

Crisis Management: De-Escalating Strategies

Your Speech

- ❖ **Speak slowly and confidently with a gentle, caring tone of voice**
- ❖ **Do not argue or challenge the youth.** Even when you know what they are saying is just plain wrong, remember that their maturity is still developing, whether they're in Kinder or a senior in high school. Pick your battles and prioritize their safety
- ❖ **Do not threaten.** This means not making empty threats, like saying "I'll call the mental hospital on you if you don't stop that right now!" but rather if you are needing to put forth a limit, have it be more of a natural consequence if possible, such as if they refuse to eat the food in front of them, they'll be hungry, or if they refuse to complete an assignment, they fail that assignment. You'll consider other measures, such as calling in their parent or another third party such as a crisis team, with your team first before spontaneously threatening a student with these plans.
- ❖ **Do not raise your voice or talk too fast.** It's normal to sometimes do this, especially in the heat of the moment, to match the anger and hurt that the other person is expressing. Or if we're nervous ourselves, our speech can reflect that without us even noticing by talking too quickly, making us seem rushed and disorganized,
- ❖ **Use protective words instead of negative words.** Try sticking with observable facts, rather than your opinion. For example, reflecting "I'm noticing your face seems flushed, your voice was raised, and your fists are clenched. I'm here to support you through this together." As opposed to "you're being really aggressive and bipolar and need to get it together, you're X years old now, you should know better, I don't have time for this nonsense."
- ❖ **Be careful in not labeling others with clinical jargon.**

Your Behavior

- ❖ **Stay calm and avoid nervous behavior,** fidgety, biting your nails, eyes darting back and forth, crossing/uncrossing your arms, pacing, and more all tend to be nonverbal cues that others can pick up on as being anxious behaviors.
- ❖ **Do not restrict the youth's movements** as you dialogue with the student, be extremely careful to not place yourself in a situation where you have come into physical contact with the student, this could have very serious consequences for both you and the youth

Your Thoughts

- ❖ **Try to be aware** of what may increase the youths fear and aggression, knowing the student's history can help you with knowing how to approach the student
- ❖ **Pause,** if needed, during the conversation, sometimes just taking a break and a few deep breaths can bring everyone's heart rate and breathing back to being level, making it a little easier to have tough conversations

***Important: If your safety or the safety of the person or others is at imminent risk, STOP and get help immediately**