

# High Risk Situations In the Workplace

How to de-escalate volatile situations

-Richard Hatfield

# What is De-escalation

**Escalation**: the increase of the intensity of a conflict or potentially violent situation.

**De-escalation**: the reduction of the intensity of a conflict or potentially violent situation.

Why do people escalate? Needs, distress, trauma responses, chemical imbalances, substance abuse disorders

Basic steps of De-escalation:

1. Reduction 2. Intervention, 3. Protection

Always remember, your job is to support and serve our guests/clients!

Never approach a situation alone.

If a situation feels wrong, follow your instincts and leave.

NEVER get physically involved in a situation.

Respect personal space keep a 5-foot distance.

# Proper Safety

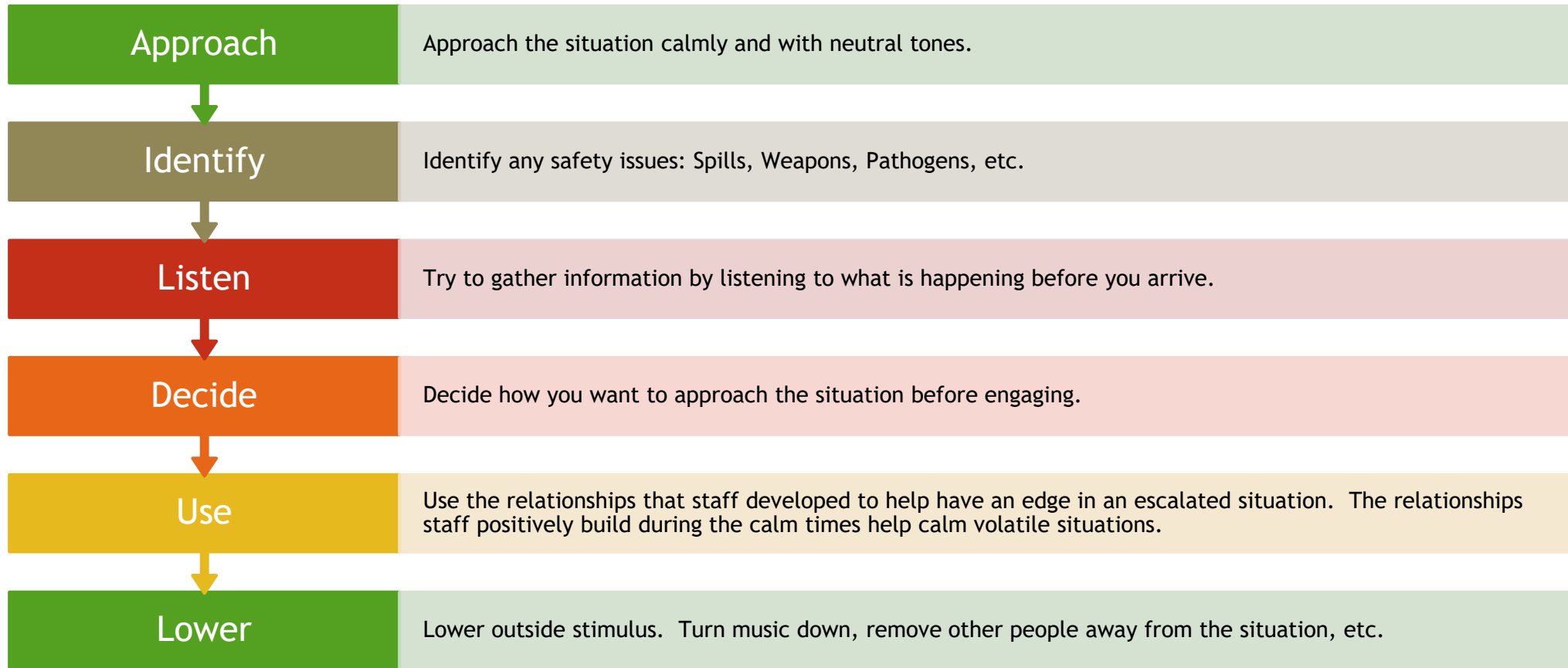
# Avoidable Conflicts/Not all situations are rational

Every situation will be different from the last. Even with all the proper tools and training, we might not get the outcome we want.

Do not approach a client if their behavior is dangerous. If a client or customer is likely to cause injury, prioritize safety and call the police.

Actively building a positive relationship with our clients and customers change how they react to us when they are in an escalated state. Trust can help de-escalate a situation.

# Approach and identify cause



# Body Language

1. Punishment is not the start of De-escalation
2. Staff's actions can unintentionally escalate a situation.

## AVOID

- Getting defensive
- Using accusatory tone
- Using elevated voice
- Pointing
- Erratic hand gestures
- Accusatory body language
  - Arms folded
  - Facial gestures of disbelief, or humor

## DO

- Keep hand gestures to a minimum
- Keep voice low and calm and soothing
- Calmly listen no matter what is said
- Keep the topic on solving the situation at hand

# Rational Detachment

- ▶ Every time is the first time. We have to treat every instance like it's the first time. Our biases do not help de-escalate.
- ▶ Behavior is communication. Most communication is non-verbal. Signs of anxiety in body language, tone and cadence may reflect a need and provide clues about what the client really wants.
- ▶ Avoid the power struggle. Challenging or exercising authority over a person can escalate negative behaviors. No one can meet every need at every moment, so offering what you can allows flexibility to address both parties' needs and desired outcomes.
- ▶ It's not personal! Stay calm. Let it go. Take time to de-stress and regulate your own emotions. You can only control your own attitude and actions.

## Active Listening; Facts are important, but how a person feels is the heart of the matter.

- ▶ Separate the persons involved from the situation. Invite them to a neutral location. Ask them to sit and explain what the situation. Try not to start by issuing orders.
- ▶ Let the person explain the entire problem. If it gets repetitive, try and steer the conversation forward. Paraphrasing what has been said to you assures people you are listening. Use supportive words.
- ▶ Ignore challenging questions. If a person challenges your authority, ignore it and bring the conversation back to the heart of the matter.
- ▶ Behavior can't be forced but setting limits can help us influence behaviors. Framing acceptable behaviors or outcomes encourage the other person to choose the most productive option.
- ▶ Solving a situation rarely should result in Firm Outcomes like, "If you don't do this, I will be Exiting you from the program," or, "if you don't do this, you will be getting a night out." Punishments should be our last line, and only used when we are fully prepared to carry them out



# Form Relationship/Identify Solution

Validate decisions and reinforce a positive outcome.

Set boundaries based on the rules

Allow time for decisions to be made. Unless a situation is violent, we can give people time to think and reflect.

Propose strategies to prevent the next escalated event.

Enforce and evaluate the decision within a reasonable time

Choose wisely what you insist on. Be very careful deciding which rules are negotiable and which ones are not. If you can offer a person options and flexibility, it can avoid unnecessary escalation

Develop rapport. Learn from the conflict and help the other person to learn from the experience.

Focus on identifying and preventing the patter of behavior in the future. Put time and effort into repairing the relationship.

# Resolve Situation and Establish Firm Boundaries.

## Avoid

Avoid promising an unachievable solution

## Help

Help guide clients to make a sound decision themselves.

If they feel they came up with an appropriate response, they will feel more relaxed.

## Reflect

Reflect on the choices that have been made and reiterate your expectations from them.

## Inform

Inform Supervisor of the situation.

## Give

Give them a firm time frame to meet the expectations that they set.

## Check back

Check back in from time to time to help people make correct decisions.

## Enforce

Enforce the decisions that were made, and then come to a final response.

# Stores Scenario List

1. Unhoused person refuses to leave changing room and is becoming increasingly aggressive.

2. A Customer is upset over pricing and is demanding that you lower the price for them.

3. Two customers are arguing over an item that they both want, and are rapidly escalating.

# Homeless Services Scenario List

- ▶ 1. Client has been administered Naloxone and upon waking is extremely aggressive about being Narcaned.
- ▶ 2. A client is being exited for various issues about their living area, and refuses to leave the property.
- ▶ 3. A Client has brought a family member onto the site, and after being informed that they cannot be here, they became hostile that you wont allow their family here.