

DE-ESCALATION SKILLS

CMHA-CEI

- The purpose of this material is to provide staff with some basic information on how to reduce the level of conflict in crisis situations.
- Thus increasing the level of safety for everyone involved.

GOALS

- Content Covered in this Course
 - Escalation
 - Definition
 - Causes
 - Early Warning Signs
 - Imminent Danger Signs
 - Elements of non- verbal communication techniques
 - Verbal communication techniques
 - Strategies of De-Escalation

Objectives



The Underlying Cause of Escalation

Before we go there



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Feeling Unsafe

- Physical Illness or Disability
- Mental Illness
- Developmental Disability
- History
- Losses
- Environment
- Lack of Meaning in One's Life

Possible Causes of Feeling Unsafe

- Runs away
- Cries a lot
- Expressionless
- Sad appearance
- Hits self or others
- Sleeps poorly
- Refuses to participate
- Self stimulates
- Hoards
- Flinches
- Curses
- Complains

Indicators of Feeling Unsafe



You are Safe with me



It is Good to be Loved



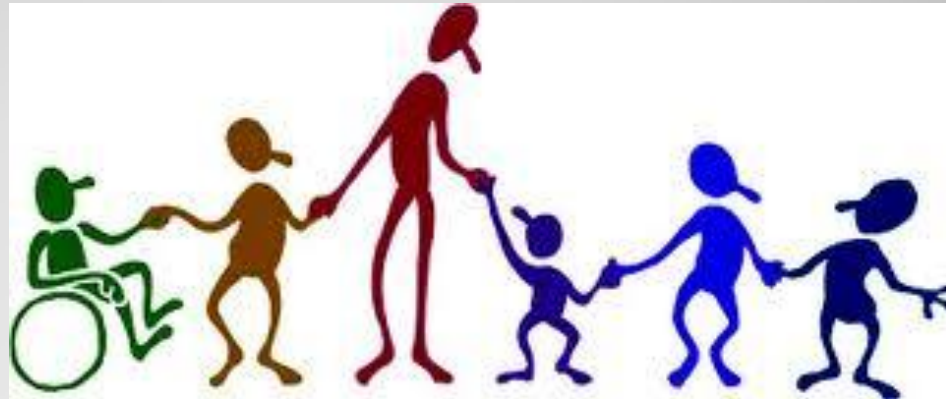
It is Good
to be
Loving



It is Good to be with
me

Four Pillars of Companionship

- Stays with others
- Expresses joy
- Relaxed
- Contented appearance
- Enjoys participating
- Respects self



Indicators of Feeling Safe



What is escalation?

An increase in the level of conflict

- An increase in the number of and size of issues being debated
- An increase in
 - hostility,
 - tension,
 - competitive behavior
 - Bringing personalities into conflict

Escalation

- The helper engages in a power struggle
- The helper does not attend to person's body language
- The helper overreacts to threats, posturing, or emotional displays
- The helper's own issues become engaged
- The person feels he is not being heard
- The person himself feels threatened
- The helper pushes and becomes provocative

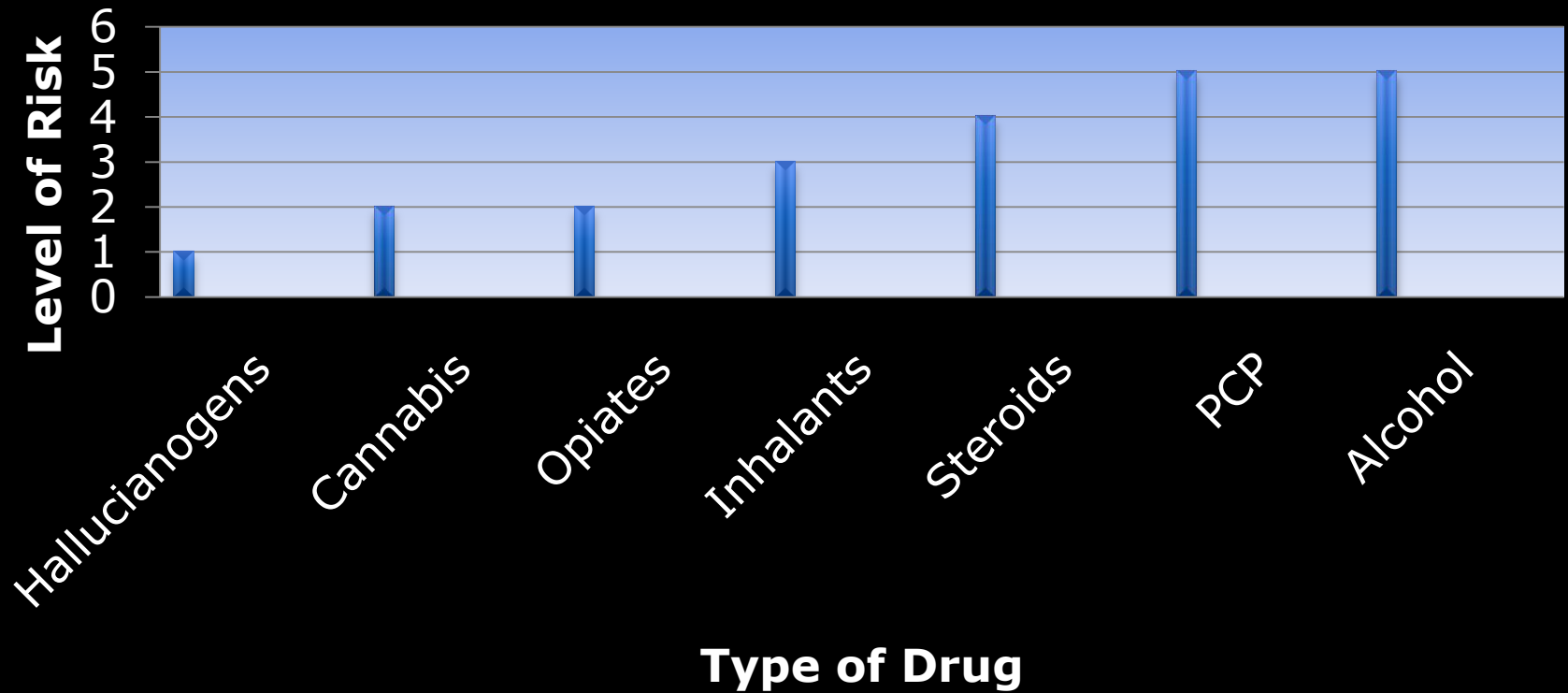
Causes of Escalation

- Fear
- Peer pressure
- Weapons
- Pride
- Tone of voice
- Facial expressions
- Drugs

- Alcohol
- Self-esteem
- Bad communication
- Body language
- Not enough personal space
- Anger

More Causes of Escalation

Relationship of Risk and Drugs



If Drugs are involved

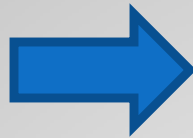
- **People are doing the best they can to get their needs met**
 - **1. Love and Belonging**
 - **2. Power**
 - **3. Freedom**
 - **4. Fun**



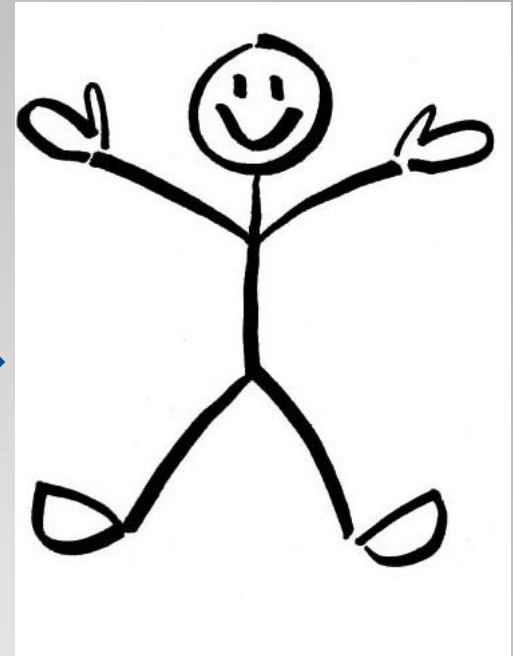
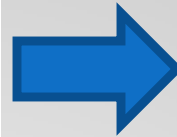
Person's view



ANGRY PERSON



YOU



WHAT THEY WANT
(UNMET NEED)

Escalating Person's View

- Early Warning Signs
 - Change in mood and level of anxiety
 - Pacing, movement (toward you or away)
 - What they are saying, how they are saying it
 - Changes in baseline behaviors
 - Eyes, - watchful, scanning, assessing
 - Concentration problems
 - Disorganized behaviors
 - Gestures - jerky / uncontrolled

**What does an Escalating Person
Look Like?**

- *IMMINENT DANGER SIGNS*

- **Face**

- pale, flushed, lips tighten over teeth
- Eyebrows drop to cover/protect eyes
- Break stare, then look at intended target
- Chin drops to protect neck

- **General**

- Breathing rapid and deep
- Clenched fists
- Stance goes from square to bladed
- Body movement may stop -or- rocking from heel to toe
- Lowering of entire body to lunge

**What does an Escalating Person
Look Like?**



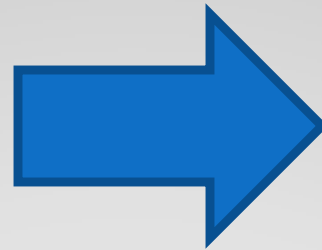
DE-ESCALATION

A reduction in the level of conflict

The goal of de-escalation is to build rapid rapport and a sense of connectedness with an agitated person in order to reduce the likelihood of escalation to physical violence. This sense of connectedness is established through the use of specific verbal, psychological, and nonverbal techniques that emphasize controlling one's own emotional response to threat while guiding communication.



WORKING
TOGETHER



TO ACHEIVE



WHAT THEY
WANT/NEED

Collaborative view

**We are not creatures
of circumstance:
we are creators of
circumstance
-- Benjamin
Disraeli**



- Awareness & Assessment
 - The sum total of information you have accumulated about the nature, circumstances, stages and dynamics of various forms of escalation.
- Action
 - Verbal and Non-verbal behaviors and strategies we use in order to guide the communication.
 - De-Escalation techniques used to resolve the crisis without the use of force.

The A's of De-Escalation

- Helps identify precipitating factors
- Helps with our own ability to control our emotional response
- Helps with identifying interventions to use
- Helps with timing the intervention



Awareness / Assessment

- How we react in return determines whether the situation escalates, de-escalates, or becomes mutually or individually tolerable.



Know yourself

- Need to Be Right
- Need to To please others / be accepted
- Need to Be in control (leads to a power struggle)
- Need to Solve the problem
- Burn out
- Entitlement issues
- Personalizing
- Tendency to compete (leads to power struggle)
- Tendency to blame
- Response to “threats” (right violation, telling boss, etc)
- Your reputation
- “Just like”

What are your hot buttons?

- Cultural differences
- Poor listening skills
- Making assumptions
- Being preoccupied or in a hurry
- Reacting with anger
- Defensiveness
- Blaming
- Our hot buttons
- Language differences



Barriers to Positive Reactions

- Increased heart rate
- Adrenaline
- Increased body temperature
- Face flushing
- Shaking
- Increase in volume and intonation of speech
- Nervous laughter
- Sweaty palms
- Clenched fists

YOUR PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS



De-Escalate yourself first

- REMEMBER TO BREATHE!
- **Act Calm**
 - Fake it
 - Maintain Eye contact
 - Neutral Facial expression
 - Relaxed Body
 - Keep gestures to a minimum
- **Reassure self**
 - Positive Self Talk
 - Project Success
- **Ask for help**
- **Position yourself for safety**
 - Avoid the Danger Zone - within one arm length
 - Safety Zone - Out side of person's reach
 - Zone of Influence - Within Safety Zone, but still close enough to communicate effectively
 - Use Natural Barriers



- Do they feel unsafe
- Substance use or abuse, or withdrawal
- History of violence
- Paranoia
- Medication Non-Compliance
- Physical Illness/pain
- Difficulties with Communication

Awareness & Assessment of the Individual

- History of abuse
- Feeling discriminated against
- Money problems
- No cigarettes
- Low self-esteem
- Social Stressors
- Plans of Service
- Cultural Background



- Past history of violence
- Suicidal tendencies
- Patterns
- Individual's Triggers,
 - Divorce
 - Loss of employment
 - Major life changes



Risk factors for violence

- Audience
- Crowded / No personal space
- Noisy
- Weather
- Changes from the norm

- Colors
- Behavior of others
- Holidays
- Potential Weapons
- Avenues of Escape
- Use of natural barriers

Awareness & Assessment of the Environment



- Appear calm, centered, and self-assured even if you don't feel it. Your anxiety can make the client feel anxious and unsafe which can escalate aggression.
- Maintain limited eye contact. Loss of eye contact may be interpreted as an expression of fear, lack of interest or regard, or rejection. Excessive eye contact may be interpreted as a threat or challenge.

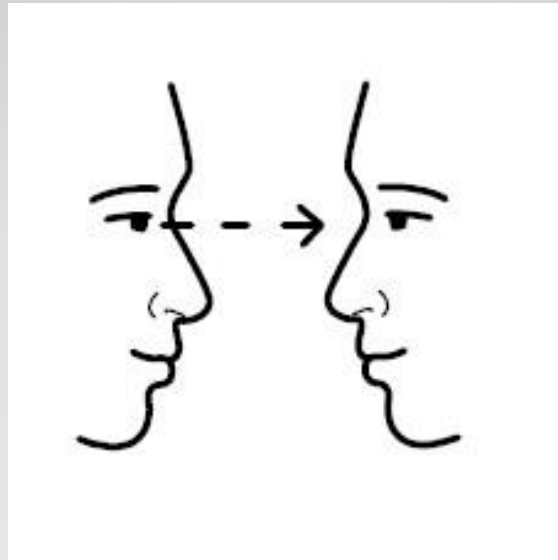
Action!

Non-Verbal Skills

- Maintain a neutral facial expression. A calm, attentive expression reduces hostility.
- Keep a relaxed and alert posture. Stand up straight with feet about shoulder width apart and weight evenly balanced. Avoid aggressive stances.
- Minimize body movements such as excessive gesturing, pacing, fidgeting, or weight shifting. These are all indications of anxiety and will tend to increase agitation.

Non-Verbal Skills

- Always be at the same eye level. Encourage the client to be seated, but if he/she needs to stand, stand up also.
- Do not point or shake your finger.



Non-Verbal Skills

- Use extreme caution with touch. Even if some touching is generally culturally appropriate and usual in your setting. Cognitive disorders in agitated people allow for easy misinterpretation of physical contact as hostile and threatening.





**BEFORE MOVING TO VERBAL
SKILLS, ALLOW THE PERSON TO
VENT!**

Listening

- Three Main Listening Skills:
 - Attending: Giving your physical (and mental) attention to another person.
 - Following: Making sure you are engaged by using eye contact. Use un-intrusive gestures (such as nodding of your head, saying okay or asking an infrequent question.)
 - Reflecting: Paraphrasing and reflecting, using the feelings of the other person. (empathy)
- Listen when you are “listening.”
 - No other activities when listening.
 - Multi-tasking is not good when you are listening.

Be an empathic listener

- Do **NOT** be judgmental.
- Do **NOT** ignore the person or pretend to be paying attention.
- Listen to what the person is really saying.
- Re-state the message.
- Clarify the message.
- Repeat the message.
- Be empathetic!
- Validate the person's feelings
 - "I understand why..."
 - (Not in agreement with...)
- Try to establish rapport with the other person.



De-escalating Effectively

- To verbally de-escalate another person, you must open as many clear lines of communication as possible.
- Both you and the other person must listen to each other and have no barriers.



- The things that keep the meaning of what is being said from being heard.
 - Pre-judging
 - Not Listening
 - Criticizing
 - Name-Calling
 - Engaging in Power Struggles
 - Ordering
 - Threatening
 - Minimizing
 - Arguing



Communication Barriers:

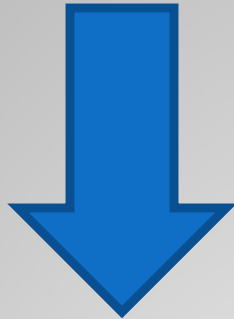
- **Ordering**– you must...you have to...
- **Relationship dependent** (Management directives)
- **Threatening**– if you don't, then ...
- **Preaching**– you should...
- **Lecturing**–here's why you are wrong
- **Judging**–you're Lazy... you'll never change
- **Excusing**–it's not so bad ...
- **Labeling**–you're being unrealistic

Phrases for miscommunication

De-escalating Positively

- Use positive and helpful statements such as:
 - “I want to help you!”
 - “Please tell me more so I better understand how to help you.”
 - “Let’s call Mr. Smith ... I know he would be able to help with this...”
 - “Ms. Jones handles this for our district, let’s ask her what she thinks about this situation ... She is always willing to help!”
- Put yourself on his/her side of finding a solution to the problem.

- Decrease Demands



- **Increase Praise**

- Explain your intentions and convey your expectations clearly
- You may need to repeat
- Use the person's name
- Make requests simple and specific
- Be an active and reflective listener

Tip:
It's always better to REQUEST
and SUGGEST
than COMMAND and DEMAND



Communicate Clearly



Remember that there is no content except trying to calmly bring the level of arousal down to a safer place.

- **Align yourself with the person**
 - Find a point of agreement (getting to yes)
 - Cast yourself as an ally
 - Distance yourself from authority
 - Acknowledge a grain of truth



De-Escalation Techniques

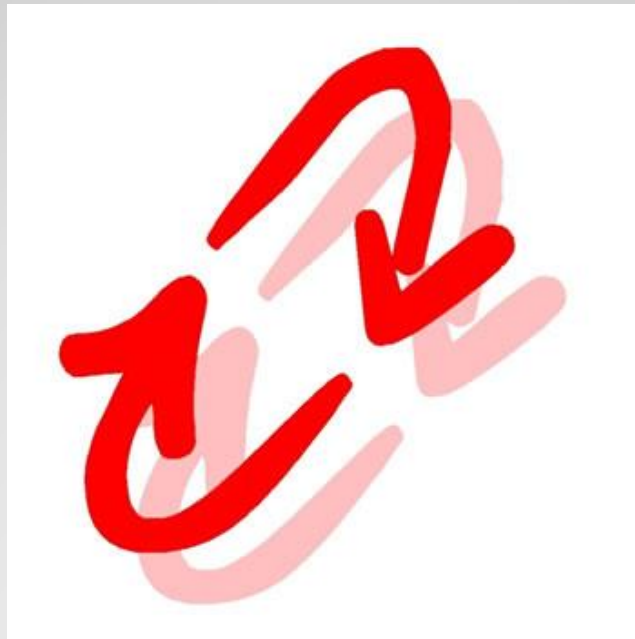
- **Redirect attention**

- a learned skill that assists someone to shift the focus or direction of energy for example, change topic of conversation to assist the speaker to get out of a rut-when the topic of conversation is no longer productive.



- **Feedback**

- Identifying or pointing out a person's behavior without demanding a change
- List consequences of inappropriate behavior without threats or anger.





Model:

Behavior = Effect = Alternative

Feedback may help prevent someone who is beginning to escalate from further escalation or prevent future escalations.

However, it is not useful if someone is already highly agitated

- **Changing the immediate environment**

- Useful if someone present is contributing to the escalation by removing the audience
- Moving to somewhere safe where there is back-up



- **Ask them to sit down**

- Lowers general arousal
- Decreases aggression

- **Use Humor-carefully**

- Powerful tension reliever
- Decreases stress
- Careful not to be insensitive-you have to know the person



- Do not be defensive even if comments or insults are directed at you. They are not about you. Do not defend yourself or anyone else from insults, curses, or misconceptions about their roles or behaviors.
- Do not try to argue or convince.





- Use a modulated, low monotonous tone of voice (our normal tendency is to have a high-pitched, tight voice when scared).
Do not get loud or try to yell over a screaming person. Wait until he/she takes a breath, then talk. Speak calmly at an average volume.

- Be very respectful even when firmly setting limits or calling for help. The agitated individual is very sensitive to feeling shamed and disrespected. We want him/her to know that it is not necessary to show us that they should be respected. We automatically treat them and all clients with dignity and respect.

- Respond selectively. Answer only informational questions no matter how rudely asked, (e.g. “Why do I fill out these g-d forms”?) This is a real information-seeking question.
- Do not answer abusive questions (e.g. “Why are all counselors’ assholes”?). This sort of question should get no response whatsoever.

- Be honest. Lying to a person to calm them down may lead to future escalation if they become aware of the dishonesty. However, do not volunteer information which may further upset the person.



- Explain limits and rules in an authoritative, firm, but respectful tone. Give choices, where possible, in which both alternatives are safe ones (e.g. “Would you like to continue our meeting calmly or would you prefer to stop now and come back tomorrow when things can be more relaxed.”).
- Represent external controls as institutional rather than personal.

- Empathize with feelings but not with the behavior (e.g. "I understand that you have every right to feel angry, but it is not okay for you to threaten me or my staff.").



- Trust your instincts. If you assess or feel that de-escalation is not working, STOP! Get help.
- It's important to remember your responsibility to the safety of others in the area, and also to keep yourself safe.

RETREAT!





Summary of Key Points

- Focus on building a solid relationship with each person you work with and strengthening the Four Pillars of Companionship.
- When the four pillars of companionship are present in person's life, opportunities for conflict are greatly reduced and escalation is no longer necessary to get their needs met.



Safe



Loved



Loving



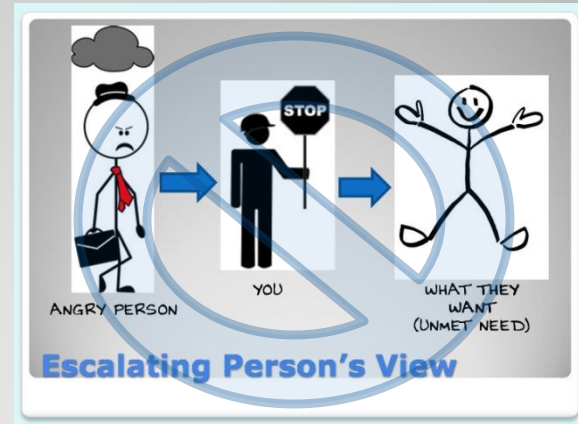
Engaged

Four Pillars of Companionship

- People are doing the best they can to get their needs met. They need to view you as someone who will help them move toward that goal.



THIS!



NOT THIS

*We are not creatures of circumstance:
we are creators of circumstance
-- Benjamin Disraeli*

How do they see you?

- **DE-ESCALATE YOURSELF FIRST!**

- Breathe
- Act Calm
- Relax muscles
- Reassure yourself
- Positive self talk
- Focus on Success
- Ask for help
- Stay in safety zone
- Use natural barriers



HOW DO YOU SEE YOU?

- Listen!
 - Physically attend to the person
 - Listen to what they really saying
 - Restate / clarify / reflect
 - Validate feelings



Assessment *before* action

- Align with the person
- Redirect Attention
- Communicate Clearly
- Trust your instincts

- Change the environment
- Be honest & Be respectful

- Decrease Demands



- Increase Praise

Strategies

**Thank you
& Stay Safe!**

You must pass the final test in order to receive credit for completing this course.