

VASSAR

OFFICE FOR
INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY

Crisis De-Escalation



Types of Violence	3
Types of Threat.....	3
Working with People in Crisis	4
Staying Safe	5
Building Rapport.....	5
Cultural Competence.....	6
Bias	6
Putting It Into Practice	7
An Ongoing Process.....	8
Final Thoughts	8



Types of Violence



AFFECTIVE VIOLENCE

- Emotional reaction
- Based on situations and environmental stress
- Driven by adrenaline
- Lacks forethought or planning
- Can Be seen in FIGHT-FLIGHT-FREEZE

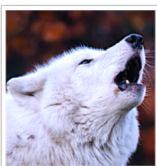
TARGETED VIOLENCE

- Non-emotional reaction
- Deliberate planning (weeks-months-years)
- Based in perceived/actual grievance
- Willing to sacrifice life for cause

Types of Threat

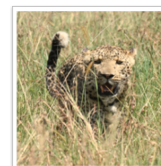
Howlers

Do not engage in approach behaviors and lack the intent to carry out their threats. When howlers threaten, their threats are TRANSIENT.



Hunters

Engage in serious targeted violence, and their intent is to complete the attack. They do not draw attention to themselves by making threats, so when hunters threaten, the threats are considered SUBSTANTIVE.



TRANSIENT THREATS

These types of threats do not express lasting intent to harm.



SUBSTANTIVE THREATS

These threats represent a continued attempt to harm someone.

TYPE OF THREAT	EXAMPLE
Direct	"I'm going to blow up the library."
Indirect/Vague	"Something bad is going to happen to the library."
Direct w/action/time imperative	"I'm going to blow up the library Tuesday at 3."
Conditional ultimatum	"If you don't give me a good grade, I'm going to blow up the library."
Transient	Frustrated about an assignment, a student throws a book and yells, "Burn this down!"
Substantive	"I'm going to bring a nalgene bottle of gasoline to spread on these books and light it up."
Howling	"You can't treat me like this. I'm going to set fire to the world and roast marshmallows!"
Hunting	"I have what I need. I know what I'm going to do. #fire #library"
Vague but direct	"Something bad is happening in the library soon."
Direct but vague	"They might want to invest in fire extinguishers around here."

Working with People in Crisis

- A person's behaviors and communications are often disclosed through nonverbal means.
- Pay attention to what people are saying through facial expressions, emotions, and body language.
- Individuals are unique and will likely not discuss intentions or needs in a uniform manner.
- Behaviors that some people find troubling or threatening may very well be a person's way of asking for help.
- People have bad days. They can become sad, argumentative, or angry; this does not mean there is intent to cause harm.
- Be aware of your non-verbal communications. Ensure your tone, facial expressions, body language, and gestures relay calm and empathy.

Using Your Voice: TONE: Speak calmly to demonstrate empathy.
VOLUME: Avoid raising your voice.
RATE: Slower speech can be more calming.
INFLECTION: Avoid emphasizing words or syllables that escalate or inflame.

Instead of:

"Calm down!"
"I can't help you."
"I know how you feel."
"Come with me."

Try this:

"I can see you are upset."
"I want to help. What can I do?"
"I understand how you feel."
"May I speak with you?"



Standing rigidly in front of them...
Pointing your finger...
Excessive gesturing...
Faking a smile...

Keep a relaxed and alert stance to the side.
Keep your hands down, open, and visible.
Use slow, deliberate movements.
Maintain a neutral and attentive expression.

Things to Do

- Convey genuine interest
- Demonstrate empathy
- Establish trust
- Help them feel heard
- Attend to underlying issues for the behavior
- Use non-threatening body language
- Be honest and genuine
- Explain limits
- Be respectful
- Maintain a safe distance
- Use a noncombative attitude
- Try to convince individual to relocate
- Listen intently
- Project empathy
- Keep talking
- Call for assistance
- Observe the individual's hands and body language

Things NOT to Do

- Ignore the underlying issue
- Focus on your own points
- Ask too many questions
- Offer solutions too quickly
- Focus on rules and policy
- Patronize or preach
- Interrupt
- Act defensive
- Shout over them



Staying Safe

- What should the first person who is aware of a problem do?
- Who will help the first person and who will inform others?
- Who will summon law enforcement?
- Who will lock the doors to keep an assailant out, if possible?
- Who will guide individuals to safety? How will they do it?

If you recognize that a hostile act is occurring or is imminent:

1. Remove yourself from the situation and seek safety
2. Communicate the threat and suggested response in a loud, clear voice.

“Gun!”

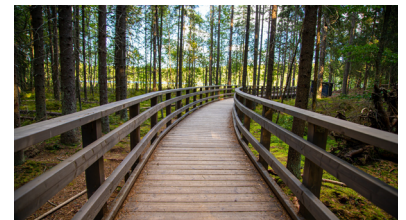
“Bomb!”

“Get out!”

Building Rapport

Build a Strong Bridge of Connection

- **Smile.** This is a universal gesture of goodwill regardless of culture, nationality, or religion. Research indicates that individuals who receive a smile from another feel accepted and not judged.
- **Listen carefully.** Most people do not listen to each other in an open and patient manner. If the interviewer is attentive, is nonjudgmental, and shows interest in other people, a very positive emotional dynamic will be put in place, even if the interviewee is very distrustful and hates what the interviewer represents (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Americans).
- **Find something in common.** Identify a characteristic that is shared between the interviewer and interviewee and point that out. It could be marriage, a child, a common geographical area visited, a certain amount of education, or interest in a certain sport. Find it and say it.
- **Mirror the interviewee.** This refers to mimicking the interviewee’s body language and words, which takes attention and practice. If it is done too obviously, it will be noticed and rapport will not arise. It may mean sitting the same way, making similar gestures, using some of the same words, even using similar emotional tones of voice.
- **Avoid blunders.** Allowing the soles of one’s shoes to face another person is considered an insult in the Arabic culture. Displaying a cold and unfriendly demeanor is considered an insult. Conveying impatience, such as glancing at one’s watch or tapping one’s fingers on the table, is considered an insult. Certain gestures may be an insult. Study the culture and know what the blunders are.
- **Find hooks, beware of barbs.** Hooks bring us closer together (common interests, similar backgrounds). Barbs drive us apart, raising defensiveness.



Cultural Competence

We are more effective in our management of crises when we consider individual differences.



Cultural competence is the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from different cultures and beliefs than your own.

Teams should be diverse in gender identity, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, political affiliation, religious beliefs, physical and mental disability, and age.



Bias



What is Bias?

Bias is our tendency to see the world from our particular lens of experience. It can lead us to ignore the evidence or make assumptions not based on evidence. It can impact what we remember and what witnesses remember. It can create blinders for BIT team members and impact their

ability to build rapport, connect, and create safe/neutral spaces. While we can never remove bias, we can train to make us more aware of how bias can affect decision making.

Types of Bias

- **Confirmation Bias:** Form an early hypothesis and tend to seek or overvalue evidence that fits it or confirms it. Are you interviewing or validating?
- **Dunning-Kruger Effect:** People who are terrible at a particular task think they are much better than they are, while people who are very good at it tend to underestimate their competence.
- **Anchor Bias:** The tendency to rely too heavily on the first piece of information we are given about a topic.
- **In Group/Out Group:** The tendency to be favorable toward the group that is similar to you.
- **Blind Spot:** Ability to spot systematic errors in others' decisions.
- **Availability Bias:** Reliance upon readily available (most recent) information.

Where does bias come from?

- Gender, gender identity experiences, and sexual orientation
- Race/ethnicity, world view, and generational expectations
- Mental illness or physical disabilities
- Different cultures or geographic areas
- Veteran history; and religious or political experiences
- Economic differences; and friend or peer groups



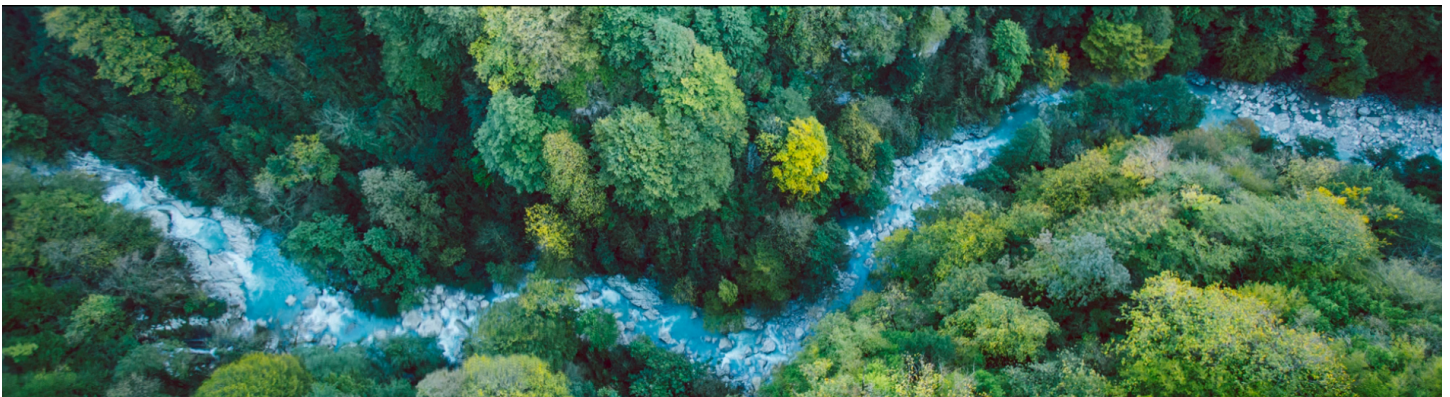
Putting It Into Practice

Motivational Interviewing

- **Express empathy.** Respect their point of view, freedom of choice, and ability to determine their own self-direction.
- **Develop discrepancy.** Explore the consequences of their actions and how they will not lead to the desired outcome.
- **Avoid argumentation.** Instead, explore more deeply what they are saying and reduce their defensiveness with open-ended questions.
- **Roll with resistance.** Avoid direct confrontation and stay focused on goals and outcomes, supporting their developmental growth and personal responsibility.
- **Support self-efficacy.** Praise them when they take positive steps and acknowledge that a positive outcome is possible.

Transtheoretical Change Theory

- **Pre-contemplation.** They aren't aware of the problem or ready for change. Raise doubt; increase their perception of risk and the problems with their current behavior.
- **Contemplation.** They are thinking about change, but haven't taken steps. Help them see the risks of not changing and strengthen their self-efficacy for making changes.
- **Preparation for action.** They are ready to make a plan to bring about change. Work with them to find the best course of change.
- **Action.** They are putting their plans into action to bring about change. Provide encouragement and resources to make change.
- **Maintenance and relapse prevention.** They maintain positive steps and adjust elements that aren't working. Teach them relapse prevention skills.



Crisis de-escalation needs to offer something different from a “one and done” approach and needs to include referrals and longer term, collaborative interventions that remain in place until the risk has been reduced.

An Ongoing Process

Calming the Initial Crisis

This entails adopting a calm, cool and collected stance in the face of upsetting or frustrating behavior, activating back-up as needed and applying crisis de-escalations skills to address the concerns. This approach is both an art and a science that requires study and experience to accomplish well.

Motivating and Inspiring Change

Once the initial crisis has been addressed, the staff can adapt a bit more of a cheerleading/supportive role with the student, helping them with problem solving and overcoming obstacles. This should be done with an appreciation for the values and boundaries that are set forth as part of the job description. In other words, how does the staff member encourage the student to begin to develop their own critical thinking skills to better problem solve the difficulties they encounter?

Managing the Ongoing Behavior

In many ways, this is one of the more difficult challenges for staff. The initial crisis is resolved and staff have done all they can to form a relationship and help the student develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. But. They. Keep. Coming. Back. The behaviors don't change and staff begin to become stressed to the point of burnout attempting to deal with the behaviors in front of them. In this stage, we encourage the use of additional resources, exploring supportive philosophies such as positive psychology, goal setting and building self-care capacity for staff and departments.

Final Thoughts

- Choosing the right approach for the given situation is critical. Yelling back at an escalating, rude or entitled individual isn't the right tool (no matter how cathartic it might feel). For example, embarrassing a student who is misusing technology when it's their turn in line to be helped isn't the best way to address that behavior. It's using a screwdriver to hammer a nail into a board. You might be able to get the job done, but there are easier, more effective, ways.
- It is important to appreciate the unique abilities, knowledge, and experience of staff as they apply a given technique. Some excel at using humor to engage an individual without offending them. Others' attempts at humor end up feeling forced and often make a crisis worse. Some display genuine concern and caring through personal questions. Some treat individuals with a degree of humanity and empathy that immediately garners respect. Others attempt this same stance and end up coming off as pushy or prying. The right technique, applied to the right situation with experience and skill is the ideal. A single technique or comment made at the wrong time can lead to an intervention that fails to persuade the student to comply.