

Handout Four – De-Escalating Violence

NINE BASIC WAYS TO DE-ESCALATING VIOLENCE*

Don't act frightened

Don't behave like a victim; demonstrate respect for yourself.
Be gentle, but firm. Pleading induces more cruelty.

Connect humanities

Speak to the assailant as a person of dignity.
Become a person to the assailant.
Humanise self and them (say "I"). Ask Questions.
If the victim is violent in return, the attacker feels justified.

Remain calm

Breathe deeply. Keep your voice low.
Silence can disarm.

Listen, listen, listen

Show the person you have heard what they are saying.
Do not rush into faster and faster speech.
Only interrupt if person personally abusive.
Hearing does not mean agreeing.

Watch body language – your own and assailant's

Avoid sudden moves. Use slow, gentle hand movements.
Use non-threatening eye contact.

Use the unexpected to create wonder and surprise

Use humour, distraction, introduce yourself to the person
Shake hands.
Interrupt the process somehow – possibly by trying to sit down, offering coffee etc.

Empathise

Remember the assailant has all the fear that you have.

Know that the assailant is a human being capable of love

Pay attention to the need to be loved.
Trust that the person wants to act positively.

Allow a way out

Both physically, as in a door, and 'saving face'.

“Calming a potentially violent person is :

56% facial expression and body language
37% tone of voice
7% what we say”

J Reuwer, MD

* Adapted from CPC Training 1993