

## De-escalation Techniques *(in no particular order)*

1. **LISTEN.** Pure active listening is the best tool to de-escalate a conflict. Listen to understand the person's statement and listen without judgment. When you truly listen you concentrate on what the talker is saying and not on your response. You avoid providing solutions, personal examples and stories, and diverting questions and comments. Instead you may repeat statements, ask clarifying questions, and provide acknowledgement.
2. **WATER.** Offering water to someone in a high emotional state allows the person a moment to calm down. Not only does the water help decrease emotions, but it is also perceived as an inviting and friendly gesture.
3. **GATHER MORE INFORMATION.** This is not a cross-examination, rather the use of open-ended questions to get a better understanding of the situation. Statements such as tell me more about that, anything you would like to add, what happened next, what have you tried already, provide a non-judgmental way of gathering information.
4. **WHAT NOT WHY.** Often when trying to determine the motivation behind someone's actions we ask why? Why is perceived as a challenging question and often results in a defensive answer or an unhelpful answer like "because" or "I don't know". If a student is complaining about something a teacher did. Instead of saying why do you think the teacher did that (as a way to explore the purpose behind the teacher's actions) ask what do you think made the teacher do that or what do you think the teacher was trying to accomplish by doing that.
5. **CLEAR EXPECTATIONS.** The failure to meet expectations (realistic or otherwise) and inconsistency can escalate conflict. It is important to be very clear on what you can and cannot do, what type of communication is acceptable or not, when a conversation take place or not. Asking a person what he or she expects of you can help determine expectations. A conversation about options can then follow.
6. **PERSONAL SPACE.** The comfortable space between people decreases during conflict. Therefore it is important to provide enough space between you and the person with whom you are talking. When possible try to situate yourself at the same level as the person (not talking down to him or her).
7. **tone and VOLUME.** People in conflict experience a surge of hormones and chemicals. This may result in the individual talking faster or louder or in a more commanding manner. Responding in kind only reinforces the high emotions. People will mimic others, therefore maintaining a calm, slow, and soft voice will help de-escalate the situation.
8. **MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS.** People in conflict will use a variety of techniques to get the outcome they desire. This includes personal attacks, threats, manipulation, shutting down, etc. Recognizing this technique as a tool to meet the individual's needs will help you keep your emotions in check. Being a professional includes managing your own emotions and not responding in kind when personal attacks arise. When a person comes to you he, she, or them may have only had a problem with someone else. You don't want the person leaving to have a problem with you.
9. **TIMING.** Be mindful of the timing of the conversation. People in conflict are in the flight or fight mode. Taking a time out can let the person shift to a better and calmer place. Time can also be used to approach the situation from a new angle. Addressing the situation at a later time may allow you to control the environment so that the conversation can occur in a private setting, without onlookers or instigators.