



Mid-America (HHS Region 7)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# Calming the anxious mind

De-escalation strategies for Assertive Community  
Treatment teams

Marla Smith, MS, LMHP, LMHC



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***SAMHSA***

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This work is supported by grants under Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) No. SM-18-015 from the DHHS, SAMHSA.

The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND  
ACCEPTING OF  
DIVERSE CULTURES,  
GENDERS,  
PERSPECTIVES,  
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED/  
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS  
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR  
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND  
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND  
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR  
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH  
OUR ACTIONS,  
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS



# Announcements

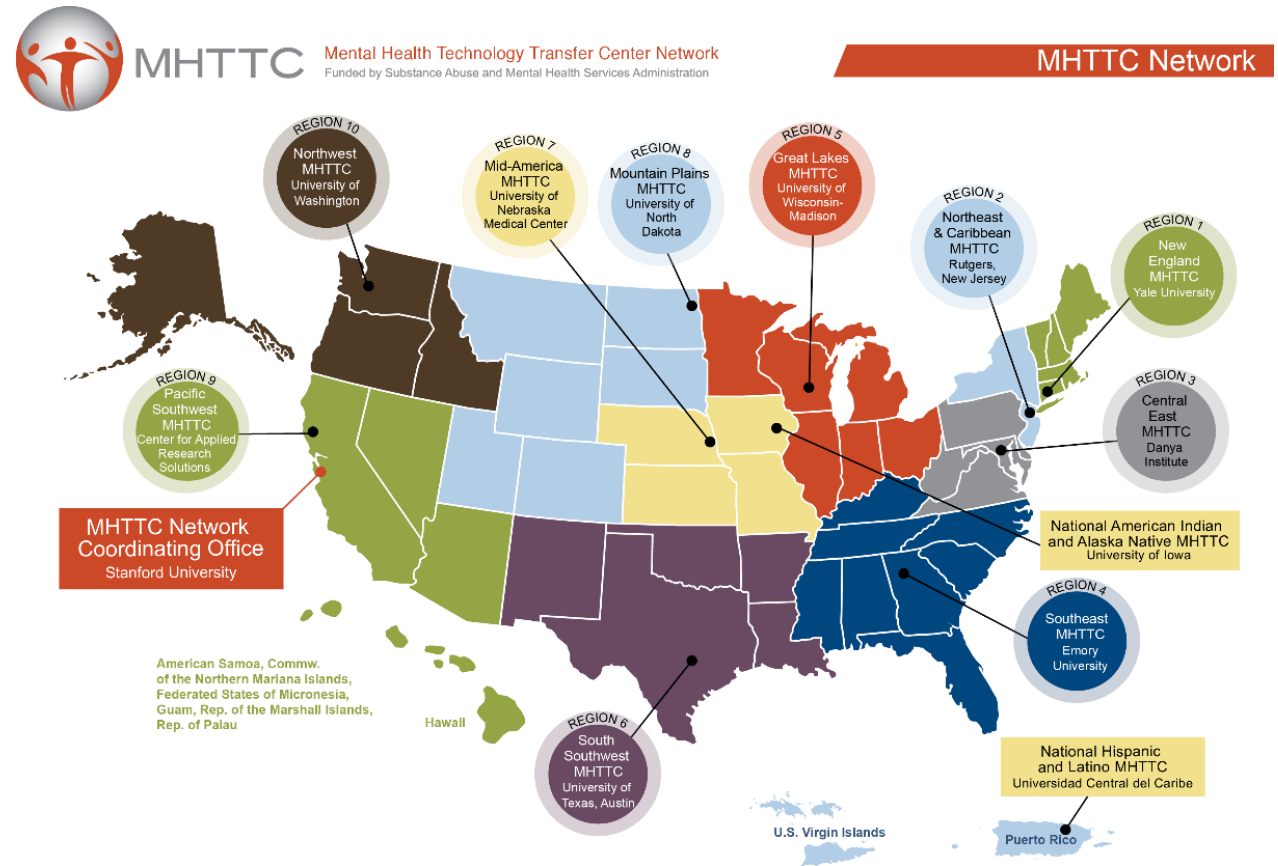
The webinar recording can be found here.

<https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mid-america-mhttc/implementing-assertive-community-treatment-act-kansas>

# Mid-America Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

Established to increase utilization of evidence-based mental health practices.

- Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas.
- Free training and technical assistance.
- SAMHSA grant awarded to the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska at University of Nebraska Medical Center.  
(5 years, \$3.7 million, grant number: H79SM081769)



# Agenda



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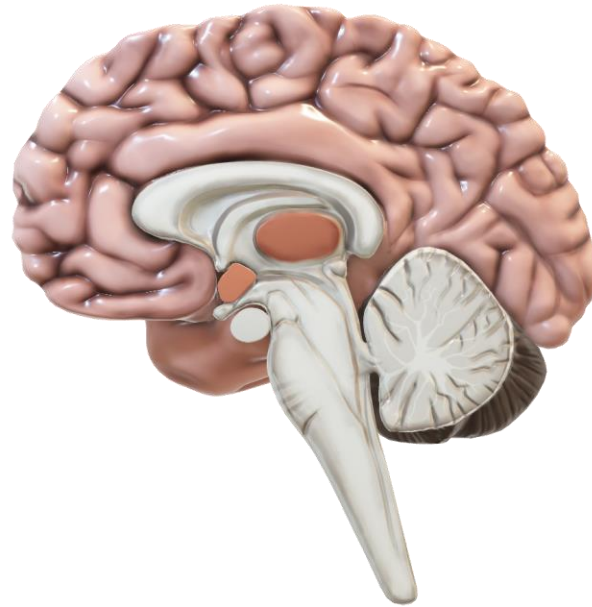
- Recognize signs of escalation and mental health crisis
- Communicate effectively with care
- Resolve conflicts and develop adaptive coping skills

# Causes of escalation

- In your experiences, what are causes for escalation?
  - Threatened
  - Fear
  - Triggered
  - Feeling overwhelmed
  - Feeling out of control
  - Minimized
  - Invalidated
  - Disrespected & Attacked
  - Ignored & Not listened to
  - Unwanted & Rejected
  - Entitled

# The mammalian brain

Affects behavior, personality and ability to plan






# Executive functioning includes...

- Decision making skills
- Planning and executing tasks
- Making predictions
- Adjusting oneself accordingly
- Rationality
- Inhibiting impulses
- Processing complex information





**“What does the frontal cortex do?  
Gratification postponement, executive  
function, long-term planning, and  
impulse control. Basically, it makes  
you do the harder thing”**

- Robert M Sapolsky

# The reptilian brain

Fight-flight-freeze and fawn functions

Responsible for emotions and bonding



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# Logic vs Emotion

## Logical Thinking

- Based on facts, evidence, and reason
- Analyzes information effectively

Reflective state

## Emotional Thinking

- Based on emotions
- Can lead to impulsive/risky behavior

Reflexive state

# Emotional flooding

“It is a Sympathetic Nervous System response to stress that was originally designed to alert us to danger and enables us to act quickly in self-defense”



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# What happens when we flood emotionally?



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- Rationality
- Language
- Difficulty focusing or processing information
- Unable to see options
- Compromised hearing
- Tunnel vision or trouble seeing

# Reflect and Discuss

- Reflect on a time where you were working with someone who was flooding.
  - What did that look like?
  - What are some things that, thinking back, you notice that you may not have noticed before?

# De-escalation techniques



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Language is a more recent technology. Your body language, your eyes, your energy will come through to your audience before you even start speaking.

— *Peter Guber* —

AZ QUOTES

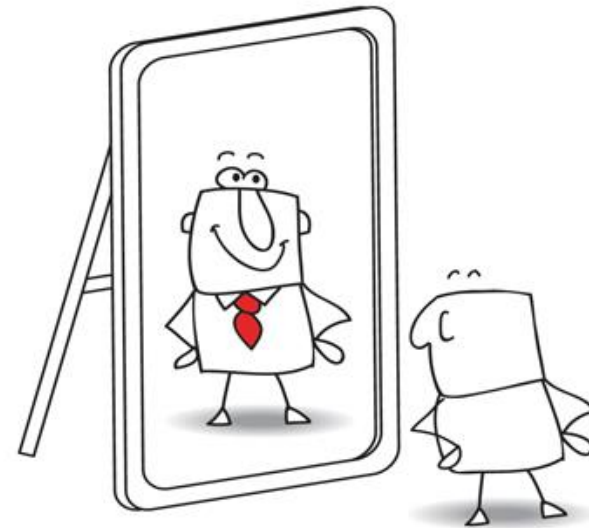
# Leadership Posture

- Appear centered and calm
- Do not make any sudden moves or turn away
- Speak softly (use authority voice)
- Listen
- Empathize with feeling, not behavior
- Maintain appropriate eye contact



# Mirroring

- Using your body to show validation for someone and that you're taking them seriously during their outburst



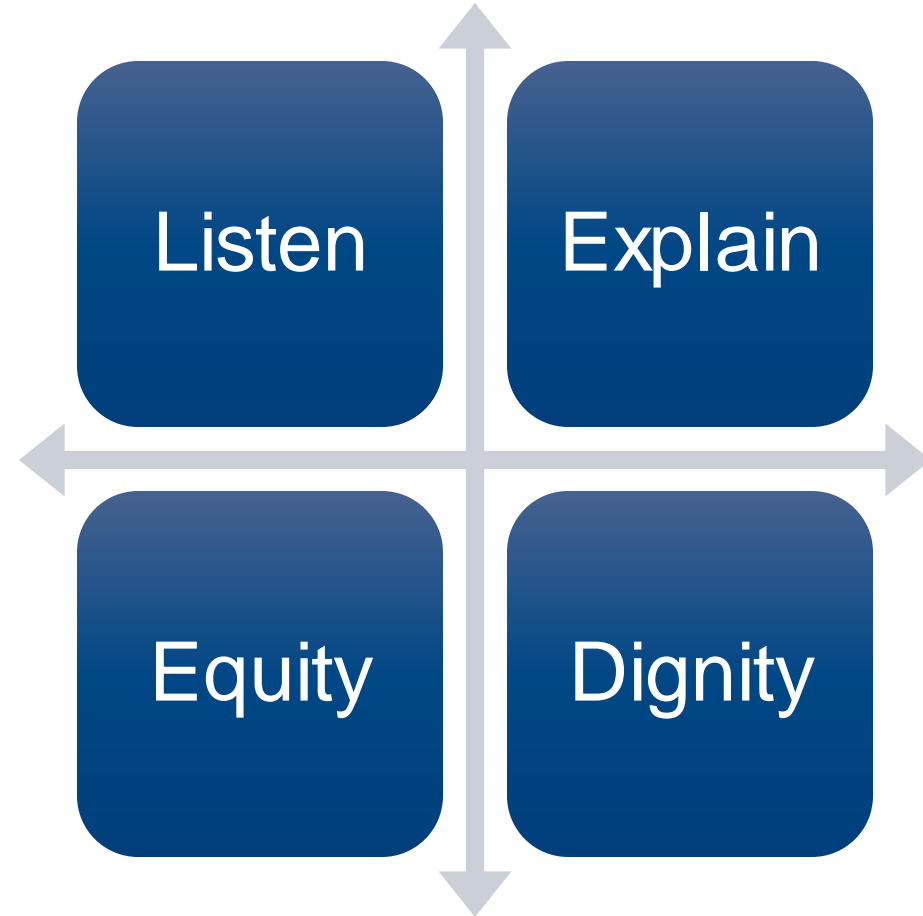
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# Shaming Signals



- Rolling eyes
- Smirking
- Sarcasm
- Other irritable signs of impatience

# LEED-listen and explain with empathy and dignity



# Reflection and Discussion

LEED encompasses the following:

Voice/Choice

Dignity

Common, Human  
Respect



What are some ways that you can cover LEED in your world?



# Stages of Escalation



CALM



TRIGGER



AGITATION



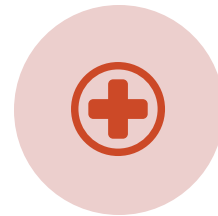
ACCELERATION



PEAK



DE-ESCALATION



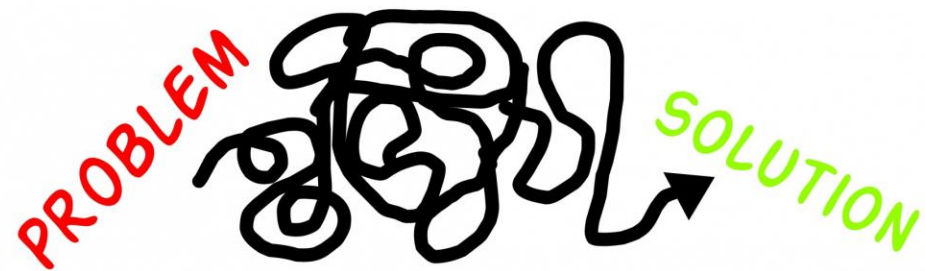
RECOVERY

# Simple Sequence questions

- Use concrete, closed-ended questions to help the person focus
- If the person is not too agitated, briefly explain why you are asking the question
- For example: I'd like to get some basic information from you so that I can help you better. Where do you live



# Simple Problem Solving



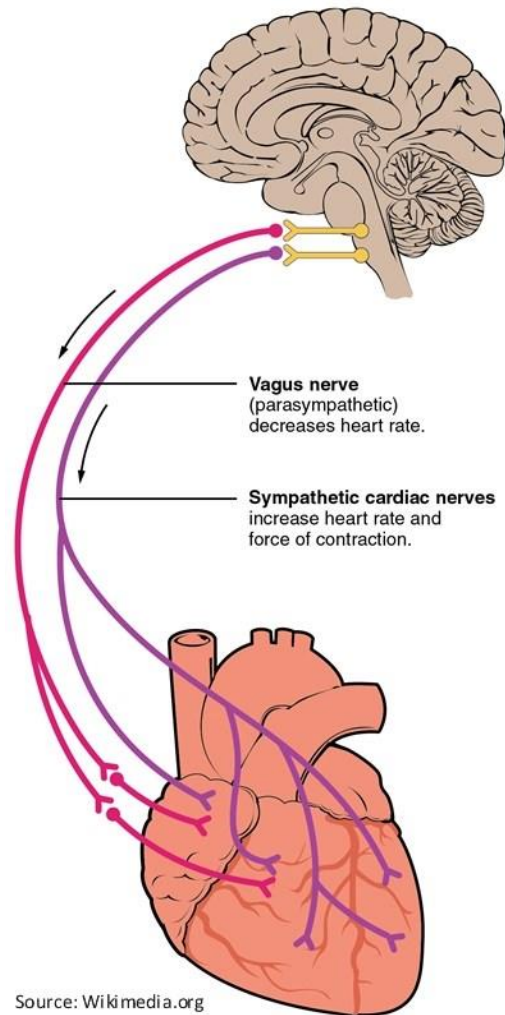
- Focus on solving the immediate problem
- If too complex, break into simpler steps

# Suggestibility

- People will defy commands, yet fall into suggestions
- Question statement
  - You look thirsty, why don't you take a drink of water?
  - Why don't we talk about this in the office?



# Vagus Nerve



The longest nerves in your body- estimated 75 percent

Branches in key organs

Stomach

Kidneys

Liver

Bladder

Activates the “rest and digest” system

# Ways to stimulate Vagus nerve

## Physical

- Gargling
- Singing
- Chanting/"Om-ing"
- Laughing
- Cold exposure

## Psychological

- Gratitude journaling
- Deep breathing/"Box breathing"
- Meditating
- Exposure to things you find beautiful

# Things to Keep in Mind...

Be empathetic and nonjudgmental



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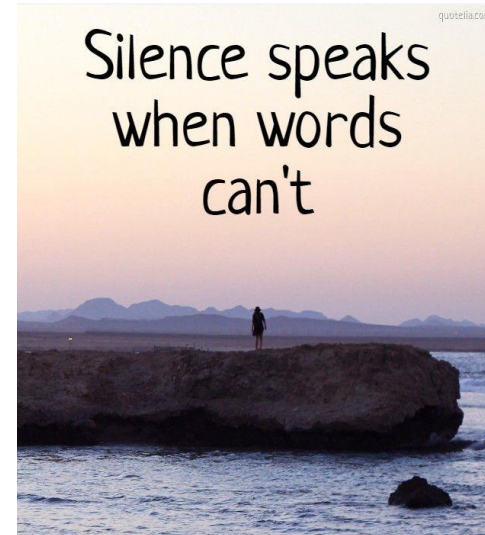
Respect personal space

# Things to Keep in Mind

Allow silence for reflection



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Allow time for decisions

# Reflection and Discussion



How can you implement what  
you've learned today?



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