



Techniques for Diffusing Aggressive Behavior

"If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you . . ." Rudyard Kipling

Sometimes people react to difficult or stressful situations by losing control of themselves, becoming loud and argumentative, irrational, and even being aggressive. So, how do you deal with this conflict? First, let's identify some indicators of aggressive behavior. Indicators of aggressive behavior, may include, but are not limited to:

- Increasing anxiety and irritability
- Escalating physical gestures (e.g. pointing, flexing, intimidating, etc.)
- Hyper-arousal (e.g. increase in respiration, skin reddening, etc.)
- Getting increasingly louder
- Using disparaging, or condescending, "threatening" language

Trust your instincts regarding the behaviors exhibited and the need for additional assistance, when appropriate.

Concepts for Diffusion

- First and foremost, ensure your safety and the safety of your co-workers
- Position properly and have an exit strategy
- Make sure a co-worker or security officer is aware you are having an issue with the subject
- Know when it is time to end the conversation and withdraw
- Handle the situation directly and calmly
- Project confidence, balance assertiveness and empathy
- Be self-aware of your body language, posture, movements and tone
- Remain professional, do not let the subject "push your buttons" or goad you
- Utilize "Active Listening" techniques: Allow them an opportunity to be heard, reflect what they are saying and respond appropriately
- Don't be afraid to take a "time out" and allow some de-compression
- Identify the emotion (e.g. "you seem to be upset", or "you seem to be getting more frustrated") but **NEVER** say "relax" or "calm down"
- Try to "Re-Focus" the subject and get them to work with you to solve the problem, encouraging the subject to take responsibility for their own behavior and to direct it into more creative or positive outlets. For example, you might say:
 - "I'm trying to help you, but your anger is counter-productive. To solve this issue for you, I need you to work with me," or
 - "I need to check on this file, please give me a moment" and allow them time to de-compress and cool off