

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Module 1: Effective Communication & De-Escalation Techniques

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Agenda



**Communication
basics**



**Neurological
aspects of
communication**



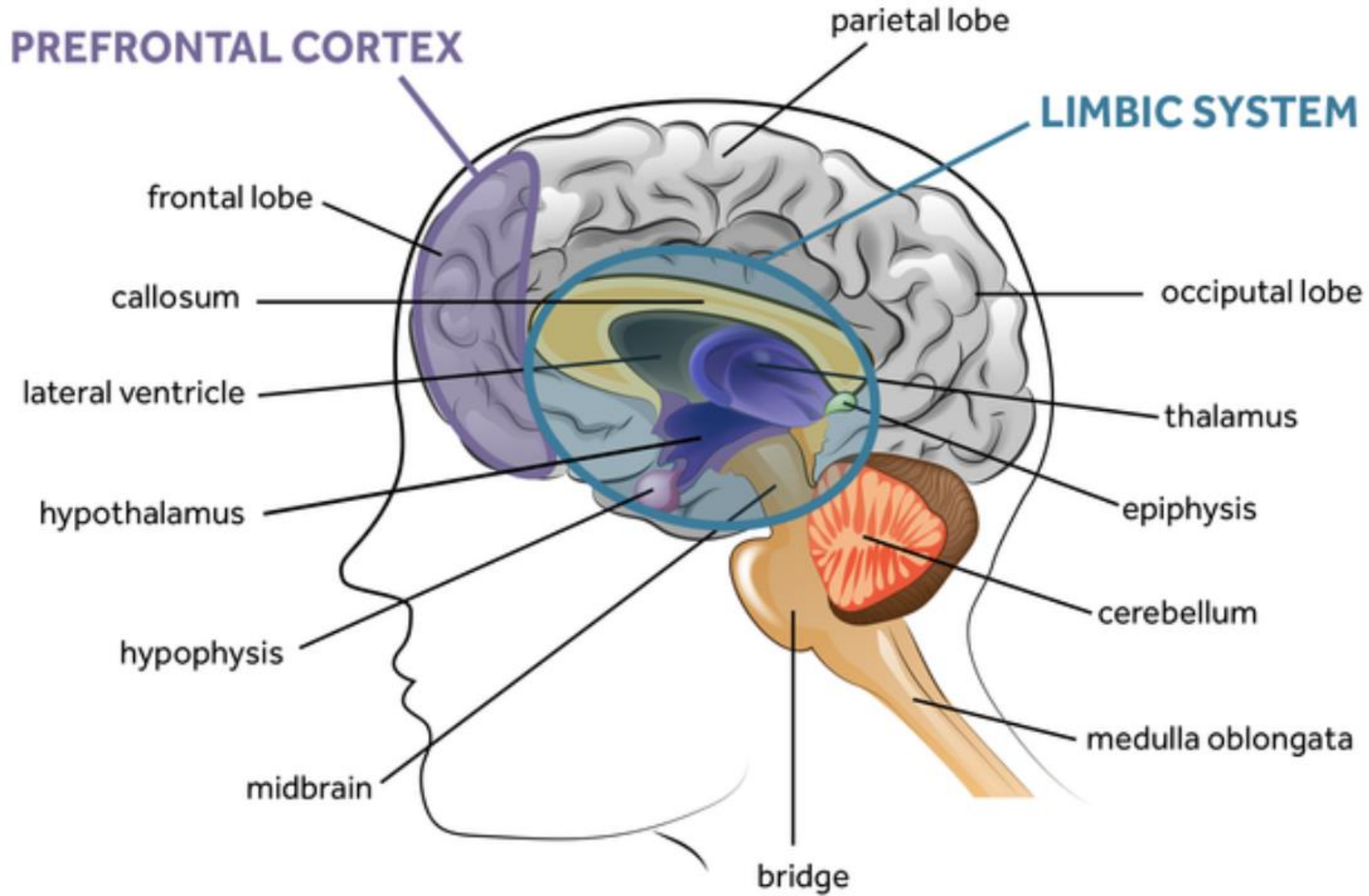
**De-escalation and
other strategies**



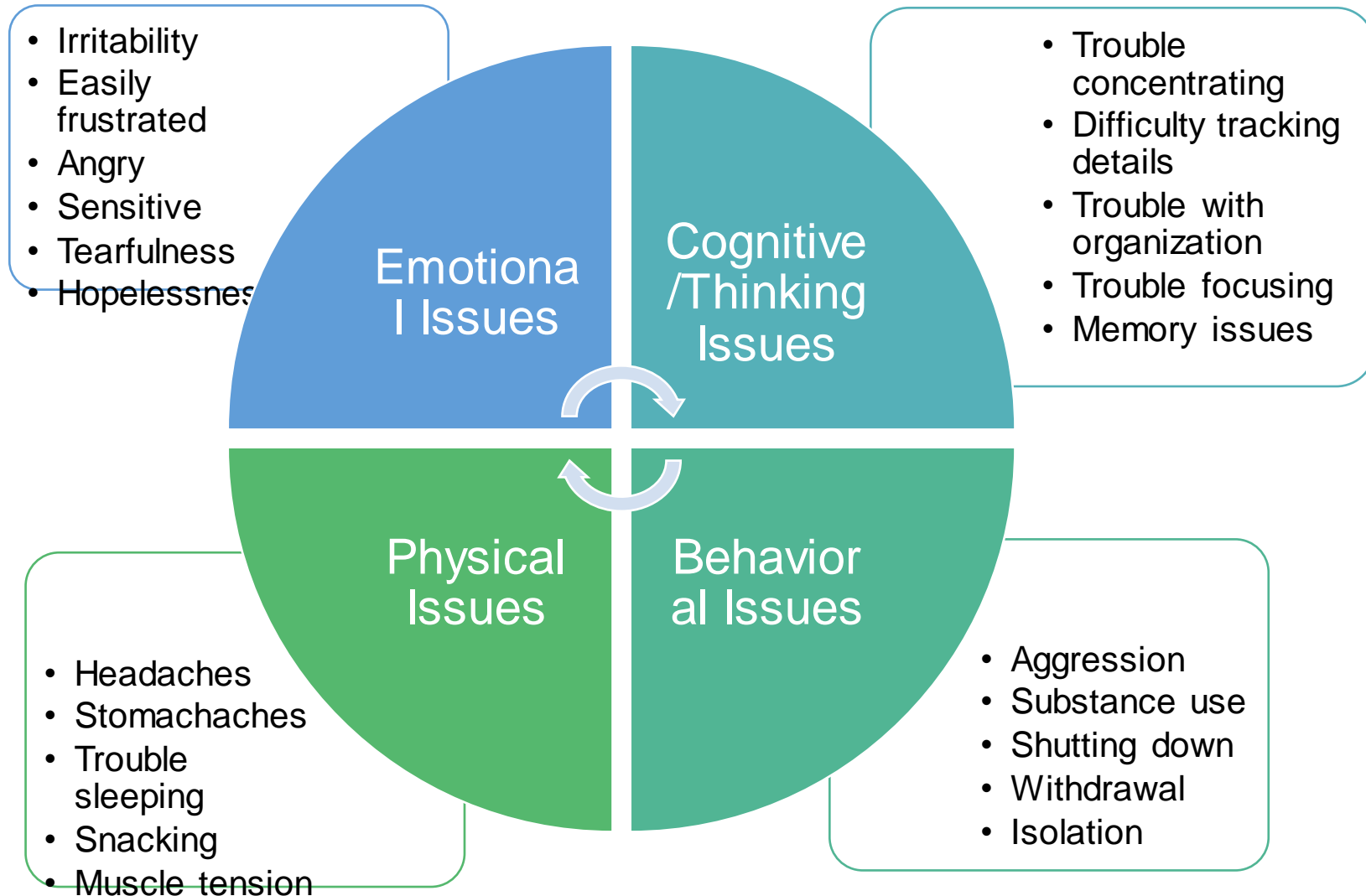
**Understanding effective
communication in groups,
teams, or families**

Communication Basics

- **Zones of regulation:** Neurological influences on our ability to perceive, process, and respond to others
- **Active listening:** A strategy or technique used to further understanding and caring
- **De-escalation:** Use the **SAFE** model to help others process their distress
- **Motivational interviewing:** Identify and focus on the need to regulate distress (often in the context of substance use) as a means of motivating change
- **Family communication:** Different developmental levels influence how people communicate



Common Responses



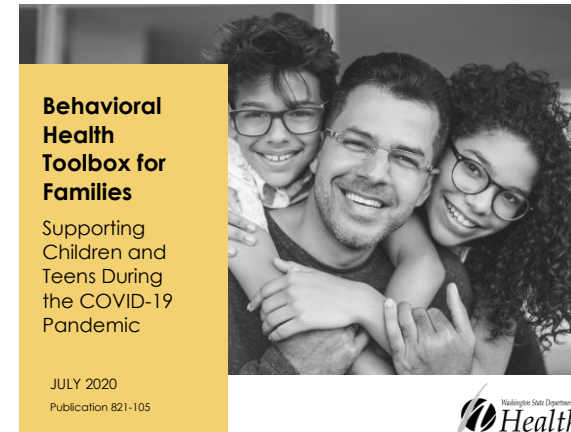
Communication Issues

- Remember how our pre-frontal cortex is influenced by stress.
- No one can have a logical problem-solving oriented talk when they are flooded.
- Take extra time to talk.
- Get space from difficult conversations, rather than continuing to push the

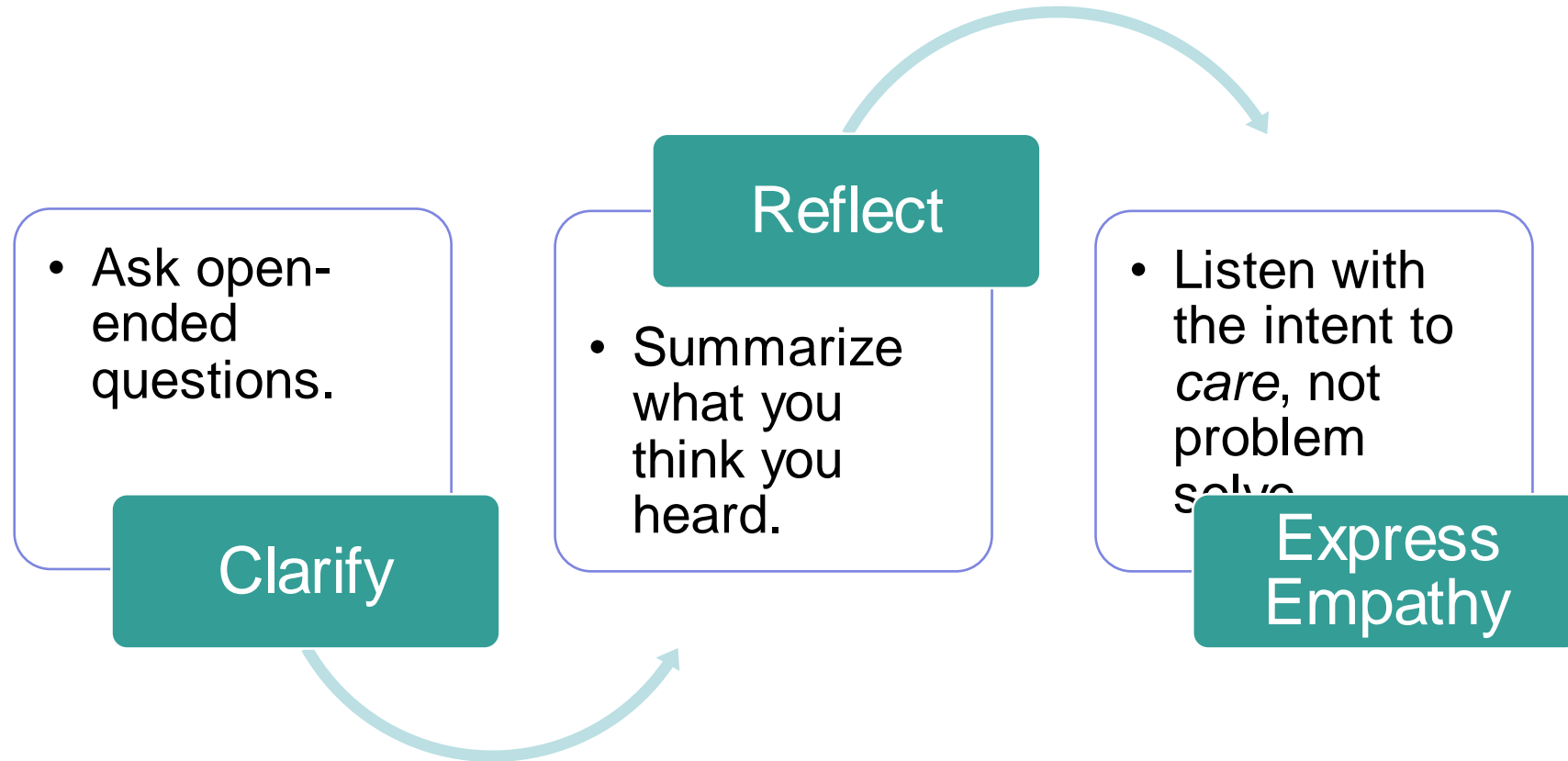
Zones of Regulation

Color	Level of Alertness	Feelings
Blue	Low state of alertness	Bored, tired, sad, disappointed, sick, depressed, shy
Green	Perfect state of alertness	Happy, positive, thankful, proud, calm, content, ready to learn
Yellow	Higher state of alertness	Excited, silly, annoyed, worried, embarrassed, confused, nervous
Red	Too much alertness	Upset, angry, aggressive, mad, too excited, terrified, out of control

- Check in on levels of rest/tiredness before pursuing important conversations.



Active Listening



Working with Anger and Hostility: **SAFE Model** for De-Escalation

Many people are expressing distress about the pandemic in an external way. This often manifests itself as anger. In order to de-escalate yourself and others, the **SAFE model** provides key concepts to keep in mind.

- **S**: Self
- **A**: Area Awareness
- **F**: Feelings
- **E**: Engagement

SAFE: Self

- Tune in to yourself.
- Be aware of your own reactions, the tone of voice you use, your body language, and your choice of words.
- Monitor yourself in order to stay calm and to not take the situation personally, even if the words become personal.
- **Larger, non-verbal messages are important, particularly in the case where PPE (e.g., masks) can interfere with people's ability to pick up on nuances of communication.**
- Be aware of the non-verbal cues you are relaying to the other person. **Posture** and **position** are important here.

SAFE: Area Awareness

- Pay attention to your physical area.
- Notice the space and people around you.
- Your general physical area includes people, exits, (potential) weapons, available help, and other resources.
- **Don't position or keep yourself between an angry person and their exit.**

SAFE: Feelings

- Employ active listening techniques to identify what the angry person is feeling underneath the anger.
- **Remember that anger is often related to other emotions like fear or sadness. It is easier for most people to direct emotions outwardly than deal with them internally.**
- By listening for feelings underneath anger, you can identify the cause of the emotions at the center of the issue.
- It is easier to empathize with someone who is angry when you understand what they may be afraid of or worried about.

SAFE: Engagement

- If it is safe to do so, connect with the angry person by **engaging** to understand their story. Use active listening.
- Don't dismiss them or their concerns. Identify and **engage resources, other people, or information** that may be able to address or help solve their problem or concern in some way.
- **Engage support for yourself** when you are in the position of dealing with an angry person or people.
- Don't keep a hostile interaction to yourself. Share it with others to get the support you need after dealing with a difficult person or situation.
- **Engage your resources (friends, family, social networks)** to increase your resilience.

Motivational Interviewing

- Use open-ended, empathic statements to draw out concerns and issues.
- Focus on behavior or patterns that the other person wants to change.
- Amplify the person's concerns to increase motivation for change and solidify the importance of change.
- Plan concrete, simple steps needed to make the desired changes in behavior.

Discuss What Might Deter Change

- Worries about trying something different
- Fears about making mistakes
- Thoughts they believe can't change
- Assumptions that past patterns and behaviors will always recur

Help Them Imagine What Would Happen

- What parts of life would be better?
- How would it affect others?
- What would happen to important relationships?
- What would be the impact on their work?

Encourage Practice

- Once an action or behavior is chosen, encourage the person to practice.
- At the end of each day, take stock of how the change went and plan any adjustments.
- Encourage them to practice, even if they don't feel like it.
- When one change seems normal, then consider making another.

Family Communication

- Remember the zones of regulation.
- Slowing down and allowing an integrated brain to respond and communicate is most effective.
- For younger children:
 - Try to model emotion regulation, taking a pause before responding.
 - Give children accurate, truthful, and developmentally appropriate information about what is happening.
- For adolescents and teens, alliance is key:
 - Behavioral management should be as straightforward (non-emotional/limbic system oriented) as possible.
 - Set clear expectations (i.e., don't move the goal posts).
 - Work together to establish expectations, consequences, and rewards.

Family Communication (continued)



Kids 5 – 12

- Any window is a good window.
- They don't communicate on our schedules.
- Regression in development.
- Shift expectations.



Kids 13 – 18

- Model careful reactions, slow down.
- Ask about goals: What do **they** want or hope for?
- Future focus helps with hope.
- Positive reinforcement.



Young Adults

- Meet them where they are.
- Your worries may be different from theirs (don't assume).
- Help with creative connection to peers.

Resources

Training:

- Health Support Team (including train-the-trainer)
- PsySTART-Responder (frontline healthcare only)

For information on trainings, please reach out to the Behavioral Health Strike Team at DOH-BHST@doh.wa.gov.

Resources (continued)

MEDIC, REST, and SAFE Models

Families, Children, and Teens:

- [Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families](#): Supporting Children and Teens During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Emergency and Healthcare Workers:

- [Coping During COVID-19 for Emergency and Healthcare Professionals](#)
- [COVID-19 Anniversary Reactions for Response Teams and Public Health Personnel](#)
- [Behavioral Health Group Impact Reference Guide](#):
 - Healthcare, behavioral health, outreach teams, post-vent individuals
 - Unique challenges/considerations
 - Support strategies (organizational, supervisory, personal)

Businesses and Workers:

- [COVID-19 Guidance for Building Resilience in the Workplace](#)

Resources (continued)

Webpages:

DOH – Forecasts, situation reports, guidance, and other resources:

- [Behavioral Health Resources Webpage](#)

State – General mental health resources and infographics:

- [Mental and Emotional Well-being Resources](#)
- [Infographic Library](#)

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