

De-Escalation Training:

Key Training Components

Most programs focus on several core pillars to handle escalating behavior:

- **Verbal Communication:** Using calm, low tones and simple, direct language to help an individual regain rational thinking.
- **Nonverbal Awareness:** Managing body language, maintaining neutral facial expressions, and respecting personal space to avoid appearing threatening.
- **Active Listening:** Empathizing with the person's feelings and reflecting their concerns back to them so they feel heard and understood.
- **Situational Assessment:** Recognizing early "triggers" or warning signs of agitation before a crisis occurs.
- **Self-Regulation:** Training the responder to remain calm and in control of their own emotional responses to avoid further escalating the situation.

The Five Steps of De-Escalation

1. Maintain Your Own Calmness

Before interacting, regulate your own emotions. Use deep breathing to keep your adrenaline at bay and ensure your tone and body language remain neutral and non-threatening.

2. Ensure Safety and Physical Presence

Respect personal space by standing at a safe distance (usually 1.5 to 3 feet). Position yourself at an angle rather than directly facing the person and avoid sudden movements or aggressive postures like crossed arms.

3. Active Listening and Empathy

Allow the person to speak without interruption. Use "minimal encouragers" (like nodding) and acknowledge their feelings without judgment. Paraphrase what they say to show you genuinely understand their perspective.

4. Identify Interests and Redirect

Determine what the person actually needs or wants. Redirect their focus away from the source of the problem by suggesting new activities or shifting the conversation toward finding a way forward.

Key Tips for Success:

- **Avoid judging:** Focus on feelings rather than lecturing them on facts.
- **Allow silence:** Pausing allows time for the person to think and for emotions to settle.
- **Know when to seek help:** If the situation escalates further, ask for assistance.