict than to face it. This might even include completely giving up relationships or goals that are associated with the conflict.

Conflict Management Styles

Accommodating:

Accommodating styles typically value relationships over their own goals; if forced to choose, they will often sacrifice their goals to maintain relationships.

Accommodating styles generally want to be liked by others and prefer to avoid conflict because they believe addressing it will damage relationships.

Accommodating to smooth over conflict to prevent damage to the relationship.

Compromising:

Compromising styles are moderately concerned with both their goals and their relationships with others. They typically seek a compromise; they give up part of their goals and persuade the other person in a conflict to give up part of their goals. They seek a conflict solution in which both sides gain something; the middle ground between two extreme positions. They are willing to sacrifice part of their goals in order to find agreement for the common good.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT YOUR DEFAULT MANAGEMENT STYLE?

- Imagine an angry parent begins to verbally assault you during a home visit. How would your default management style help or hinder this tense situation?



MANAGING YOURSELF

**WHAT DOES THAT
MEAN!!!???**



In order to manage others especially in using de-escalation techniques, you have to learn to **manage yourself!**

This is key to successfully using de-escalation when confronted with a potential volatile situation.

The first step is recognizing your Conflict Management Style.

The second step is understanding what happens physiologically to you when confronted when alarming situations and your **ALARM REACTION MODE KICKS IN!**

**AND REMEMBER IF YOU ARE IN ALARM
REACTION MODE.....**

SO IS THE PERSON

WHO IS ESCALATED!!!





**Don't
PANIC!**

COVER THAT ALARM BUTTON!

When confronted with an alarming, startling or frightening situation,

Your **Alarm Reaction** gets activated!

Your **survival brain** takes over your **thinking brain!**



ALARM REACTION MODE:



Adrenaline seems to grab the starring role!

But it is just *1 of 1400* chemical reactions

that are instantaneously activated

throughout your body.





Typical reactions of your Survival Brain can include:

FREEZE

While this seems unproductive, it is usually temporary, it allows you to Stop, Observe and Assess danger, formulate plan.

FLIGHT

Fleeing, this may be your best defense depending on the situation.



FIGHT

Aggressive actions to defend yourself from the perceived danger.

FRIGHT

Characterized by intense fear, so much that you give up, and leads to inaction.

The fight or flight response

Dilation of pupil

Dry mouth

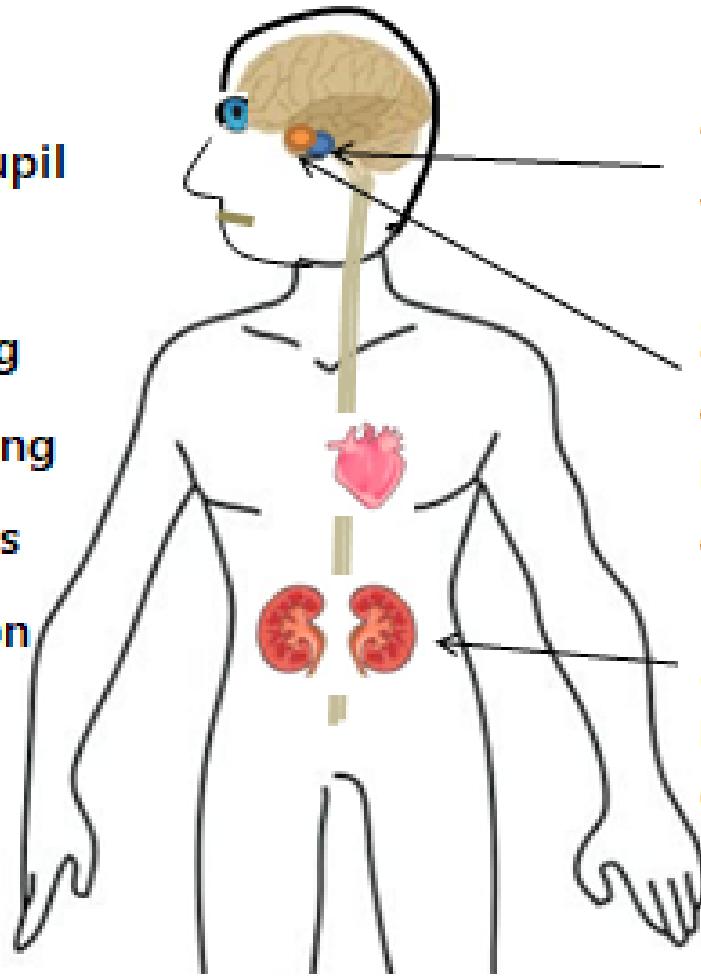
Fast breathing

Heart pounding

Tense muscles

Slow digestion

Sweating of palms



1. The amygdala reacts to threat

2. The hypothalamus activates the sympathetic nervous system, release of adrenaline

3. The adrenal cortex releases cortisol for continued alertness

STRESS CYCLE IN ESCALATION or ALARM REACTION MODE

Stress: Your perception of your ability to cope

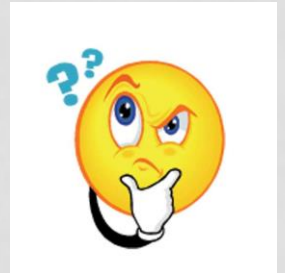


While a certain amount of stress is beneficial as it heightens awareness, too much or on-going stress leads to:

- **Cognitive Distortions**
- **Irrational Thinking**
- **Maladaptive Behaviors**

If you are in a constant stress cycle, your mind and body never have the opportunity to fully recover.

The **Alarm Reaction**, which is a good thing when you are threatened or in survival mode, is a bad thing when you have to think your way out of it!



Maintaining awareness of the Alarm Reaction helps us from succumbing to it!

**MAINTAINING SELF-CONTROL
IS PARAMOUNT!**

Crossing the Line into Crisis Situations

It is important to develop strategies for ensuring personal safety in potentially problematic situations.



In any conflict, you have a choice.

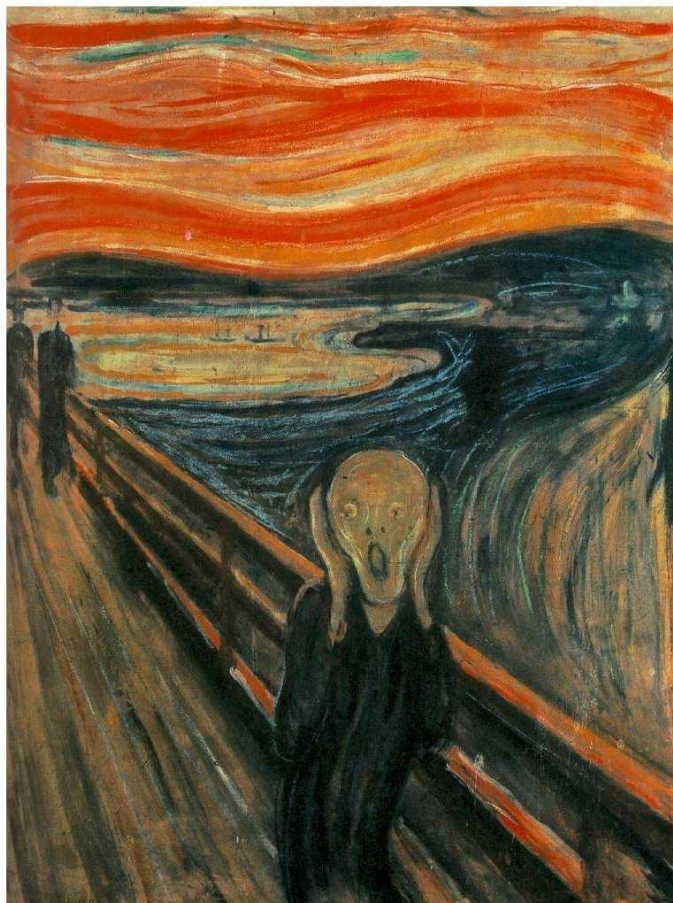
- ✓ **Escalate the incident further**
- ✓ **De-escalate the situation.**

HAND MODEL OF THE BRAIN DR. DAN SIEGEL

[Hand Model Video](#)

Please click on the link to view this video

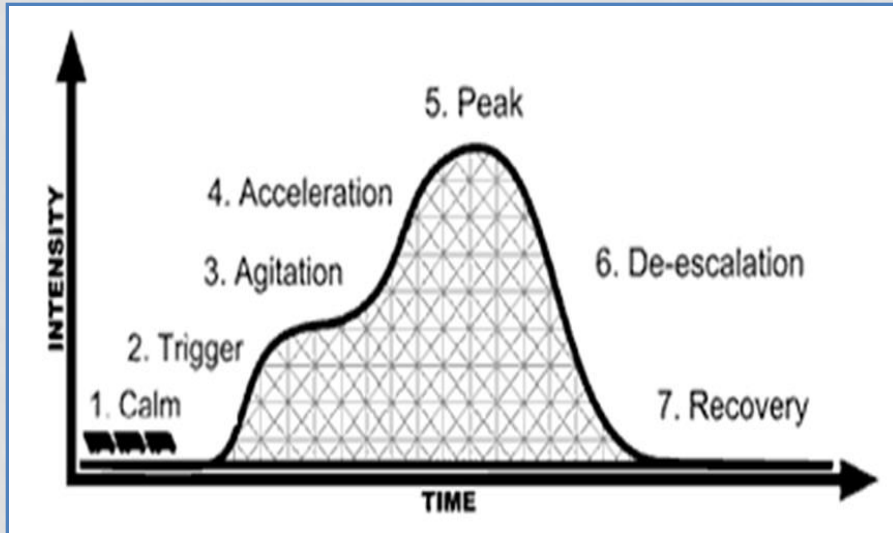
THE FIRST AND ONLY DE-ESCALATION OBJECTIVE



Reduce the level of anxiety to encourage the possibility for discussion.

Reasoning with an enraged person is not possible.

WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF ESCALATION?



- Aggression can be unpredictable.
- A person may quickly move from slightly agitated to full scale aggression.
- Identification of escalation's early stages will help you to respond effectively.

Non-Crisis Thinking:

Logical
Abstract
Reasonable

Crisis Thinking:

Illogical
Concrete
Unfocused

STAGES OF BEHAVIOR ESCALATION

Calm: Person relatively calm / cooperative.

Trigger: Person experiences unresolved conflicts . This triggers the person's behavior to escalate.

Agitation: Person increasingly unfocused / upset.

Acceleration: Conflict remains unresolved. Person FOCUSES on the conflict.

Peak: Person out of control / exhibits severe behavior.

De-escalation: Vents in the peak stage, person displays confusion. Severity of peak behavior subsides.

Recovery: Person displays willingness to participate in activities.

TRAITS AND FACTORS THAT MAY TRIGGER AGGRESSION

- **Psychiatric illness**
- **Substance abuse**
- **Prior history of violence**
- **Highly stressful situations**
 - Removal of children
 - Involvement with DCFS
 - Court proceedings
 - Compliance with services
 - Termination of parental rights
- **Ages 15-40, esp. males**
- **Certain feelings**
 - *Powerlessness*
 - *Fear*
 - *Grief*
 - *Feeling of injustice*
 - *Boredom*
 - *Humiliation*
- **Access to weapons**
- **Physical disability or chronic pain**
- **Personal history of child abuse**

COMMON SIGNS OF AGITATION

- Raised voice
- High-pitched voice
- Rapid speech
- Pacing
- Excessive sweating
- Excessive hand gestures
- Fidgeting
- Shaking



- Balled fists
- Erratic movements
- Aggressive posture
- Verbally abusive

WHAT IS VERBAL DE-ESCALATION?

Verbal De-Escalation is an intervention used with people who are at risk for aggression.

It is basically using calm language, along with other communication techniques, to diffuse, re-direct, or de-escalate a conflict situation.



VIDEOS: De-Escalation

Understanding Agitation (9 minutes)

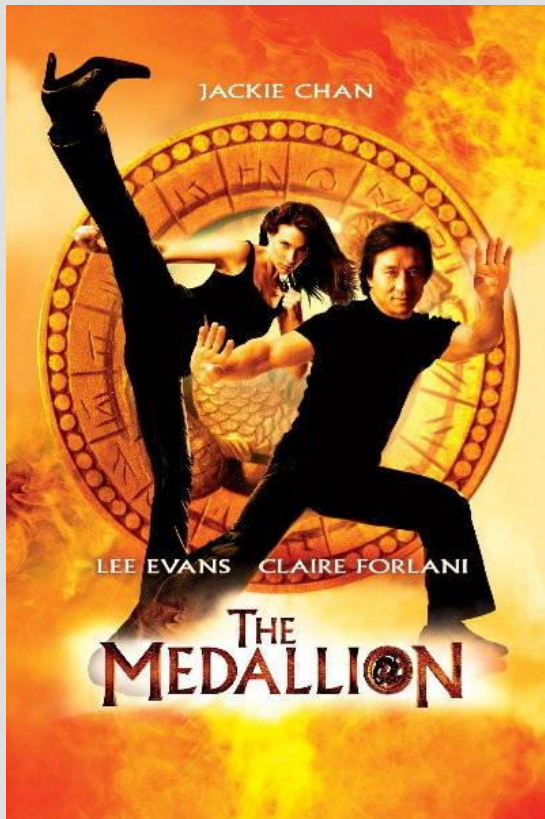
[Agitation Video](#)

Verbal De-Escalation (5 minutes)

[Verbal De-Escalation video](#)

PHYSICAL FORCE IN DE-ESCALATION

Without specialized training, *never* consider the use of physical force as your first response.



Physical force is a last resort to prevent injury to yourself or to another person.

Use of physical force usually results in someone (*you?*) getting hurt.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

One Response Does Not Fit All:

If your response is not working, stop and try something new.

Unplug the Power Struggle:

This is not the time for a teaching moment!



Ask the person what they want to achieve, demonstrate you are listening.

Some times silence is best...it allows them to reflect offer choices or alternatives, don't tell them to calm down..

Behavior Is A Form Of Communication:

What is the person trying to gain

What are they trying to avoid

ABOVE ALL:

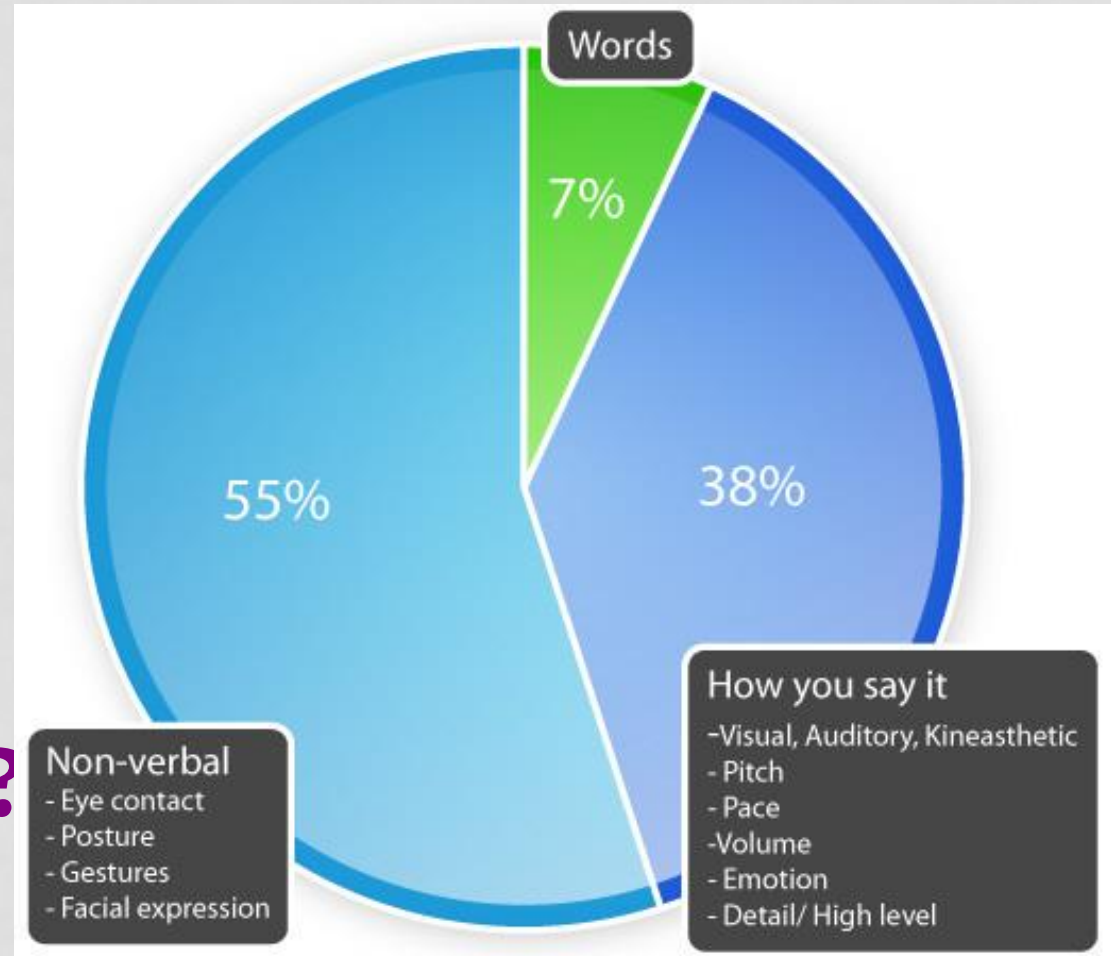
- Think about how your response is meeting their **NEEDS!!**
(Always keep assessing, never assume)
- Be **RESPECTFUL** and treat the person with **DIGNITY!!**
- Keep your **SAFETY** and theirs in mind
at all times!



3 ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

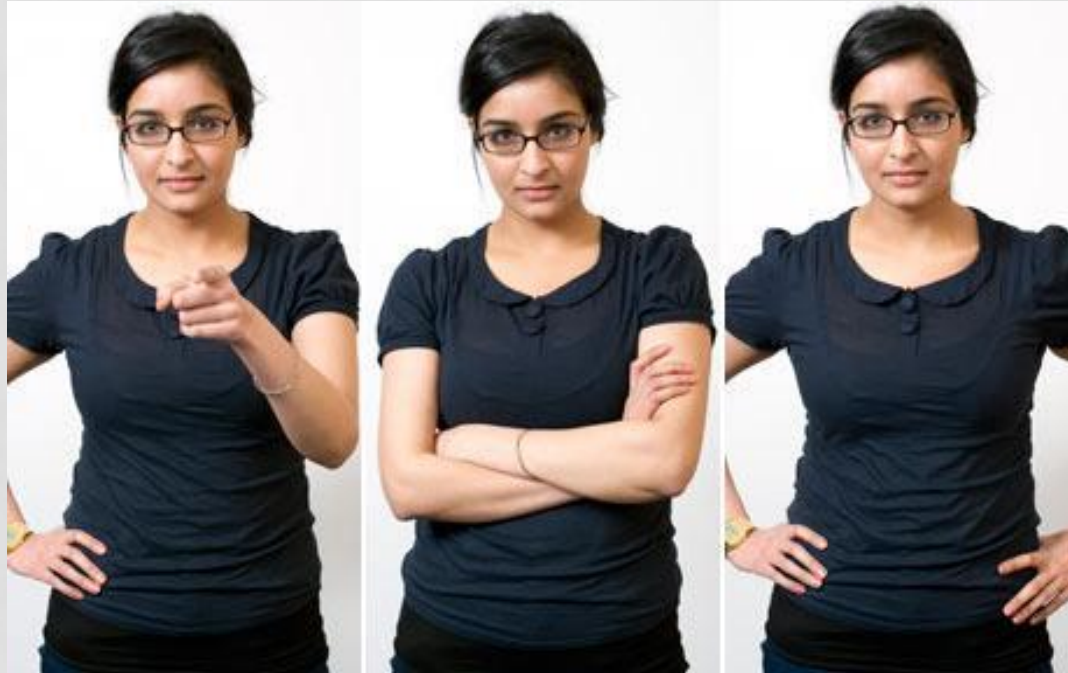
- Body language
- Tone
- Word choice

Which has the most influence?



BODY LANGUAGE

55% OF COMMUNICATION IS NON-VERBAL



What is her body language saying?



BODY LANGUAGE CAN ESCALATE TENSION

Match the body language to its message.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Shoulder shrugging | Mocking or uncaring |
| 2. Jaw set with clenched teeth | Accusing or threatening |
| 3. Finger pointing | Anxiety |
| 4. A fake smile | Hostility or threatening |
| 5. Excessive gesturing, pacing, fidgeting, or weight shifting | Not open- minded or listening |
| 6. Touching, even when culturally appropriate | Uncaring or unknowing |

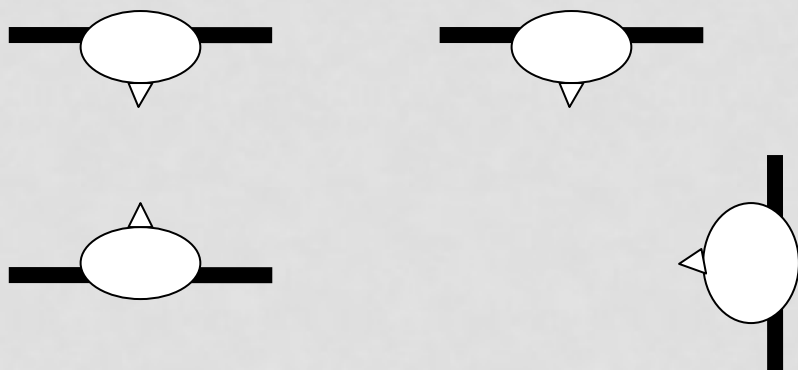
Also avoid: **Turning your back**
Quick actions
Aggressive postures

Try to look as non-threatening as possible.

- Appear calm and self-assured, even if you don't feel it.
- Maintain limited eye contact.
- Maintain a neutral facial expression.
- Place your hands in front of your body in an open and relaxed position.
- Be at the same eye level. Encourage the client to be seated, but if he/she needs to stand, stand up also.



WHICH POSITION IS LESS AGGRESSIVE? WHY?



Best stance – at an angle, feet hips width apart, one foot in front

- Greater balance and mobility
- Exposes less of the body as a target

Stay far enough away that the other person cannot hit, kick or grab you.

- **Do not approach a client head-on or from the back.**
- **Approaching at an angle is perceived as less confrontational.**
- **Never turn your back during a hostile situation.**

“Don’t Stand So Close to Me”



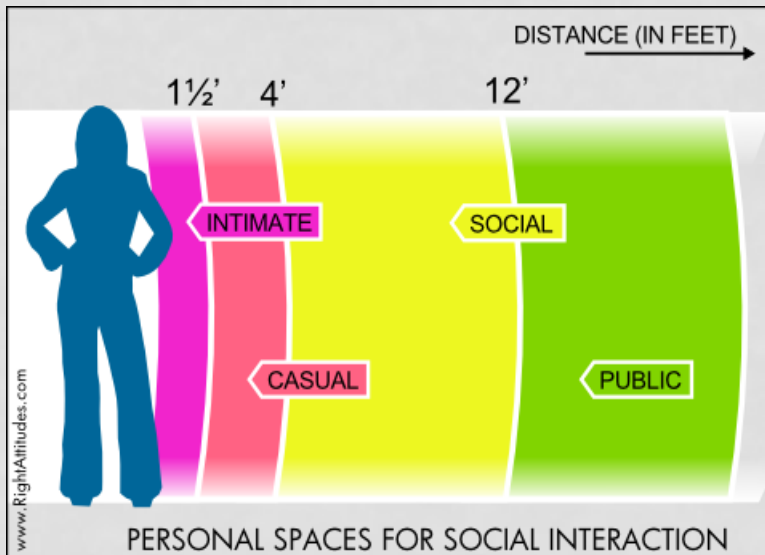
Where’s your comfort zone?

1. Divide group into two lines. Allow approximately 5 feet of empty space between the rows.
2. Each person should be facing a partner.
3. Ask one line to remain stationary while the other line gradually steps forward toward their partners.
4. Ask the stationary line to put out their hands in a “stop” gesture when they feel their personal space is invaded.

● **How did you feel during this activity?**

● **How can this information help you during de-escalation?**

“Stand by Me” or “Stand Back”?



Four Personal Spaces

- **Intimate space** - interacting with friends, significant people / hand-shaking, whispering, etc. -- touch to 1.5 feet
- **Casual space** - interacting with close friends—1.5 feet to 4 feet
- **Social space** - interacting with acquaintances—4 feet to 12 feet
- **Public space** - interacting with anonymous people—further than 12 feet

“DON'T FENCE ME IN”



Violence-prone individuals perceive the need for a wider territorial space in order to feel comfortable – 5 times the normal physical space.



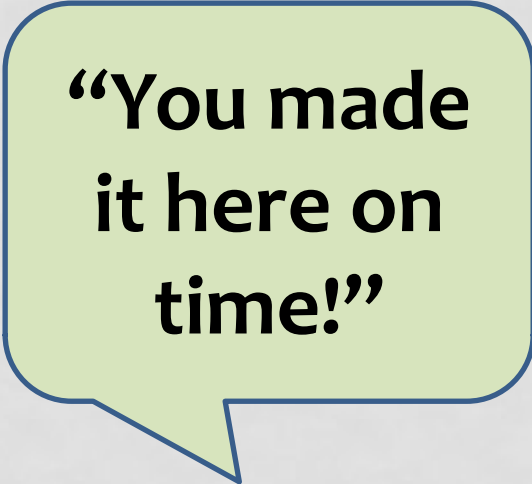
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, BUT HOW YOU SAY IT.

Tone expresses speaker's feelings or attitudes.

Listener interprets speaker's message through tone.

38% of communication depends on tone

Try it! Say the following sentence with different tones.



**“You made
it here on
time!”**

1. in a suspicious tone
2. in a happy tone
3. in a patronizing tone
4. in an irritable tone

It's not just *what* you say but *how* you say it.

- **Tone**

- **Stern** = confidence, possibly aggression.
- **Timid/wavering** = fear, lack of self-assurance
- **Lowered** = uncertainty
- **Raised** = anger, agitation

- **Volume**

- **Loud, overpowering** = authority, unwillingness to hear others
- **Soft, unassuming** = docility, possibly fear

- **Rate of speech**

- **Slow but rhythmic rate** = soothing
- **Controlled** - both **calm** and **firm** promote confidence

- **Politeness**

- Be **respectful**. No name calling.
- **“Please”** and **“thank-you”** – **“Mr.”** or **“Ms.”** indicate respect.

“HANDLE THEM CAREFULLY, FOR WORDS HAVE MORE POWER THAN ATOM BOMBS.”

PEARL STRACHAN,
BRITISH POLITICIAN, 1930.

- Do not get loud or yell over a screaming person. Wait until he/she takes a breath, speaking calmly at normal volume.
- Respond simply. Repeat if necessary. Answer informational questions, no matter how rudely asked.

“Why do I fill out these <expletive> forms?”

This is a real information-seeking question.

- Do not answer abusive questions.

“Why are all DCFS employees such <expletives>?”

- Help client talk out angry feelings rather than act on them.



VERBAL DE-ESCALATION TIPS

- Do not be defensive, even if comments, curses, or insults are directed at you. They are not about you.
- Be honest. Lying to calm someone down may lead to future escalation if the dishonesty is discovered. If possible, wait to convey further upsetting news.
- Explain limits and rules in an authoritative, firm, but respectful tone. Give choices, where possible, in which both alternatives are safe ones.

“Would you like to continue our meeting calmly, or would you prefer to stop now and continue tomorrow?”

VERBAL DE-ESCALATION TIPS

- Be respectful when firmly setting limits or calling for help. The agitated individual is very sensitive to feeling shamed and disrespected. Utilize the core conditions at all times.
- Empathize with feelings but not with behavior.
“I understand that you have every right to feel angry, but it is not okay for you to threaten me.”
- Suggest alternative behaviors *where appropriate*.
“Would you like to take a break and have a cup of coffee or some water?”

Videos: Please click on the links below to view videos

[Pease Pass the Butter](#)

[Active Listening](#)

TECHNIQUES THAT SHOW YOU ARE LISTENING

1. Minimal encouragers
2. Reflecting
3. Ask open-ended questions

“Can you tell me more about that.”



USE MINIMAL ENCOURAGERS

1. Brief nonverbal statements (positive head nodding)
2. Simple verbal responses
 - *Okay*
 - *Uh-huh*
 - *I see*
 - *I am listening*



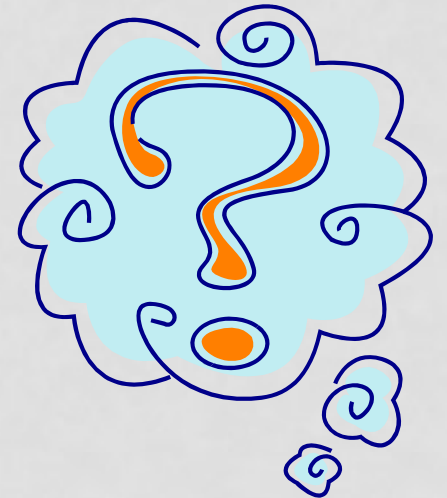
Minimal encouragers demonstrate to the person that you are listening and paying attention, without stalling the dialogue or creating an undue interruption.

DEMONSTRATE REFLECTING

- Show evidence of active listening by **repeating** what the person has said.
- These statements should be **brief**. Do not interrupt the agitated person.
- **Example:** *“I am tired of everyone disrespecting me, and it’s making me angry.”*
“Jim, you don’t feel respected, and you are angry.”

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- allow you to get more information
- allow you to assess whether the situation is potentially dangerous to you
- allow you to assess whether the person is rational





TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

If de-escalation is not working, **STOP!**

If situation feels unsafe, **LEAVE / CALL FOR HELP!**

T.A.C.O.S. 5 De-escalation Don'ts

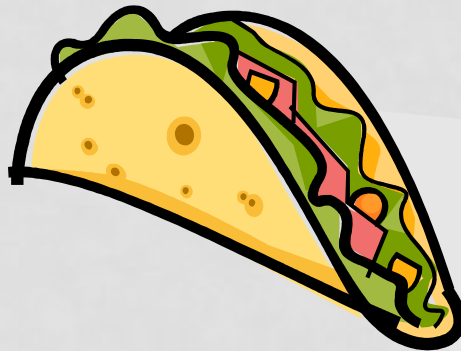
Threaten

Argue

Challenge

Order

Shame



POSTVENTION PREVENTS PROBLEMS

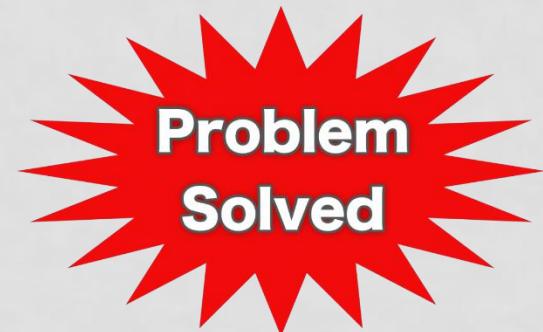
POSTVENTION:

Is what you have learned after the event that allows you to reflect and possibly prevent it from happening again.

PREVENTION:

Is the preparation before for an event to help ensure it does not happen again...(positive behavior support)

**THE BEST PROBLEMS ARE THE
ONES WE DON'T HAVE ANY MORE!!**



**FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND READING
MATERIALS FOR BOTH TRAUMA AND DE-
ESCALATION TIPS AND INFORMATION SEE:**

RESOURCE FOLDER

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

**VISUALIZE YOURSELF MAKING THE RIGHT
RESPONSE**

HAVE A SAEFTY PLAN IN MIND...

