

DE-ESCALATION

BEST PRACTICES, TIPS, AND TECHNIQUES

Common signs and signals of agitation

- Handwringing
- Fidgeting
- Pacing
- A change in volume or tone of speaking voice
- Using more swear words than usual
- Rocking in chair
- Pacing

Verbal Communication

Here are some tips and statements that can be effective in de-escalating 'heated' situations:

- Keep your tone even and calm
- Speak slowly and steadily
- Reflect back what the other person is saying
- Restate and synthesize what the other person is saying to get clear on the message and need
- Offer choices whenever you can to help empower the other person
- Use the other person's name to get their attention, break tension and show you are being attentive to them.
- Try validating and reassuring yet respectful statements:
 - "I'm here to help any way I can"
 - "It sounds like this has been an awful day. Let's try to shift gears."
 - "I really think there is a solution to this problem."

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is often far more effective than verbal communication. Here are some non-verbal ways of communicating to de-escalate:

- Proximity: give the other person space
- Silence is ok
- Eye contact when appropriate, respectful aversion of eyes when appropriate
- "Supportive stance": standing off to the side, avoiding toe to toe stance
- Move slowly and confidently
- Model calm and steady breathing

