

Principles of De-escalation

There are basic guidelines of de-escalation that can help keep a person from becoming assaultive after they have begun escalating. Remember that agitated students are experiencing increased adrenaline and reduced oxygen to the brain. For these reasons de-escalation strategies need to be simple, clear and respectful.

Use few words

- Escalating students are less able to hear you; long discussions of what they did wrong are not useful to de-escalate. Words should focus only on helping them calm down, be simple and straightforward. Do not discuss consequences once a student is escalated

Listen

- Let the student be heard, try to use active listening skills like reflection and summarizing. Often feeling like someone has really heard them out is enough to prevent a crisis

Re-direct

- Sometimes getting the student off of the issue that is upsetting them is enough to defuse the crisis. Shift the conversation or activity to something that is less agitating for a brief period until the child is less escalated. When the child is calm you can go back to try to deal with the issue in a different way

Use Self-Control

- Make sure you have good strategies for keeping yourself calm. Take deep breaths, use a calm voice tone. Students will respond to the energy you put out.

Allow for Time

- Don't panic; sometimes waiting just a minute and giving the student breathing room will allow them to make the right decision about how to handle their emotions

Give Choices

- Most times students will de-escalate if they have viable options to get out of the situation they are in. Give them some ways to feel they have control over the situation.

Be Natural

- Use these techniques as best they suit your style. You have to feel comfortable in order to be natural with the students. If you seem different than yourself when working to de-escalate students they will sense your discomfort and this may escalate the situation.

Get Support

- Seek out others during a crisis; know where others are ahead of time who can support you if a crisis should occur so that you are not left to deal with things by yourself.