



De-escalation & Communication

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National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

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- Founded in 1978
- Largest grassroots mental health organization in the U.S. dedicated to building better lives for those impacted by mental illness
- 600+ local affiliates nationwide
- **NAMI** fills the gaps in our local mental health system through support, education, advocacy, and referral.

Reminders:

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- ▶ We all speak from our own experience, knowledge and truth
- ▶ Notice the balance of who is speaking & who is not
- ▶ Not everything will have closure
- ▶ Confidentiality: Lessons learned can (and should!) leave the room, all names/identifiers stay here
- ▶ Impact > Intent

What is escalation?
What are some
examples of
escalation?

Causes of Escalation

- ▶ Insufficient Resources
- ▶ Unacknowledged Needs
- ▶ Power Dynamics & Systems
- ▶ Negative/Toxic Belief Systems & Conditioning
- ▶ Mental Health/Safety Triggers
- ▶ Out of Emotional Bandwidth
- ▶ Alcohol or other Substance Use

Remember:

Escalation is only a snapshot of someone's experience. We won't always know the cause and that's okay.

Personal/Social Factors in Escalation

- ▶ Power Imbalance
- ▶ History of Individual and Collective Marginalization
- ▶ Cultural Linguistic Considerations
- ▶ Presenting Identity of those Involved
- ▶ Lived experience
- ▶ Time/space

What are the signs of
escalation?

Signs of Escalation

- ▶ Inability to process information
- ▶ Yelling, Arguing. Abusive Verbal Behavior
- ▶ Body language changes
- ▶ Change in eye contact
- ▶ Flushing, Eye Darting, Rapid/Shallow Respiration
- ▶ Using defensive statements
- ▶ Overgeneralization

Remember:

Whether or not you interpret something as escalation is strongly influenced by who you are and who they are (race, class, gender, culture).

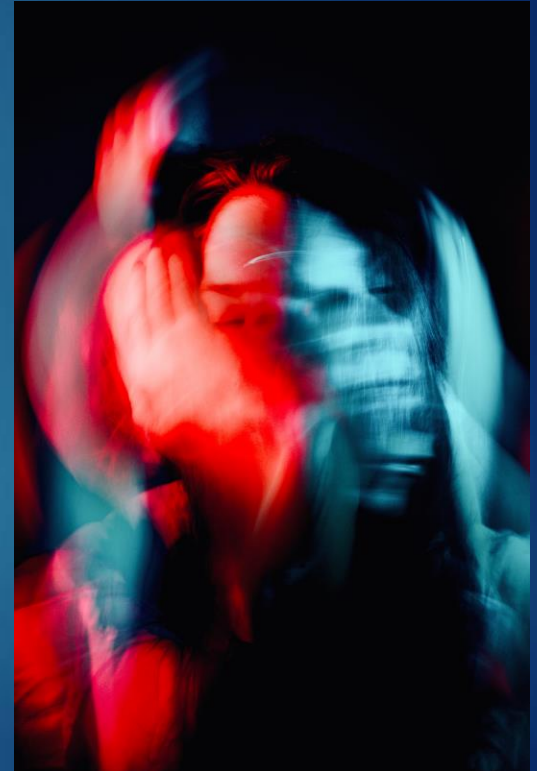
What are your objectives in working to de-escalate?

- ▶ Keep Things From Getting Worse
- ▶ Maintain Safety/Sense of Safety
- ▶ Keep relationship rapport
- ▶ Keep operations, services accessible

Some Considerations...

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- ▶ It's Not About YOU (in a good way!)
- ▶ Reason and Logic Don't Help Emotions
- ▶ Different Situations Call for Different Strategies
- ▶ Note that we all make the best choices we can
 - ▶ maybe a "poor" choice worked in the past
 - ▶ maybe a "bad" coping mechanism kept someone alive to see another day



First: Assess the Situation



- ▶ Identify Triggers (yours & theirs)
- ▶ Notice Physiological Reactions
- ▶ Evaluate Actual Danger Levels
- ▶ Note Nonverbal Communication
- ▶ What Supports are Available to You?

Mental Health Considerations

- ▶ Information/Sensory Processing Challenges
 - ▶ Noise Sensitivity
 - ▶ Disjointed Thoughts
 - ▶ Internal Fears
- ▶ Can make it impossible to separate things someone needs to pay attention to from things they don't
- ▶ Frustrating behavior might be a **logical reaction** to their experience

Barriers to De-Escalation

Is There an Audience?

Physical Space to Distance

Fear around Security/Police

Emotional Regulation

De-escalation Strategies

Next: De-escalation Strategies

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- ▶ Keep Things Simple
- ▶ Tell the Truth
- ▶ Find Points of Agreement- Build Rapport
- ▶ Body language
- ▶ Really listen
- ▶ What do they seem to need?
- ▶ Demonstrate Empathy with body and verbal behavior

| If they... | It's helpful for you to... |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| have trouble with reality | be simple, truthful |
| feel fearful | stay calm |
| feel insecure | be accepting |
| have trouble concentrating | be brief, repeat as needed |
| feel overstimulated | limit input, don't force discussion |
| become easily agitated | recognize agitation, allow escape |
| have poor judgment | not expect rational discussion |
| have quickly changing emotions | go with the flow |
| have changing plans | stick with your commitments |
| have little empathy for you | recognize this as a symptom |
| believe delusions | acknowledge, don't play into or argue |
| have low self-esteem | stay positive |
| be preoccupied | get attention first |
| be withdrawn | initiate relevant discussion |

What are some ways we
might unintentionally
make things worse?

- ▶ Using Ultimatums
- ▶ Contradicting Their Feelings
- ▶ Defensiveness
- ▶ Blaming or Arguing
- ▶ Our Own Triggers Get in the Way
- ▶ “I understand what you’re going through” (or similar)
- ▶ Verbal Escalation in Volume, Pace, or Quality

Discussion

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- ▶ Please share a time in which you encountered someone that was escalated in your workspace.
 - What? When? Where?
 - How did you respond?
 - Did your response help to de-escalate the situation?
 - What went well?
 - What could have gone better?

Finally: Letting It Go

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- ▶ Who can you talk to afterwards?
- ▶ How do you leave work behind?
- ▶ How does your supervisor/organization support you during/after?
- ▶ Which aspect is most challenging to you?

NAMI Programs

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Helpline

- ▶ Call/text/email with any mental health question

Presentations

- ▶ In Our Own Voice
- ▶ Ending the Silence (middle/high school)

Classes

- ▶ Peer-to-Peer
- ▶ Family & Friends
- ▶ Family-to-Family

Support Groups

- ▶ Peer
- ▶ Family
- ▶ BIPOC, LGBTQ
- ▶ Diagnosis & Treatment based

All NAMI programs are free and open to those who need them

Turn Toward!

Thank You!



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