De-Escalation Strategies and the Behavior Assessment Team

Department of Risk Assessment
919-513-4224

Why do people escalate?

What are some behavioral signs of escalation?

What are some tense situations that you may encounter with others in your role?

De-escalation strategies for tense situations

Active Listening

Allow for silence

04 Wait till the other person speaks again.

Repeat key phrases

05 From time to time repeat the other person words or paraphrase it back to them. It will reassure that you really listen and encourage them to open up.

Paraphrase

06 Understand the emotions behind the words. When you paraphrase also try express the others feelings back to them.

Four Strategies

| Create Safety | Maintain Dignity | Break the Rhythm | Limit Setting |

Create Safety

- Appear calm, centered, and self-assured
- Ask uninvolved parties to leave the area (if this can be done safely) or provide a private space
- Alert others
- Position self for safety and avoid challenging body language
- Do not touch person without permission
- Minimize body movements
- Allow ventilation/ask questions that call for long narratives
  - Reassure that you are there to help and support them and you want to keep them safe

Create Safety

Maintain Dignity

- Do not embarrass
- Acknowledge the person's feelings/listen empathetically and non-judgmentally
- Do not attempt to argue
- Do not agree with, encourage, or argue with distortions, delusions or hallucinations
- Do not downplay the seriousness of the situation
- Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Adopt an attitude of acceptance and seek to understand
- Ask for their recommendations and or small favors/give some control
- Focus on the problem, not the behavior

Maintain Dignity

Break the Rhythm

- Offer water or a snack
- Speak slowly, clearly, and softly
- Ask questions to regain control of the conversation
- Allow for breaks

Limit Setting

- Ask a belligerent person to leave the area and come back when they are calmer
- Name the behavior
- Establish ground rules
- Describe consequences of any violent behavior

Enhancing Communication

Communication Blockers	Communication Enhancers
Blaming & Attacking	Asking for more information
Being distracted or non-interested body language	Making eye contact, leaning forward, giving full attention
Dismissing or Minimizing	Showing empathy, validating
Interrupting	Being silent and patient
Lecturing / Moralizing	Withholding judgment
Closed-Ended Questions	Open-Ended Questions

Let's practice

A student comes in to meet with you about a concern related to their grade and a few late assignments. You refer the student to the syllabus for the late assignment policy and the conversation shifts to another topic. The student suddenly brings up the issue again. They continue to get louder and their physical appearance changes. Before you can respond, the individual demands that you "do the right thing… or else" and begins to yell without giving you a chance to respond to anything they are saying.

How do you respond?

What does follow up look like?

Have you ever received a hostile email?

Responding to hostile emails

Strategies

- Take a deep breath
- Did I interpret the email correctly?
- Define the intent
- Consider your options

Options:

- Consider whether the email needs to be escalated to someone above you or if you need to consult with someone else about your reply
- Ignore the message
- Respond with a calm, patient, professional email
- Remember - You don't have to respond immediately

Responding

- Start with a Thank you ("Thank you for your email!" "I appreciate your feedback")
- You've prompted me to consider _____ in a new light.
- Message should be straightforward and brief
- Use facts in your reply
- Clarify details
- Answer the email professionally
- Avoid using all capital letters
- Do not use abusive or threatening remarks

Let's practice

A student emails you without a specific question and describes in great details their struggles related to focusing on academics. You respond and try to get more information about what specific help they are looking for. The student then sends 12 emails in a row overnight that each sound more desperate.

What are your concerns for the student?

How do you respond?

What does follow up with the student look like?

Let's practice

A colleague emails you following a tense meeting with a follow up question. You respond to their question and offer to meet again if they want to discuss the situation further.

The colleague then sends 12 emails in the middle of the night that each sound more desperate. You noticed the individual added more colleagues to each email they sent.

How do you respond?

Key points to remember

- Self Awareness
  - Voice – keep your voice low and calm
  - Body Language
  - Pay attention to how you are feeling
  - Limit distractions
- Remember each situation is different
- Take any threat seriously
- It's okay to ask for help
- Be present!
- Don't take it personally
- Write down their complaint or concern
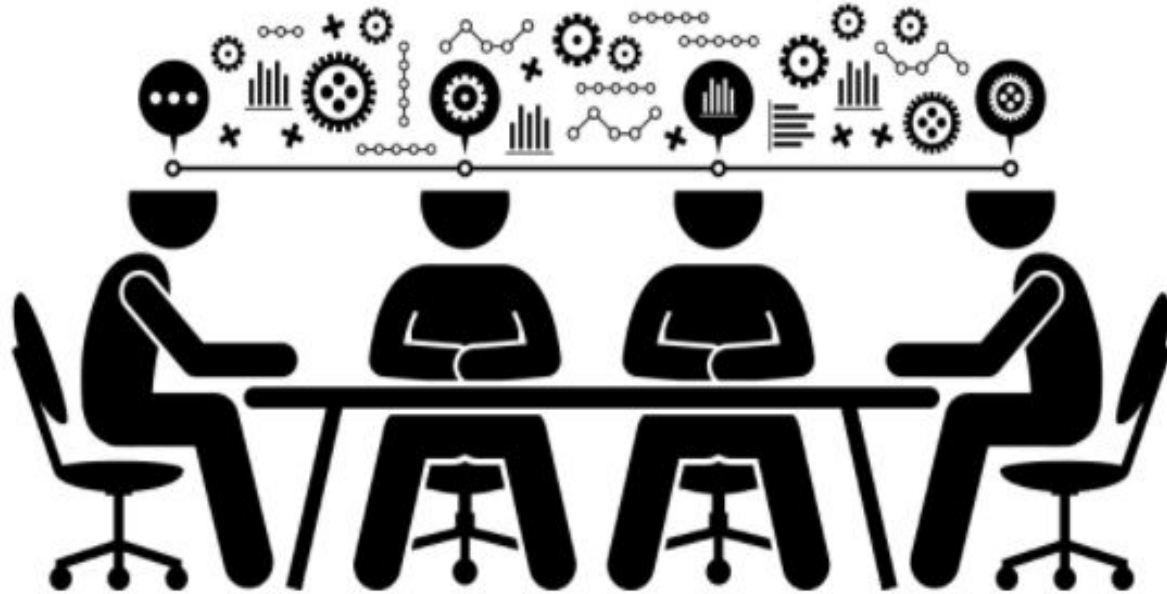- Debrief the situation when the individual leaves

What other strategies have worked for you?
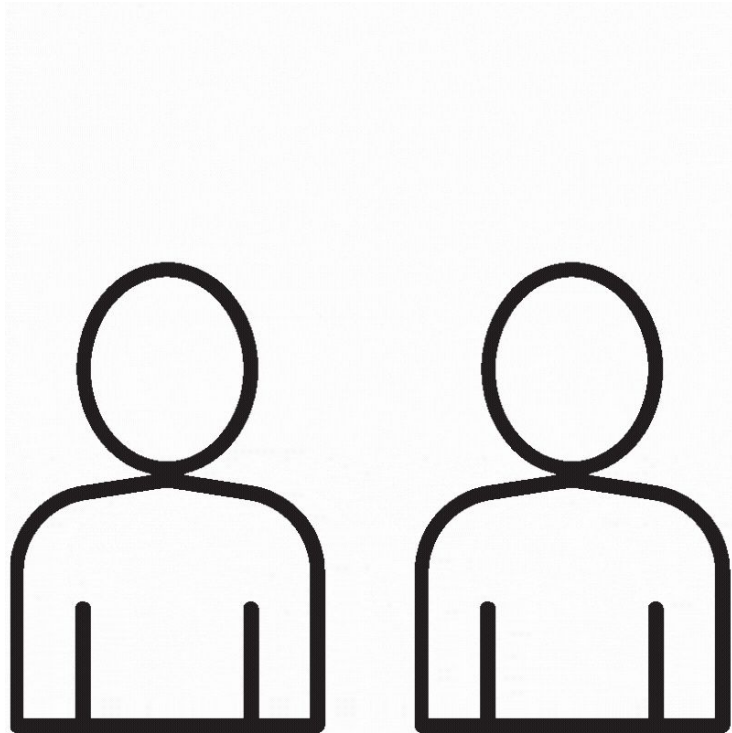
Questions?

Behavior Assessment Team

Sharing Concerns

- Employees and students shall immediately refer any acts of violence, potential violence, or threatening behaviors to:
  - Immediate supervisor
  - Violence Prevention & Threat Management
  - Employee Relations staff (Employee)
  - University Police
  - Office of Student Conduct (Students)
- Online Referral
  - go.ncsu.edu/risk-assessment
  - Red "Share Concerns" button on the right sidebar

IN A NON-EMERGENCY

Share Concerns

CONCERNING BEHAVIOR REFERRALS SUBMITTED JUNE 01, 2023 THROUGH MAY 31, 2024

Student	Employee	Non-Affiliate
2749	118	151

NOTE: Compared to 2022-2023:

- Student – Decrease by 5%
- Employee – Increase by 22%
- Non-Affiliated – Increase by 17%

CARES & BAT

Two Teams | One Goal

Ensuring the Safety of Students and the Community

Similarities

- Multidisciplinary Team
- Case Management
- Collateral Information Data
- Not a disciplinary process

Differences

- Team structure
- Cares: Students / Concerns related to distress
- BAT: Students, Employees and Non-affiliated / Concerns related to potentially violent behavior
- Assessment and Case Management Process

Mission

The NC State Behavior Assessment Team (BAT) is committed to improving the NC State community's safety through a proactive, collaborative, coordinated, objective, and thoughtful approach to the prevention, identification, assessment, intervention, and management of situations that pose, or may reasonably pose, a threat to the safety and well-being of the campus community (i.e. students, employees and others not affiliated with the university).

(Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill, & Savage, 2008)

Process - Assessment

Once a report has been received about an individual of concern (students, faculty, staff, visitors), a BAT member conducts an initial assessment based upon the documented behavior and communication of the individual and convene the team.

Process - Assessment

While each case is unique, the team utilizes a consistent process for:

- sharing information
- determining what additional information is needed
- discussing potential risks associated with the case, including other possible stressors for the individual
- assigning a level of risk for the case

Process - Intervention

- After the assessment, if necessary and based upon the level of risk, the BAT plans and coordinates interventions to protect the campus community from the potential for targeted violence

- Multiple options are available for intervention

Process - Management

After the assessment and interventions, continued case management may be necessary to:

- monitor the progress of interventions
- maintain contact with the individuals involved in case other stressors develop
- provide relevant updates to the team and reassess the level of threat

Share concerns early and often

Questions?

Resources

- Department of Risk Assessment/ Office of Violence Prevention & Threat Management: 919-513-4224 / 919-513-4315 / 919-515-0998 / 919-515-0760
- Police: 911 for emergencies or 919-515-3000
- Counseling Center: 919-515-2423
- Prevention Services: 919-515-4405
- Office of Student Conduct: 919-515-2963
- Employee Relations: 919-515-6575

Resources

- Office for Equal Opportunity: 919-515-3148

- Student Ombuds Program: 919-513-3401 to set up an appointment for Confidential Voicemail - 919-513-0235

- Faculty and Staff Ombuds: brdavis5@ncsu.edu

Faculty and Staff Assistance Program
866-467-0467

- Confidential Counseling
- Financial Information and Resources
- Work-Life Solutions

- Legal Support and Resources
- Online Guidance Resources

Call your NC State University FASAP Program anytime for confidential assistance.

Call: 866.467.0467
Go online: guidanceresources.com

TDD: 800.697.0353
Your NC State Web ID: FASAP

Training opportunities

- Workplace Violence Prevention
  - Managers and Leaders: Online Training
  - Staff Live and Online Training
- Suicide Prevention Training – QPR
- Threat Assessment Fundamentals
- Telling Amy's Story - Domestic Violence in the Workplace
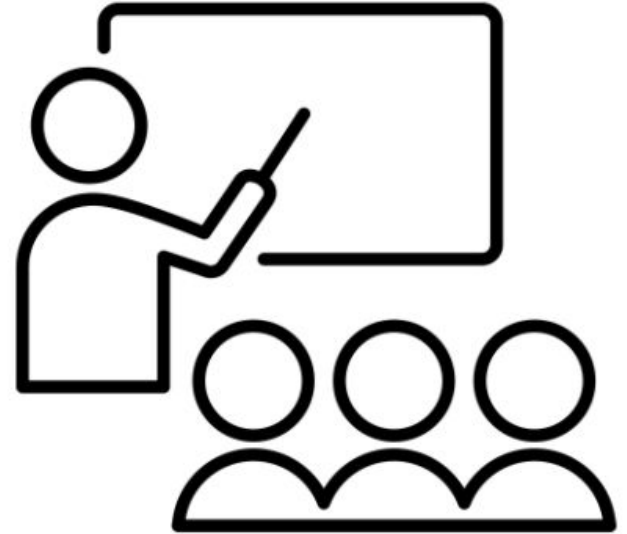
References

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- https://smart-union.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Active-Listening-Techniques-Handout.pdf
- [Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates (2004) (PDF) (ed.gov)](#)
- Calhoun, T., & Weston, S. (2003). Contemporary threat management. San Diego: Specialized Training Service.
- Cawood, J.S. & Corcoran, M.H. (2019). Violence assessment and intervention: The practitioner's handbook, 3rd. Ed. Boca Raton, FL: CRC press.
- Deisinger, E., Randazzo, M., O'Neill, D., & Savage, J. (2008). *The handbook for campus threat assessment & management teams.* Stoneham, MA: Applied Risk Management.

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Feedback Form

Your feedback is very important to us! Please complete the training evaluation anonymously at the following link:

go.ncsu.edu/de-escalation_evaluation

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