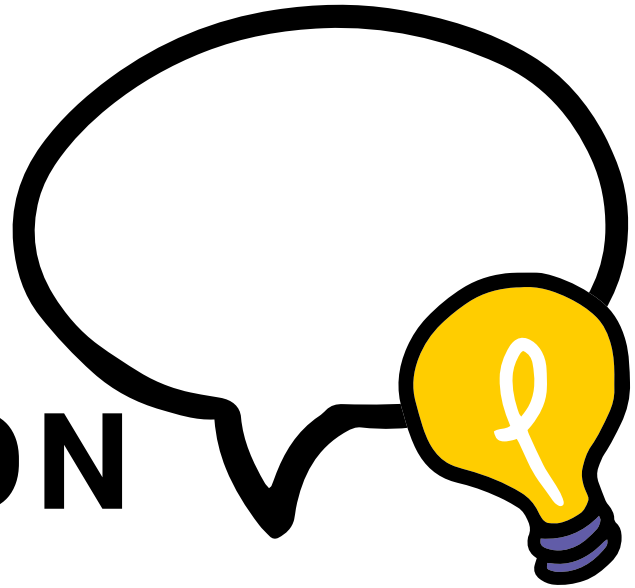


DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

Supervisor Skill Building Session

August 2026

Roadmap



What is de-escalation?

Where does it come from?

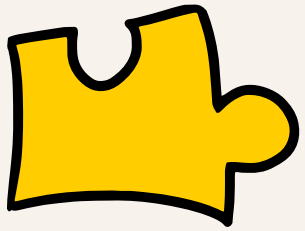
What is the supervisors role?

How can I best de-escalate?

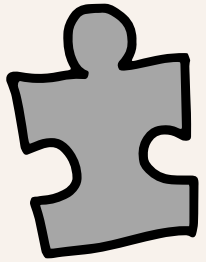
What do I do if it doesn’t go well?

De-escalation is the act of making a tense, angry or dangerous situation calmer and less severe

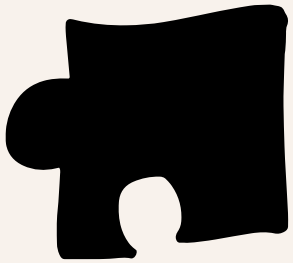
Where does escalation come from?



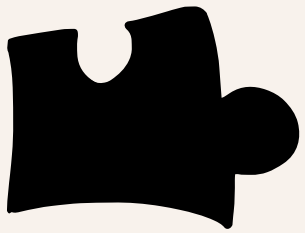
Employee feels threatened



Employee feels unheard or dismissed



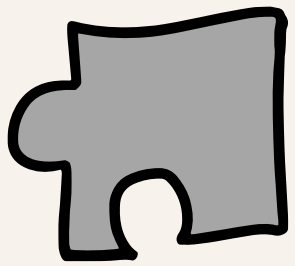
Emotions have built up over time



Expectations have not been met

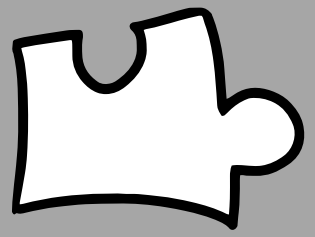


Employees feel a loss of control



Personal stress spills into work

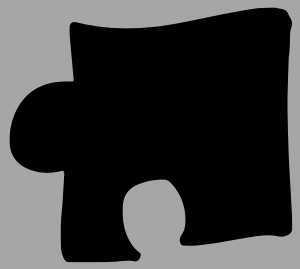
What triggers this type of response?



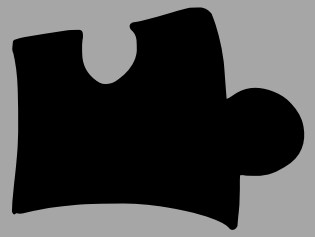
Communication Triggers



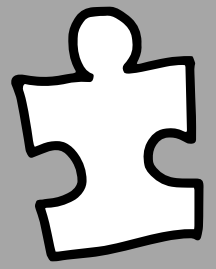
Workload Triggers



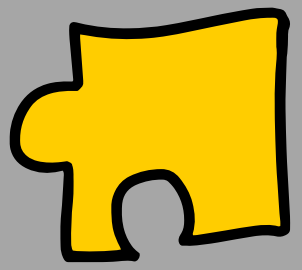
Change Triggers



Relationship Triggers

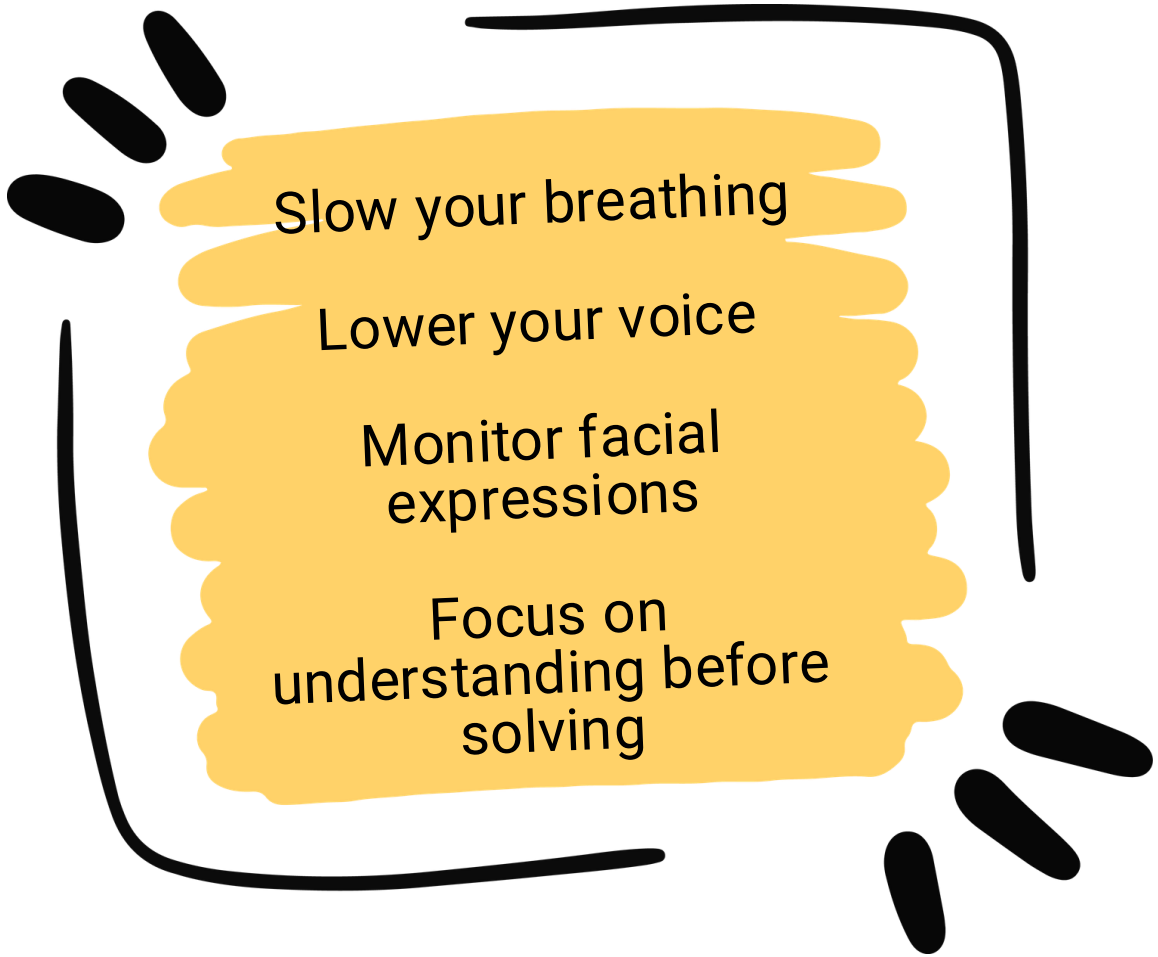


Identity and Values Triggers



Environmental Triggers

Supervisor’s Emotional Regulation Comes FIRST



Key Supervisor Considerations



Active Listening & Validation are KEY



Choices Reduce Defensiveness



Use Curiosity Over Correction



Safety Comes First

Keep CLEAR before you solve.



Calm → Listen → Empathize → Ask → Resolve

Framework

CALM

Take inventory of yourself before doing anything else.

Regulate your body.
Breathe.
Lower your voice.



Framework

CALM

Listen

Focus on Active Listening:

attentiveness
empathy
non-verbal cues
reflective responses
withholding judgment
open-ended questions

“Tell me more.”
“Help me understand...”



Framework

CALM

Listen

Empathize

"I can see why you're frustrated."
"That sounds really difficult."

Phrases to Avoid:

"Calm down"

"You're overreacting"

"That's just the way it is"

"You need to relax"

"Stop taking this personally"



Framework

CALM

Listen

Empathize

Ask Questions

Focus on getting to the bottom of the concern

Don’t jump straight to conclusions or solutions



Framework

CALM

Listen

Empathize

Ask Questions

Resolve

Move to talking through possible outcomes.

OR schedule a time to discuss later

Action focused.

“Let’s talk through possible options.“
“What outcome are you hoping for?”
“This is important. Let’s meet tomorrow to discuss”



Bonus R – RESTORE

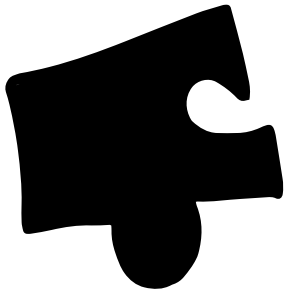
1. Respect
2. Building & Nurturing Relationships
3. Fostering a Sense of Responsibility
4. Repairing the Harm Caused
5. Facilitating Re-integration

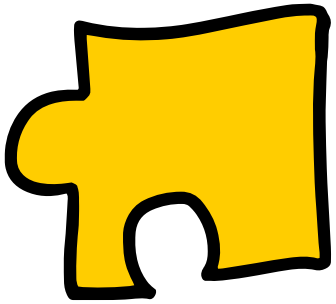


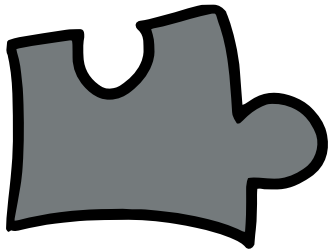
Remember:

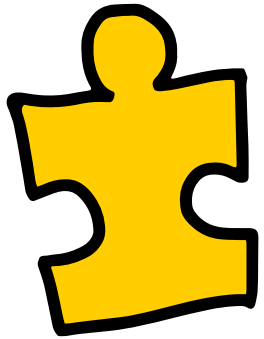
Stay Calm
Stay Curious
Stay Connected

KEEP CLEAR
Calm → Listen → Empathize → Ask → Resolve









> *People may not remember every word of a difficult conversation, but they will remember whether they feel hears, respected, and safe.*

When to Involve HR

- Ongoing conflict between employees
- Inappropriate workplace behavior
- Harassment or discrimination concerns
- Performance concerns with escalating emotions
- Employee relations issues that supervisors aren't sure how to navigate



Refer to Ombudsperson

- Employees need a confidential, neutral place to talk through concerns
- Workplace conflict that may benefit from mediation
- Relationship challenges between coworkers, supervisors, or departments
- Individuals who are unsure how to address a concern



Call the Threat Assessment Team

- Threatening or harassing communications
- Fixated grievances or concerning behaviors
- Statements about harming self or others
- Significant behavioral changes that raise safety concerns
- Situations that leave someone fearful for their safety



When to call University Police or 911

- Threats of violence
- Physical aggression
- Stalking concerns
- Imminent safety risks
- Any situation where someone feels unsafe



Employee Assistance Program

- Employees experiencing personal stress
- Emotional distress
- Family challenges
- Mental health concerns
- Situations affecting work performance

