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## **TRAINING BULLETIN**

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### **5 De-Escalation Training Tips Used by Law Enforcement**

De-escalation training and properly implementing de-escalation strategies can be the difference between an elevated and intense conflict and a peaceful resolution. Typically, these methods are used to lower tension in high-intensity situations. Knowing how to calm an irritated individual is a skill that has become highly sought after for individuals in law enforcement, security, customer service and a number of other sectors.

Here are some examples of conflict escalation in an irritated individual:

- A person clenching his/her fists or tightening and untightening their jaw.
- A sudden change in body language or tone used during a conversation.
- The person starts pacing or fidgeting.
- A change in type of eye contact.
- The “Rooster Stance” – chest protruding out and arms away from the body.
- Disruptive behaviors – yelling, bullying, actively defying or refusing to comply.

The basic principles of de-escalation are rooted in understanding emotions and responding to those emotions in ways that encourage a peaceful resolution.

Learning to master these principles in both your personal and professional life can lead to better conflict avoidance and resolution.

## **1. Gaining Trust**

The simplest way to resolve any conflict and de-escalate a situation is by building trust and using that trust as a means to an end. Although it may sound easy, gaining an aggravated individual's trust can be extremely difficult.

Try to put yourself in the irritated individual's shoes without minimizing their feelings. By recognizing that you understand that they are upset, but also acknowledging that you can't know exactly how they are feeling, you show both compassion and respect – both helping to build trust.

Once trust has been established in a conflict, it is important to not do anything which may result in the trust being diminished prior to conflict resolution.

## **2. Body Language and Body Mirroring**

Human beings subconsciously react to body language as a social cue which instructs us how to behave in a situation. Body language helps us determine how another individual feels, and we are able to communicate back with our own body language.

If you find yourself in a situation with an irritated individual, it is important to have a calm, relaxed and open posture which does not signify aggression. By using this body positioning you are able to begin building trust with the irritated individual.

Body mirroring also establishes trust, as subconsciously the individual will associate your body language with their own. Use body mirroring techniques to show that you are equal with the irritated individual and not a threatening presence.

## **3. Deflection**

Irritated individuals will often use insults in high-stress situations as a way of gaining control of the conversation and elevating themselves into a position of power.

A great way to avoid giving power to insults and obscenities is to deflect the comments without acknowledgement. By not acknowledging the comments, you avoid giving the insults power and leverage.

Never acknowledge rude, belittling or derogatory statements – simply change the topic of conversation or ignore the comments altogether. If the individual persists, stay calm and composed and ask open ended questions to encourage the individual to change the topic of conversation.

#### **4. Be Willing to Apologize**

Even those who have mastered de-escalation techniques may accidentally say the wrong thing to an irritated individual. It is important to recognize when you have said something wrong and use your de-escalation training to correct the situation.

If you say something that raises the level of irritation in an individual during conflict, the best de-escalation technique is to simply apologize to the individual, ask for forgiveness, and explain that you misspoke and did not mean what you said.

If the individual remains irritated, continue to speak softly and remain in a position of understanding – acknowledging why they are upset about what you accidentally said. This acknowledgement will serve to show the individual you are trying to understand what has upset them.

#### **5. Respect Space and Know Your Surroundings**

When an individual is irritated, it is important not to enter that person's space without prior consent to doing so.

Personal space is an important concept in our daily lives, but even more so during a conflict, as personal space is a defining factor in someone's comfort levels. If that space is invaded, even by someone with the best intentions, it can serve to elevate anxiety levels and result in the individual becoming more upset.

In addition to ensuring you don't accidentally enter into the agitated individual's space; it is also important to monitor the space around you. Knowing your surroundings can help you both ensure your own safety, and the safety of the irritated individual. If you know your surroundings it is easier to identify important factors such as possible exit strategies, or possible dangers to you and the irritated individual's safety.

*Source: Canadian Academy of Guard Training*