

# De-escalation strategies

## De-escalate yourself first

### Remember to breath

- ⇒ Maintain eye contact
- ⇒ Neutral facial expression
- ⇒ Relaxed body
- ⇒ Keep gestures to a minimum
- ⇒ Reassure self
- ⇒ Positive self-talk
- ⇒ Project success
- ⇒ Ask for help

### Act calm

### Fake it

## Position yourself for safety

### ⇒ Avoid the Danger Zone

- Within one arm length

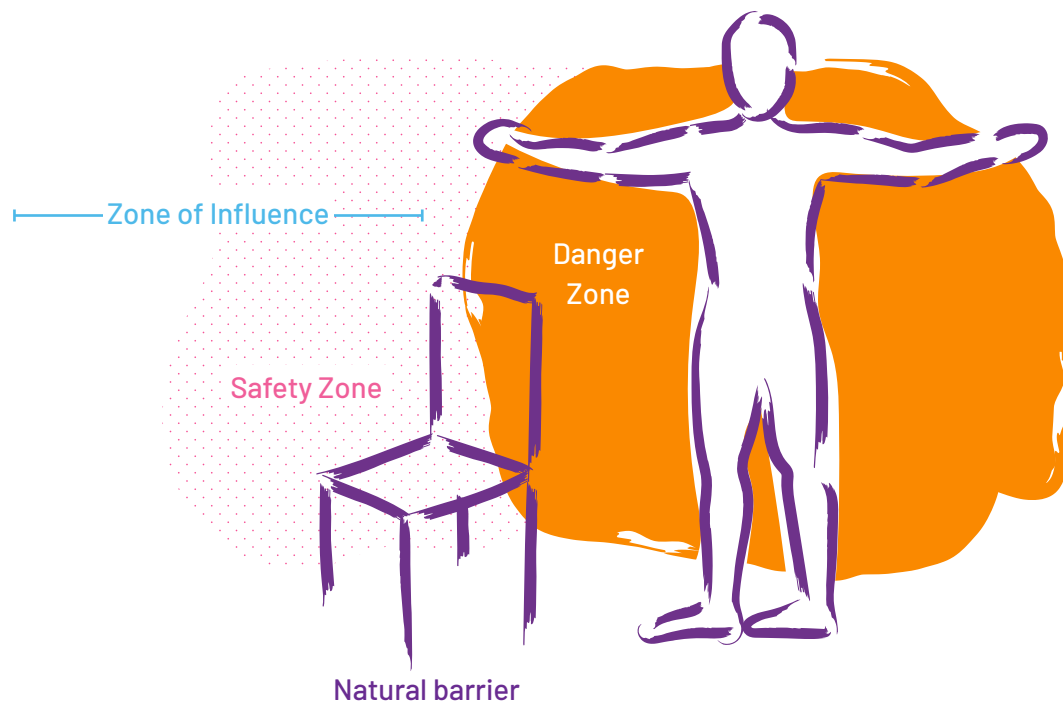
### ⇒ Safety Zone

- Outside of person's reach

### ⇒ Zone of Influence

- Within Safety Zone, but still close enough to communicate effectively

### ⇒ Use natural barriers



## De-escalation in practice

| Non-verbal skills   | Verbal Skills  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Appear calm, centred, and self-assured even if you don't feel it. Your anxiety can make the client feel anxious and unsafe which can escalate aggression.</li> <li>⇒ 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.</li> <li>⇒ Maintain a neutral facial expression. A calm, attentive expression reduces hostility.</li> <li>⇒ Keep a relaxed and alert posture. Stand up straight with feet about shoulder width apart and weight evenly balanced. Avoid aggressive stances.</li> <li>⇒ Minimize body movements such as excessive gesturing, pacing, fidgeting, or weight shifting. These are all indications of anxiety and will tend to increase agitation</li> <li>⇒ Always be at the same eye level. Encourage the client to be seated, but if he/she needs to stand, stand up also.</li> <li>⇒ Do not point or shake your finger.</li> <li>⇒ 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.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ 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.</li> <li>⇒ Use positive and helpful statements like:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I want to help you!"</li> <li>• "Please tell me more so I better understand how to help you."</li> </ul> </li> <li>⇒ Put yourself on his/her side of finding a solution to the problem.</li> <li>⇒ Explain your intentions and convey your expectations clearly</li> <li>⇒ You may need to repeat</li> <li>⇒ Use the person's name</li> <li>⇒ Make requests simple and specific</li> <li>⇒ Be an active and reflective listener</li> <li>⇒ Redirect attention               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Environment   | Humour   |
| <p><b>Changing the immediate environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Useful if someone present is contributing to the escalation by removing the audience               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving to somewhere safe where there is backup</li> </ul> </li> <li>⇒ Ask them to sit down               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowers general arousal</li> <li>• Decreases aggression</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Use humour - <i>carefully</i></li> <li>⇒ Powerful tension reliever</li> <li>⇒ Decreases stress</li> <li>⇒ Be careful not to be insensitive - you have to know the person</li> </ul>   |