Certified De-Escalation & Restraint Training

De-escalation Strategies Chart

Avoid Practices That Increase Dysregulation (These practices are counterproductive to de-escalation and should be avoided.)	**Try Strategies That Regulate and Relate** (These strategies offer both physical and emotional safety and connection.)
Over-talking: the brain's ability to process language is compromised during dysregulation. Too much verbal input may overwhelm the individual's already stressed nervous system.	**Limiting Verbal Input:** Only one person should talk. Use short, simple sentences or be quiet.
Instructing the individual to continue the current task when he/she shows signs of dysregulation: Individuals may become dysregulated when a task is too difficult or overwhelming.	**Stopping the activity when the individual shows signs of dysregulation:** Attend to the individual's emotional state instead of task completion.
Telling the individual to go to an area that is viewed as punitive: If the individual views his removal as punitive, he/she may engage in a power struggle to avoid removal.	**Offering a break in a designated area or with a designated person:** A break is usually seen as non-threatening, and a change of location usually aids in re-regulation.
Arguing with the individual, insisting he/she admits fault, accepting challenges, or matching the intensity of the dysregulated person: Arguing, challenging someone, or demanding an admission of guilt directly attacks the person's ego and sense of control, causing him/her to become defensive, angry, and potentially more volatile.	**Acknowledging and Validating Feelings:** It is important to calmly recognize and validate the individual's emotional experience. Demonstrate empathy by explicitly communicating that the person's feelings are understood and accepted. For example, you might say, "I recognize that you are feeling frustrated, and it is completely normal to experience such emotions from time to time."
Telling the individual what to do/giving orders: Individuals may view these practices as controlling, often leading to resistance, agitation, and power struggles.	**Giving Options:** Giving options increase the chance of compliance because the dysregulated individual feels that he/she is not helpless in the situation.
	Redirecting Behavior: Redirect the individual to another activity or topic. This technique works best when used *before* a behavior escalates.

Being judgmental or minimizing the individual's struggles: When we judge or minimize people's emotions or actions, they are likely to feel that their emotions are unimportant to us and that their concerns have not been acknowledged. Individuals often become defensive and feel the need to justify themselves.	**Empathizing, Showing Concern, and Offering Help**: These practices tell the individual that his/her emotional well-being is valued. "I'm sorry that this is so difficult. What can I do to help you?"
	Agreeing: Sometimes when people are angry, there is a lot of truth (or a little truth) in what they are saying. Find the bit of truth in the situation and acknowledge your agreement in a calm voice. Agreeing removes resistance by finding a point of common ground, and it signals that you are not an adversary.
Threatening, teaching life lessons, or talking about consequences while the individual is dysregulated: Discussions about consequences and life lessons should be postponed until both parties are calm and rational.	**Listening:** Give the individual your full attention, nod, ask questions, and avoid changing the subject or interrupting.
Addressing every minor negative behavior: Constantly correcting each small, undesirable action may inadvertently reinforce these behaviors or lead the individual to perceive him/herself as a target for criticism.	**Ignore and tolerate unless the behavior is unsafe:** Prioritize interventions for behaviors that are disruptive or unsafe, while promoting a supportive and understanding environment.
Focusing on the behavior: Focusing on behavior during de-escalation can backfire by shifting the situation to a power struggle, invalidating feelings, and preventing the person from feeling understood.	**Focusing on feelings:** Check in with the individual on an emotional level instead of addressing the behavior. "You look a bit frustrated. How can I help?"
Being sarcastic, humiliating or shaming the individual, or being impatient: These actions increase tension, damage trust, directly attack a person's self-worth, and are perceived as disrespectful.	**Focusing on connecting with the individual through empathy and connections:** Use positive, understanding language that creates trust and foster's a positive environment.
Calling the individual out in front of others: This practice can cause the person to feel disrespected, to become defensive, and to lose trust in the person who engages in this practice.	**Communicating with the individual in non-verbal ways:** Create signals or methods to nonverbally redirect negative behaviors of those in your care.