



PWI/EPOC Learning Collaborative: De-escalation & Conflict Resolution

Sarah Kimbrough | October 30, 2024



Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

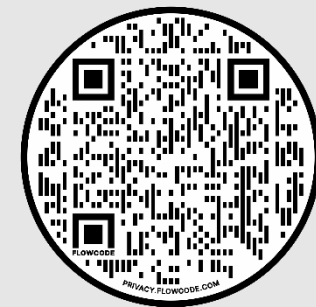
- We respectfully acknowledge that we live and work in territories where indigenous nations and tribal groups are traditional stewards of the land. Our California office resides in Tongva territory.
- Please join us in supporting efforts to affirm tribal sovereignty across what is now known as California and in displaying respect, honor, and gratitude for all indigenous people.

Whose land are you on?

Option 1: Text your ZIP code to 1-907-312-5085

Option 2: Enter your location at [Native Land CA](#)

Option 3: Access Native Land website via QR code



Community Agreements

- Be present and be an active listener.
- Remember: One mic, one voice.
- Practice inclusivity.
- Honor pronouns and gender identity.
- Show respect. (This may look different for each person.)
- Allow conflicting perspectives to exist.
- Assume best intentions.
- Take space, make space.
- Share what you are comfortable sharing.
- Protect individual privacy.
- Practice self-care.
- Encourage growth of self and for others.
- Support resource sharing.



Learning Objectives



1. Understand how to build empathy to support individuals that are actively escalated
2. Identify successful approaches to de-escalation
3. Gain knowledge about conflict resolution



Background: De-escalation & Conflict Resolution



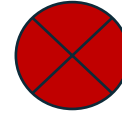
What are we here for today?



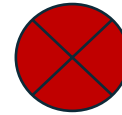
Today's session will support understanding of when we need to respond to someone who is yelling, upset, threatening, frustrated, or angry.



Conflict resolution is for repairing and rebuilding a professional relationship with someone who was escalated recently.



Not crisis response



Not physical intervention



Understand How to Build Empathy to Support Individuals That Are Actively Escalated





Part 1:
Building Empathy

Being Escalated

Experiencing Oppression

Family Situations

Health Situations

Financial Situations

Major Life Changes



What's Happening Inside?



Nervous system activated

Increased heart rate/
blood pressure

Blood flow redirected to
different parts of the body

([Cleveland Clinic, 2024](#))

Especially When It's Chronic



Challenges with memory and focus

Digestive problems and chronic pain

Low capacity to handle stress

Escalation Can Be a Two-Way Street

“You’re lying! You just didn’t want to help me!”



“I told you last week we would be closed yesterday!”



Memory challenges

Hasn't eaten today

Missed the bus

Headache

Behind on rent

Experiencing grief



Part 2:
**Understanding Our Own
Responses**

Being Proactive

When you can understand your own response to stress, you can be more proactive about understanding how to respond in the moment.



Checking In with Your Body

Where does it show up in my body?

How do I feel when I get stressed?

What are my triggers?

How do I typically respond?



How We've Seen it Modeled

Much of how we respond to situations is based on how we've seen it modeled.



Pause & Reflect

What ways have you seen people around you handle stressful situations that **weren't helpful** to the **situation?**

Interrupting the Instinct

1. Recognize what may be the ingrained response.
2. Recognize when it's happening in the moment.
3. Identify 2-3 ways to interrupt the instinct.



Breakout Room

What things help you “interrupt the instinct” and keep you cool in stressful situations?





How Can De-escalation Be Trauma Informed?

Cognizant & Caring



When we remember the escalated person is likely coming from a place of exposure to trauma, often over a lifetime...

we can be more cognizant of how to move forward in a caring way.



Identify Successful Approaches to De-escalation





De-escalation Approach 1:
Body Language

Awareness Is Key

Where are your shoulders?

What are your eyebrows doing?

How are you standing?

Are your hands clenched or open?

How loud/fast are you speaking?





De-escalation Approach 2:
Releasing the Ego

You Don't Have All the Answers!

One of the biggest mistakes in attempting to de-escalate is starting with problem solving!

Drop the ego—assume that you *don't* have the answers, and focus on the other person first!



Speak to Their Truth

Many times, people are coming into a situation having been ignored, told they're wrong, etc.

Find the truth in what they're saying and speak to that.



Let's Test it Out

“Nobody here wants to help me, and I’ve been waiting to get housed for too long!”



“You’re right, you’ve been waiting for housing for too long and you need to get housed.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about, you look like you barely graduated high school!”



“You’re right, I’m still learning.”

“If I die because you didn’t help me get my medication, it’ll be your fault!”



“You’re right, your medication is very important to your health.”



De-escalation Approach 3:
**Be a Reflective and Active
Listener**

How Does Reflective Listening Work?

1. Understand there is nothing to argue with.

2. Make the other person feels heard.

3. Make the other person feel valued.



4. Do not overthink a response.

5. Do not getting emotionally attached.

6. Build/rebuild a relationship.

Spot the Difference

“This is ridiculous, you obviously don’t know how to do your job! I called 10 times this morning trying to get through and no one answered!”

Response #1

“I’ve been working here for 20 years, and I’ve helped a lot of people! I know what I’m doing. We’re all really busy here, so we’re not always going to be able to answer the phone!”

Response #2

“It sounds like you’re upset with how I’m doing my job and that you’ve already done a lot to try and get an answer to your question.”

Types of Reflective Listening

TYPE

1. Summarizing
2. Double-Ended
3. With Feeling

STATEMENT

“I can’t believe no one here knows what they’re doing. All I wanted was to talk to my case manager and I’ve been sent to three different departments; is this how you treat all your clients?”

REFLECTION

“It sounds like today feels very frustrating and that we haven’t been very helpful in addressing your needs today.”

Types of Reflective Listening

TYPE

1. Summarizing
2. Double-Ended
3. With Feeling

STATEMENT

“I am tired of needing to fill out paperwork, call the doctor, fill out more paperwork, get you to sign off on it, send it back... this is too much and I’m sick *now*. I can’t keep waiting to start services.”

REFLECTION

“I’m hearing this process is taking too long and that there have been too many steps before you can start receiving services.”

Types of Reflective Listening

TYPE

1. Summarizing
2. Double-Ended
3. With Feeling

STATEMENT

“I really want to get a job so I can start buying my own groceries and not be limited by the amount EBT gives me, but all these jobs they want me to apply for are far away and taking the bus is terrible.”

REFLECTION

“Correct me if I’m wrong, but things are not easy for you right now because you really want to get a job, but the options available to you aren’t fitting your needs.”

Breakout Room Discussion

Instructions:

Everyone will be placed in randomized breakout groups. Each group will **select two participants** to role-play the discussion (below). Everyone else will be an observer.

Participants:

- **One** person will speak about a frustrating experience they experienced recently (at work, at the grocery store, etc.).
- **One** person will practice *only* reflective statements.
 - *Not* problem solving.
 - *Not* sharing personal experiences.

You will then get a prompt to switch.

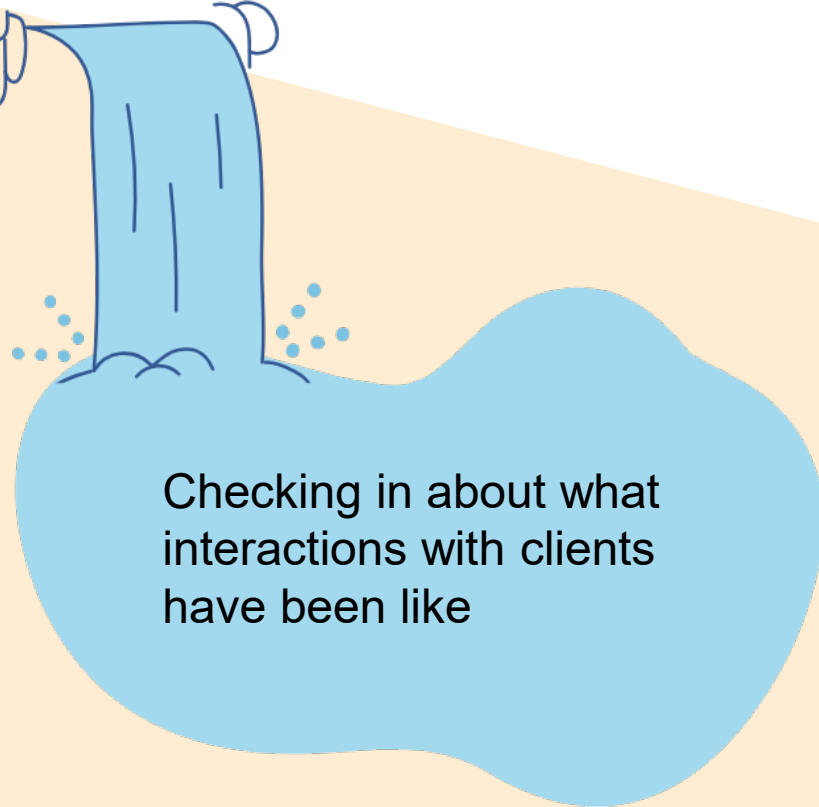
Observers:

- Notice how many times the listener tries to solve the person's problem.
- Notice how many times the listener uses reflective statements.
- Notice when the speaker feels validated by a reflective statement.
- Notice when the listener can clarify what they meant after a reflective statement.




De-escalation Approach 4: **Utilizing a Team Approach**

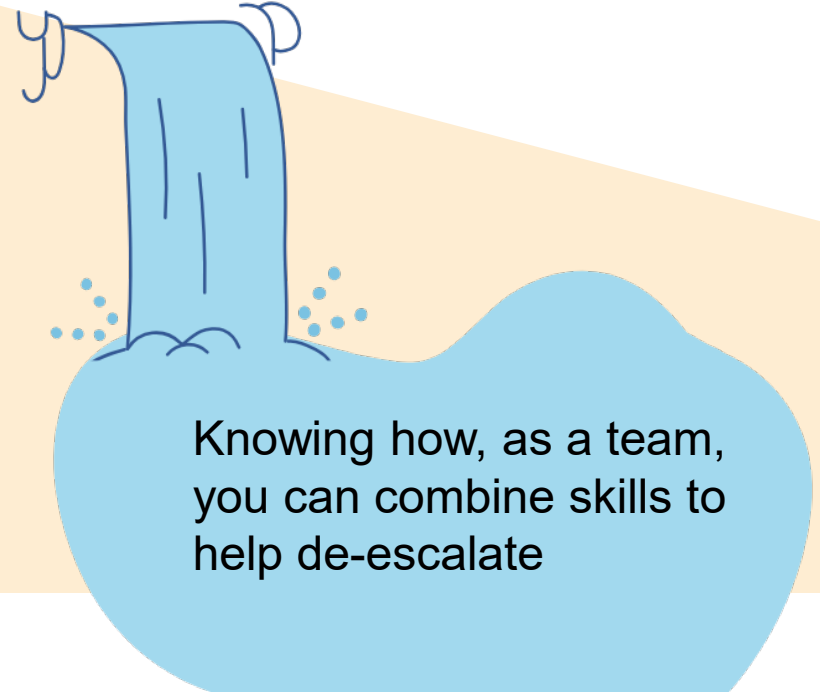
Being Proactive—Team Meetings



Checking in about what interactions with clients have been like



Regularly checking in on what rapport other staff have with clients



Knowing how, as a team, you can combine skills to help de-escalate

Internal Protocols



Use key words on walkies/telecom/group texts.



Get basic needs met—water, food, somewhere to sit.



Change of scenery—go outside, find a quiet room, know where in the building is identified for a quiet space.



Engage team members as needed—who has rapport with the client, who is good at talking someone down, etc.



Stay safe—does everyone on the team know the protocol? Does your team know if you will be stepping outside or going into a different room?

Debriefing



1. Make sure your team debriefs after a heightened experience.
 - Assess how everyone is feeling.
 - What were the fears or reactions to the situation?
 - Take a moment and cool back down.
2. Refine approaches and protocols.
3. Document the situation (give yourself a moment to breathe first).
4. Remember: mistakes happen! No one is perfect.



De-escalation Approach 5:
Setting Boundaries

Understand When You've Met Your Limit

Sometimes no amount of de-escalating will work!

Accept that may happen and know when to set the limit.



Why Setting Boundaries Is Trauma Informed



Poor boundaries do not support self-efficacy.

Trauma is what happens when boundaries are not respected—we can start to model healthy boundaries.

Boundaries ensure you are also taken care of in a trauma-informed manner.



Setting a Boundary



Boundaries are not about the other person—boundaries are about you.

Explain the consequences of continuing to cross the boundary.

Offer possible next steps.



Let's Test it Out

“You can’t talk to me like that, you’ll need to call me back when you’ve calmed down!”



“I don’t feel comfortable being yelled at, and if you continue to yell, I will hang up until we can have a calmer conversation.”

“You need to fill out the paperwork on your own, I can’t keep doing it for you.”



“I don’t have enough time to help with filling out your necessary paperwork, and if you continue to come without it prepared, I won’t be able to provide the necessary services.”

The Hardest Part About Boundaries...

...Is following through!

When you set the boundary,
be ready to enforce it.





De-escalation Approach 6:
Safety Planning

Supporting Clients After Heightened Experience

Identifying early warning signs of when they are getting escalated.

Identifying coping skills that work for them (as well as which do not).

Identifying individuals and environments that are likely to help reduce the stress.





Gain Knowledge about Conflict Resolution



What Happens Next?



Rebuilding rapport between the organization and client



What can we do to help you feel safe after this situation?



What can you do to help remember this is a safe space?



Conflict resolution

The Art of Apologizing

- **Acknowledge the hurt.** Take ownership despite the perception of the hurt.
- **Check in with yourself.** Take a moment to regulate yourself or engage in de-escalation strategies if needed.
- **Express empathy.**
- **Make a sincere apology.**
- **Thank the person for the opportunity to engage and commit to the change.**





Part 1:
**Establishing Rules for
Communicating**

Setting Up for Success



**5 min & 5 min
rule**



**Speak only for
yourself**



**Focus on
solutions**



**Acknowledge
their perspective
with validity**

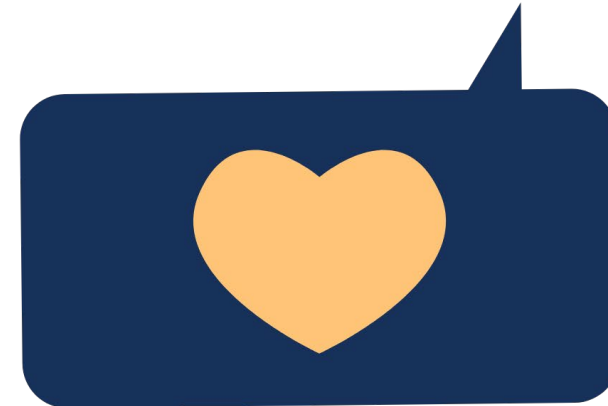


Part 2:
Finding Common Ground

Remind & Restate...

There is common ground!

1. Refocus your mind to find the common ground.
2. Let the other person know what you've identified.
3. Ask if that's still the case.



Reframe

What is the common goal of the conflict?



We both want you to receive services in a timely manner.

We both want to be done with waiting to hear back.

We both did not know that the doctor rescheduled the appointment.



Part 3:
**Using Open-Ended
Questions**

Open-Ended Questions Start With...

Tell me **more** about...

How would you **describe**...

What are some ways...

What do you **think** about...

What **would** you say is...

How does this **situation**...



Let's Test it Out

“Are you going to call your sponsor?”

“Are you upset that I didn't go to your doctor's appointment with you?”

“Did you want to reunite with your family?”

“Do you want to get sober?”

“Can you fill out your own paperwork moving forward?”



“Tell me about the times you've called your sponsor.”

“Can you explain what happened when you went to the doctor without me?”

“How would you describe how your relationship with your family has been lately?”

“What do you think about getting sober?”

“Can you tell me about things that get in the way of filling out your paperwork?”

Breakout Room

Instructions:

Everyone will be placed in randomized breakout groups. Each group will **select two participants** to role-play the discussion (below). Everyone else will be an observer.

Participants:

- **One** person will speak about a conflict they experienced with a client or in a past job, etc.
- **One** person will practice *only* open-ended questions.
 - *Not* problem solving.
 - *Not* sharing personal experiences.

You will then get a prompt to switch.

Observers:

- Notice how many times the listener tries to solve the person's problem.
- Notice if questions are trying to lead someone to a particular outcome.
- Notice when questions help open the conversation up.
- Notice when questions allow the other person to speak their truth.

QUESTIONS?





Please fill out the attendance form and feedback survey in the chat to meet your requirements for today's event.



Thank You

References

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