De-escalation Techniques

COMMUNICATION AND CONSIDERATIONS DURING A CRISIS SITUATION
OBJECTIVES OF WEBINAR

- Recognize that prioritizing your safety and the safety of others is always the most important outcome

- Learn 3 things to help you remain calm and in control

- Learn 3 things you can do, or refrain from doing, to promote calm and cooperation in someone else

- Increase confidence in knowing when to step away and/or call 911
Crisis can be defined as an emotionally significant event that exceeds a person’s ability to cope.

- Usually a precipitating event has occurred within the last 24 hours.

- Emotions are controlling a person’s actions.

- If the subject feels he is in crisis, he is
INITIAL GOALS IN A CRISIS INCIDENT

- Determining appropriate resources to safely handle the crisis
  - Recognize you need to walk away if you are not equipped to handle the crisis safely
  - Staying in an unsafe environment complicates the situation for responding law enforcement
- If on the telephone, recognize when to call the police
  - Subject is threatening himself or others
  - Other people are with the person and may need help
- As officers, know when a trained negotiator is necessary
  - Basic de-escalation does not replace a negotiator
COMMUNICATION

- Is an art and not a science
- The best communicators are the best listeners
- The only thing you have control over during an incident is your own emotions
MINDFULNESS

- Pay attention in a particular way
  - What is the person in crisis looking for (the ‘hook’)?

- On purpose
  - You want to help - not “It’s my job”

- Stay in the present

- Non-judgmental
  - John Kabat-Zinn
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Do</strong></th>
<th><strong>Don’t</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Take off sunglasses</td>
<td>• Grill or quiz the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Share your name and role</td>
<td>• Make promises you have no control over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet the subject ‘where he is’</td>
<td>• Lie or give easy answers to assuage the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be honest if you don’t know an answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAINTAINING YOUR COMPOSiSURE

- Model calm and relaxation (breathe)
- Remember: you do not have to resolve the situation immediately
- Model patience
- Do not take things personally
- Follow “The Golden Rule”
BODY LANGUAGE

- Self-awareness
- Relaxed open posture
- Posture that allows calm breathing
- Knees slightly bent
- Hands visible
ACTIVE LISTENING

- Many incidents may be diffused by simply listening

- People want to be understood
  - Problem solve
  - Show individuals the same respect as you would want

- The first few minutes are critical (first 15 to 45 minutes)
  - How you start the conversation sets the tone
ACTIVE LISTENING

- Stay focused on the persons problem(s)
  - Always be aware of your surroundings and react appropriately if something changes to affect your safety
  - If law enforcement, utilize contact/cover to assess threats

- Allow person to vent
  - During the venting process you may hear what the real problem is

- Don’t assume
MINIMAL ENCOURAGERS

- Indicates to the subject you are listening
  “uh huh”
  “ok”
  “really”

- Does not interfere with the flow of the conversation

- Encourages the subject to keep talking
PARAPHRASING

- Repeating back *in your own words* what the subject just said

  - Lets the subject know you are listening, and by paraphrasing that you understand what he is saying
  - Good for using when you are at a loss of words
  - Don’t over use (‘parroting’)

EMOTIONAL LABELING

- You are identifying the emotion/feeling that you are hearing
  - Do not be afraid to label an emotion incorrectly
  - Label all the emotions you hear
  - Do not use when you are being verbally attacked

- Demonstrates you are listening to what the subject tells you he is experiencing
REFLECTING/MIRRORING

- Repeating back the last couple of words
- Assures the subject you are still actively listening
- Helps to build rapport and trust
- Body language
VALIDATING

- Increases our effectiveness with others in all areas of communication
- Reduces defensiveness
- Validate the person and his experience using the skills discussed earlier
- Accept the person where he is emotionally
- Communicate your understanding of his experience
A KEY ABOUT VALIDATION

Being respectful, validating what the person is expressing and acknowledging the difficulty of his situation does not convey approval or agreement with his thinking or behavior.
EFFECTIVE PAUSES

- Silence
  - Most people are not comfortable with silence and attempt to fill it with talk
  - Can be used before or after something important is said

- Can be effective if used properly and not over used

- Can be an opportunity, if timed appropriately, for you to break the silence and direct the conversation
“I” MESSAGES

- Use when being verbally attacked or the person refuses to interact with you.

- “I'm here to help you. I can’t do that through arguing or if you are swearing at me.”

- “I’m here to help you. I can’t do that if you don’t talk and help me understand what you are going through right now.”

- “I’d like to hear your side of the story.”
OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

- Cannot be answered with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’
- Usually starts with “what?” “how?” “where?” “when?”
- Avoid using “why” if possible
- Elicits more information that yes/no questions
PSYCHOTIC SYMPTOMS

- Try not to get trapped in the subject’s experience
- A person’s perception is his reality

-“I know from what you are saying that you have seen someone following you all day – how scary that must be.”

-“I can see you are really angry that no one else can see what you are seeing so clearly but I want to help you.”

-“I don’t have much experience/education about (reference the topic the person is delusional about), but I do want to help.”
COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE IN CRISIS

- Observe and deal with the behavior

- Behaviors may be caused by:
  - Mental illness (initial or decompensation)
  - Medical illness or injury
  - Drug or alcohol use
  - Criminal activity as victim or suspect
  - Domestic violence
  - Parenting/custodial issues
  - Mood and anxiety disorders can have psychotic symptoms when severe
COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM A MENTAL ILLNESS CRISIS: Examples

- You seem afraid – what is scaring you right now?
- What is it that you are afraid of right now?
- What am I doing that is making you feel nervous? I want you to feel safe.
- How can I help you feel more calm (or more safe)?
- Who do you talk to when you need help, like feeling sick or needing a ride?
Examples (continued)

- What kind of medication, if any, are you taking?
- When did you last take your medication?
- What does your medication help with?
- Where do you go to get your prescriptions?
- Who is your doctor - if you have one?
- What kind of medical or mental health conditions do you have that might help me understand how to be most helpful?
When Should I Just Call 9-1-1?

- Your safety is the #1 priority when in a crisis situation!
- If the person is armed or claims to be armed, call 9-1-1
- If you feel unsafe or threatened call 9-1-1
  - Do not put yourself in a situation that forces police to act quickly by refusing to leave the person in crisis
  - Be accurate and detailed, DO NOT exaggerate the situation to get a faster response
What if I am 9-1-1?

- Recognize when you need other experts
  - Call the crisis line
  - Listen to case managers’ guidance about the person
  - Use your department’s resources

- Unless you are a negotiator, you are not a negotiator!

- Take your time

- If on the phone, continue to gain intelligence and get information for as long as possible
REVIEW

- Do what it takes to be safe
- Take your time
- Show respect
- Listen
- Problem solve
- Active listening skills does not replace trained negotiators
- Know when to ask for help
- Do not be afraid to call 9-1-1