


**Church Safety Team**  
Protecting the Sheep

**3: The Safety Team Member's Response**  
**Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1**  
Prepared by Bob Soule



**WARNING:** This training series examines the topic of church attacks and preparedness. Graphic Violence from actual incidents is depicted and discussed for informational and educational purposes in some of these presentations. Children should not view this presentation except when allowed by their parent and/or guardian.



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**Church Safety Team**  
Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

In this presentation you will learn:

- What is verbal De-Escalation.
- What verbal De-Escalation does.
- Why learn verbal De-Escalation.
- How to use verbal De-Escalation.
- The goals of verbal De-Escalation.
- Interacting with a person.
- De-Escalation strategies that work.



Slide 3.1-2

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**Church Safety Team**  
Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Introduction**

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." --Matthew 5:9 (ESV)*

One task as a Safety Team Member you might be called upon to do is to restore peace. How to step into a difficult and potentially dangerous situation and bring it to a peaceful resolution, will be covered in this section. We will cover how to communicate with people in a way that maintains or elicits a peaceful response. Discuss how maintaining your composure and remaining clam can help to resolve many issues you could face.

The key to bringing a disruptive situation under control is a skill known as **Verbal De-escalation**.



Slide 3.1-3

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**What is Verbal De-escalation?**

- Is a skill used by people in law enforcement, the medical field, psychologists, school faculty and anyone who might be dealing with agitated, emotional or difficult people.
- There are two strategies in Verbal De-escalation:
  - Is a skill used to gain control of a situation by lowering the agitation level of a disruptive or combative person.
    - ✓ Used effectively, it can get agitated and disruptive people to calm down and cooperate with you.
  - Is used to manage routine interactions so that persons do not become agitated or combative.
    - ✓ You approach a person on the property and using this technique to prevent the person from becoming combative and/or agitated.



Download Notes Package for This Resource

Slide 3.1-4

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**What Does Verbal De-escalation Do?**

- Calms the person.
  - A person thinks more clearly and responds more rationally when they are calm.
  - De-escalation reduces the tension so that everyone can behave and respond more sensibly.
- Encourages the person to cooperate.
  - Encourages the person to go along willingly with any requests you make.
- Reduces the likelihood of injury and/or violence.
  - When the person complies willingly, there is no need for any use of force.
  - When the person complies willingly, there is less chance of violence and/or injury.
- Treats the person with respect.
  - This person has been created in God's image.
  - You have an obligation to treat this person with respect and to honor their dignity.
  - Even if they are engaging in a crime.

**"To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;" – 1 Peter 3:4**

Slide 3.1-5

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Why learn Verbal De-escalation?**  
Disruptive behavior in society occurs frequently and is becoming more common in the church setting.

- Family Violence.
  - Divorces and other types of domestic dispute can find their way into the church just by the fact that the church is family oriented.
    - ✓ A perception by one of the disputants that the church or pastor has taken side of the spouse whether legitimately or not.
    - ✓ Because this affront, the aggrieved member seeks revenge by striking out.
    - ✓ Child custody can add another volatile element.
- Substance Abuse.
  - Person struggling with addictions may show up under the influence of alcohol and/ drugs.
    - ✓ This could be a member or a complete stranger coming into the building.
    - ✓ This could be a potentially dangerous threat if the person is detached from reality and hallucination.



Slide 3.1-6

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Why learn Verbal De-escalation? Continued**

- Mental Illness.
  - May display erratic or unpredictable behavior.
    - ✓ Maybe suicidal.
    - ✓ Maybe homicidal with suicide by cop as the final result.
    - ✓ Again, their detachment from reality can make it more unpredictable.
- Protesters – Professional or Spontaneous
  - Churches are not immune from political and social protests.
  - The church maybe targeted by groups because of our devotion to the Word of God.
  - Members maybe intimidated by people or protesting during a worship service.
  - Good Verbal De-escalations Skills are essential.
  - Ohio Revised Code 2917.12(B)(1) Disturbing a Lawful Meeting.

"You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." – Matthew 10:22 (NASB)

**This resource found in notes package.**

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3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Church Service Disruption # 1**

Slide 3.1-8

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**How to use Verbal De-escalation**

The diagram helps you to decide when Verbal De-escalation can be most effective and when you should be thinking other options. Every incident has its own dynamic elements. The variables include the people, the underlying history and cause for the resulting actions. People continue to be the most unpredictable and thinking you know what a person is going to do may cause you to pay the ultimate price. Always err on the side of caution.

Verbal De-Escalation: When to Use It

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3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**How to use Verbal De-escalation Continued**

- **Condition Yellow:** General Threats
  - Appear non-dangerous. Such as:
    - ✓ A person loitering on the grounds.
    - ✓ A person trying to get into a locked car in parking lot.
    - ✓ A person going through the pockets of coats in the coat rack room.
  - Approach should not be accusatory or threatening which might alarm or agitate the person.
    - ✓ The person may have a legitimate explanation which they will give you.
    - ✓ Your demeanor, body language and tone of voice can be effective without escalating something that may be innocent upon further investigation.
- **Condition Orange:** Verbal Threats and Non-Violent Physical Threats
  - The person's behavior is affecting themselves or others and is hurtful.
    - ✓ The behavior may be embarrassing, annoying or unpredictable.
    - ✓ Such as:
      - ❖ Two members in an argument.
      - ❖ A person complaining of being inappropriately touched by another.
      - ❖ A person stands up and yells at the pastor.
      - ❖ A person who is under the influence of alcohol, drugs or both; or having a mental health problem.
    - ✓ Use your skills to calm and to try to understand the motivation.

Slide 3.1-10

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**How to use Verbal De-escalation Continued**

- **Condition Red:** Violent Threats
  - Involves some kind of physical violence which is threatening to you or members nearby.
    - ✓ A Member's significant other shows up and attacks the member.
    - ✓ A member threatens the physical safety of the pastor or another member (You included).
    - ✓ An attendee assaults a church member.
  - The physical threat is serious.
    - ✓ The Safety Team must assess the situation and use their judgement.
    - ✓ Police should be notified if they haven't been already.
    - ✓ Using Verbal De-Escalation maybe useful in calming and containing the assailant while waiting for police.
    - ✓ The Safety Team's Protection of members or the intended target of the assailant should be the primary focus, whether the use of force or evacuating the target from the area.
    - ✓ Try to contain the assailant or try to direct them out of the building.

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**How to use Verbal De-escalation Continued**

- **Condition Dark Red:** Weapon Threats
  - Involves a person displaying a weapon or is using one.
    - ✓ A person pickups a hammer, brick, etc. and using it as a bludgeon.
    - ✓ A person displaying a weapon and verbalizing their intention to harm another.
    - ✓ An active murderer.
  - ✓ Use your judgement on what the response should be.
  - ✓ Police should have been called.
  - ✓ A lockdown or lockout instituted.
  - ✓ Evacuate those within the immediate area, including the target.
  - ✓ If an active killer, initiate the plan **RUN, HIDE, FIGHT, CONFRONT**.

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Goals of Verbal De-escalation**

- Get or Keep the Person Calm.
  - If the person is calm, you want to keep them calm.
  - Verbal De-Escalation involves approaching people, talking with them in a way that encourages them to stay calm.
- Lower the person's agitation level.
  - If a person is agitated, the Verbal De-Escalation skills can help them to let go of the agitation.
- Get the person to cooperate.
  - You are looking for the person to comply willingly with any requests that you make or commands that you issue.
  - Using the skills of Verbal De-Escalation makes that goal more likely.
- Prevents the situation from escalating beyond your ability to control it.
  - If the situation is routine and non-threatening, you want to maintain that status.
  - Your words and actions can trigger an emotional outburst or physical reaction from the person.

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." – Proverbs 15:1 (NASB)*

  
Slide 3.1-13

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Interacting with a Person**

Begin to use Verbal De-Escalation skills upon seeing a person whose behavior has raised your suspicions. The way you approach them—what you say and do—will set the tone for the interaction.

- Prepare for the interaction.
  - Alert other safety team members and request another member to assist.
    - ✓ Always let other members know of your intentions and why.
    - ✓ Depending on the type of behavior of the person, you may want to wait until you are joined by other team members.
  - Evaluate the situation.
    - ✓ Consider what you are observing and make a plan of action.
    - ✓ Points to consider:
      - ❖ The likelihood of danger.
      - ❖ Is there more than one person involved?
      - ❖ Do you know the person?
      - ❖ Is the person acting with violence?
      - ❖ Is a weapon being used or their access to an object that can be used as a weapon?
      - ❖ Are uninvolved members in danger?
      - ❖ Where is the nearest exit?

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Interacting with a Person Continued**

- Pray for God's wisdom.
  - ✓ Ask God for the words and appropriate actions with the person.
- Approach the person with caution.
  - ✓ Approach in a way that is not threatening or hostile.
    - ❖ Avoid sudden movements and walk slowly with confidence.
    - ❖ Avoid shouting.
    - ❖ Avoid sneaking up or surprising the person.
    - ❖ Approach the person with their field of vision.
- Respect Personal Space.
  - ✓ Stepping within the personal space of the person maybe viewed as a threatening.
    - ❖ Stand about three (3) feet from the person.
    - ❖ Increase your distance to six (6) feet if the subject is agitated or hostile. Distance is your friend.
    - ❖ Avoid touching the person.
    - ❖ If this is a general threat approach, you may want to offer a handshake and introduce yourself.
    - ❖ Do not allow the person to crowd your space.
      - ☐ Put up an open hand in front of you, palm facing outward to signal the person not to come closer.

*"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." – James 1:5 (NASB)*

  
Slide 3.1-15

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Interacting with a Person Continued**

- Lower the threat level.
  - Reduce noise and distraction.
    - ✓ Busy and loud environments can contribute to the person feeling threatened.
    - ✓ Lessen the environmental distractions and noise if you can.
  - Avoid making the person feel they are trapped.
    - ✓ Don't back him toward a wall or otherwise make them feel there is no escape.
    - ✓ This can result in the person launching an assault to escape.
    - ✓ You should want to encourage the person to head to an exit by leaving those avenues open.
  - One Safety Team Member should do the talking.
    - ✓ Designate one person to do the talking if more than one Team member is involved.
    - ✓ The person may become confused or agitated if many are talking to them.
    - ✓ The person may feel they are being ganged up on.
  - Avoid the contact feeling like an interrogation to the person.
    - ✓ Use a conversational tone with the person.
    - ✓ Avoid rapid fire questions, that makes you appear to be not listening to the person's side.
    - ✓ Show patience with the person allowing them to express their concerns.

"But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger." – James 1:19b (NASB)

Slide 3.1-16

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Interacting with a Person Continued**

- Posture and Movement.
  - Adopt a confident yet "ready" stance.
    - ✓ Feet shoulder width apart with one foot slightly behind you.
    - ✓ Keep hands in front of you where the person can see them.
    - ✓ Hands should be at waist level to allow quick response to assault.
      - ❖ Do something with them that looks relaxed and natural.
  - Move slowly and deliberately.
    - ✓ Avoid crossing arms.
      - ❖ It looks aggressive
    - ✓ Avoid shrugging your shoulders.
      - ❖ This may communicate an indifference.
    - ✓ Avoid pointing your finger at the person.
      - ❖ This could be interpreted as an accusatory action.
  - Eye Contact.
    - ✓ Use direct eye contact, but look away periodically.
    - ✓ Look at person when they're talking giving them your attention.
    - ✓ Avoid a cold hard stare.
    - ✓ Remove sunglasses
    - ✓ Avoid eye rolling.

Slide 3.1-17

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Interacting with a Person Continued**

- Posture and Movement Continued.
  - Facial Expression.
    - ✓ Show empathy and understanding.
      - ❖ In non-threatening interactions, keep your tone conversational.
    - ✓ Avoid expressions of judgement.
      - ❖ Frowning, narrowing the eyes, any other expressions that show or could be taken as annoyance.
      - ❖ Micro Expressions are subtle movements that give away someone lying or trying to keep a straight face.
  - Voice.
    - ✓ Lower your volume.
      - ❖ Speak quietly to help keep the situation calm.
    - ✓ Speak slowly and calmly.
    - ✓ Work on sounding reassuring, sympathetic, yet commanding.
      - ❖ Speak with authority without shouting or raising your voice.
    - ✓ Be tactful, patient and respectful.
      - ❖ Speak respectfully to the person especially if they are cooperating.

Microexpressions: A Universal Language You Won't Hear on Your Face

"A brief expression in a fraction of a second" Microexpressions help us communicate, whether or not we intend to with language?"



This resource found in notes package.

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Interacting with an Angry Person**

Gentle Response  
YouTube Channel Link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@GentleResponseLLC>



Slide 3.1-19

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**De-Escalation Strategies That Work**

- Five Steps to Success

The main strategy for de-escalating a tense or potentially tense situation with a person is conversation. You are going to talk to the person and listen to the person. There are 5 steps which can be recalled by the acronym of LEAST. The five steps are:

1. Listen.
2. Empathize.
3. Ask questions.
4. Summarize.
5. Talk about solutions.

➤ Listen

- ✓ Talk to the person.
- ✓ Listen to the person.
  - ❖ Listening is the most important tool for calming a person down.
  - ❖ Often an agitated person just wants someone to listen to them.
  - ❖ Let them talk and listen.

Slide 3.1-20

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**De-Escalation Strategies That Work Continued**

- ✓ Use body language and verbal cues to show you are listening.
  - ❖ Use good eye contact.
  - ❖ Have a sincere expression that you are understanding .
  - ❖ Avoid distractions.
  - ❖ Smile and nod your head when appropriate.
  - ❖ Tilting your head slightly to one side.
  - ❖ Letting face show concern, interest.
  - ❖ Your hands should be held in a relaxed position in front of you.
- ✓ Get the person talking by:
  - ❖ Introducing yourself.
  - ❖ Ask them their name and use their name during the conversation.
    - ☐ Using the name of the person personalizes the conversation.
    - ☐ Can be a way to encourage their cooperation.
  - ❖ Keep your body language open and non-threatening.
  - ❖ Ask the person what happened.
  - ❖ Ask open ended questions.

Slide 3.1-21

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**De-Escalation Strategies That Work Continued**

- Empathize.
  - ✓ Show that you understand.
    - ❖ Help the person feel they are understood.
  - ✓ Do the best you can.
    - ❖ If a person is rambling or illogical, this maybe difficult.
      - ☐ If they appear drunk, drugged or in crisis.
  - ✓ See it from the person's point of view.
    - ❖ You are not agreeing with them.
    - ❖ You are just trying to put yourself in their place to understand.
  - ✓ Echo back what the person is saying.
    - ❖ This can include their words and their emotions that they have expressed.
  - ✓ Maintain a quiet, slow, soothing voice.
    - ❖ Do not use a tone that is mocking the person.
  - ✓ Avoid saying some of these words.
    - ❖ Calm down.
    - ❖ What's your problem?
    - ❖ You're acting crazy.

  
Slide 3.1-22

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**De-Escalation Strategies That Work Continued**

- Empathize Continued.
  - ❖ Things can't be that bad.
  - ❖ You're not making sense.
- Ask questions.
  - ❖ Open ended questions are the best.
  - ❖ Be aware of the phrasing and tone you are using.
    - ☐ Avoid making the questions sound accusatory.
  - ❖ Avoid interrogating the person.
    - ☐ Rapid fire questions should be avoided.
    - ☐ The person will be less likely to cooperate.
- Summarize.
  - ✓ Repeat back the facts from the person's point of view.
  - ✓ Include the emotion the person is feeling.
  - ✓ Trust can be built with the person by listening and understanding where the person's points of contention are.
  - ✓ The person will most likely cooperate with your requests.

  
Slide 3.1-23

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**De-Escalation Strategies That Work Continued**

- Talk About Solutions.

Once you have demonstrated to the person, that you understand and the person seems willing to cooperate, it is time to talk about how the situation can be resolved.
- ✓ Ask the person to do something.
  - ❖ Using your judgement about what the person needs to do.
  - ❖ Each situation is different.
  - ❖ Some possible requests would include:
    - ☐ Ask them to leave the building.
    - ☐ Ask the persons involved to shake hands.
    - ☐ Ask the persons to go to the pastor's office for further discussion.
    - ☐ Ask the person to return the property that does not belong to them.
    - ☐ Ask the person to let someone from the Medical Team to talk to them.
    - ☐ Ask the person down the object they've been threatening people with.
    - ☐ Ask the person to sit quietly in a location until police arrive.
- ✓ Explain to the person what will happen next.
  - ❖ In some cases police or medical services have been summoned.
  - ❖ Help the person understand that cooperating is the best thing they can do now.

  
Slide 3.1-24

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Pro-Palestinian Protest St. Patrick's Cathedral Easter Mass 2024**

This video shows a demonstration that occurred at Saint Patrick's Cathedral on March 31, 2024; Easter Sunday. Their cause was to demonstrate support for the Palestinian state.



Slide 3.1-25

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**De-Escalation Strategies That Work Continued**

- Tactics to Avoid
  - As you work to win the person's cooperation avoid the following:
    - Shouting or giving rapid commands.
      - Continue to talk slowly and in a low volume.
      - Continue to move slowly—no sudden movements.
    - Lying, tricking or deceiving.
      - Never trick a person into giving up.
        - If you have gained the person's trust, you will destroy it and not regain it.
    - Making promises you can't keep.
      - Don't promise anything you can not be delivered.
      - If you don't have an answer or can not do something requested by the person, tell them.
    - Threatening the person.
      - Threatening the person destroys any trust or any chance of building trust.

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**De-Escalation Strategies That Work Continued**

- Points to Remember.
  - Be patient.
    - Verbal De-escalation takes time.
    - Give the person time to think and figure out what to do.
      - If the person feels pressured, hurried or stressed;
        - The person may never relax or they may never cooperate.
    - Respect the subject's dignity.
      - Never stop affirming the person's worth.
    - Accept their thoughts and feelings.
      - This is the key to making them feel understood and encouraging them to cooperate.

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

In this presentation you learned:

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- Interacting with a person.
- De-Escalation strategies that work.

 Slide 3.1-28

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

**Questions?**

Should you have any questions, you may contact me at:

Email: [laptop1@rsoule.us](mailto:laptop1@rsoule.us)

Bob Soule

 Slide 3.1-29

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

The next Training Series Presentation is:

**3: The Safety Team Member's Response Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 2**

 Slide 3.1-30

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Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

Sources and Further Reading:

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- <sup>12</sup> Ungerleider, S. (2005). **Mental Training for Peak Performance** (2nd ed.). Rodale Books.
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Slide 3.1-31

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Church Safety Team  
Protecting the Sheep  
3: Disruptive Person & De-escalation Part 1

Sources and Further Reading Continued:

- <sup>14</sup> Rensberg, C. (2009, April 22). **Is The 21-Foot Rule Still Valid When Dealing With An Edged Weapon? (Part 1)**. Force Science. <https://www.forcescience.com/2005/04/is-the-21-foot-rule-still-valid-when-dealing-with-an-edged-weapon-part-1/>
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## Ohio Revised Code

### Section 2917.12 Disturbing a lawful meeting.

Effective: April 4, 2023

Legislation: Senate Bill 288, House Bill 504

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(A) No person, with purpose to prevent or disrupt a lawful meeting, procession, or gathering, shall do either of the following:

(1) Do any act which obstructs or interferes with the due conduct of such meeting, procession, or gathering;

(2) Make any utterance, gesture, or display which outrages the sensibilities of the group.

(B) Whoever violates this section is guilty of disturbing a lawful meeting. Except as otherwise provided in this division, disturbing a lawful meeting is a misdemeanor of the fourth degree.

**Disturbing a lawful meeting is a misdemeanor of the first degree if either of the following applies:**

(1) **The violation is committed with the intent to disturb or disquiet any assemblage of people met for religious worship at a tax-exempt place of worship, regardless of whether the conduct is within the place at which the assemblage is held or is on the property on which that place is located and disturbs the order and solemnity of the assemblage.**

(2) The violation is committed with the intent to prevent, disrupt, or interfere with a virtual meeting or gathering of people for religious worship, through use of a computer, computer system, telecommunications device, or other electronic device or system, or in any other manner.

(C) As used in this section:

(1) "Computer," "computer system," and "telecommunications device" have the same meanings as in section 2913.01 of the Revised Code.

(2) "Virtual meeting or gathering" means a meeting or gathering by interactive video conference or teleconference, or by a combination thereof.



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# ASSESS

## How To Navigate the Risk When Someone is Escalating

The assessment process **determines whether an emergency response is needed, if de-escalation is possible, or if a more formal assessment is needed.**



### Begin with Awareness to Enable Assessment

- Awareness of precipitating events or stressors
- Awareness of your response and ability to manage your emotions
- Awareness of the situation to determine if you should engage, whether a simple “hello” will deter a threat or a more purposeful action to de-escalate the situation is required, or immediate notification to law enforcement or security is necessary



**When observing activity or behaviors that raise reasonable suspicions or concerns, individuals should assess the situation to protect personal safety and the safety of those around them.**

## WHAT DOES AN ESCALATING PERSON LOOK LIKE?

### Early Warning Signs

- Changes in a co-worker’s baseline behavior
- Pacing, ruminating, agitated gestures, or uncontrolled and disorganized behaviors
- Staring through you
- Blocking other’s movement
- Finger pointing
- Change in mood
- Distractions from work or an inability to focus
- Inappropriate responses to environmental stressors

### Signs of Imminent Danger

- Intensity in appearance with heightened senses
- Flushed, tightened jaw, clenched fists, shaking, flaring nostrils
- Rapid breathing, raised voice, nervous laughter
- Poised to strike or lunge
- Standing in a position to attack or defend
- Personal space violation
- An unauthorized person trying to enter a restricted area
- Someone impersonating an authorized person
- Someone trying to avoid security systems or personnel
- Someone abandoning an object or package and then leaving the area

### Barriers to Assessment and to De-Escalation

- Lack of empathy
- Reacting with defensiveness or anger
- Lack of respect for or shaming others
- Blaming, criticizing, preaching, labeling, or lecturing
- Lack of commitment to obligations, being preoccupied, or in a hurry
- Ordering or engaging in a power struggle
- Language or cultural differences

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## ASSESS YOURSELF

- Start by trusting your instincts; if the situation is beyond your abilities to engage, seek help
- De-escalate yourself first – remain calm or act calm if you aren't
- Control your breathing
- Relax your body and avoid gestures or postures that could be interpreted as aggressive or defensive
- Reassure yourself with positive self-talk – “You can do this” or “I can handle this”
- Project confidence and remain centered and self-assured



## ASSESS THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE ENVIRONMENT

For situations where the individual is unknown, assess if the individual presents a potential threat — the **Power of Hello** offers a means to navigate the risk.

- Does the person appear to be legitimately patronizing the business or service?
- Is the person's clothing consistent with the weather or the situation?
- Is the person avoiding security?
- Is the person asking questions about business functions or employee information? (e.g., “Who is closing?” or “How many people work here?” etc.)
- Is the person's behavior making you feel threatened?
- How is the person reacting to you or others when approached?

Assess if the environment is conducive to de-escalation:

- Is someone present who is agitating the person?
- Is there someone or something that is aggravating the situation?
- Is it crowded or lacking personal space?
- Are there environmental barriers to de-escalation (i.e., noise, weather, other distractions)?



## FORMAL THREAT ASSESSMENTS

**In some circumstances, a more formal threat assessment process is necessary.**

Threat assessment requires the organization to gather and analyze information about an employee or team member who may cause harm.

- A primary purpose is to inform decision-making on how to manage a person of concern, with the goal to prevent an incident.
- A thorough assessment by the organization's multi-disciplinary threat management team may include an interview with the person of concern and any witnesses - co-workers, associates, friends, family, or others - who can offer firsthand knowledge of the person's behaviors, history, or stressors.
- Is there evidence to suggest the person of concern poses a threat?
- What type of threat does the person of concern pose?
- Is the person of concern moving toward committing a malicious act?

Threat assessment for both emergency and non-urgent situations asks key questions:



## HELPFUL LINKS

**Power of Hello:**

[cisa.gov/employee-vigilance-power-hello](https://cisa.gov/employee-vigilance-power-hello)

**CISA Insider Threat Mitigation Guide:**

[cisa.gov/publication/insider-threat-mitigation-resources](https://cisa.gov/publication/insider-threat-mitigation-resources)

 [cisa.gov](https://cisa.gov)  [Central@cisa.gov](mailto:Central@cisa.gov)



These assessment techniques are options for consideration. This is not intended to mandate policy or direct any action.



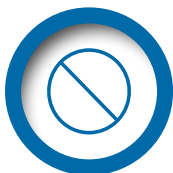
# DE-ESCALATION

How You Can Help Defuse Potentially Violent Situations

## De-Escalation

“The use of communication or other techniques during an encounter to stabilize, slow, or reduce the intensity of a potentially violent situation without using physical force, or with a reduction in force.”

– Department of Homeland Security  
Policy Statement 044-05



### De-Escalation is a method to prevent potential violence.

Individuals are encouraged to use purposeful actions, verbal communications, and body language to calm a potentially dangerous situation.



### Your safety and the safety of others is the highest priority.

Maintain a safe distance and avoid being alone with an individual who is combative or potentially violent. If there is a risk of imminent violence, remove yourself from the situation and seek safety.



### Know your limits.

Keep in mind that some individuals may be more adept in applying these techniques. Know your own vulnerabilities and tendencies and recognize that sometimes the best intervention is knowing when to seek additional help.



### Obtain Help.

If you feel the individual or situation is escalating and violence may occur, call for help from your security staff or local law enforcement and move yourself to a safe location.

## TIPS

- Be aware of your non-verbal communications. Ensure your tone, facial expressions, body language, and gestures relay calm and empathy.
- Remain respectful and courteous. Address the individual with civility and use phrases such as “please” and “thank you.”

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## PURPOSEFUL ACTIONS

**Remain Calm:** A purposeful demonstration of calmness and composure can enable de-escalation.

**Change the Setting:** If possible, remove people from the area. This could involve parties to the conflict and onlookers.

**Respect Personal Space:** Maintain a safe distance and avoid touching the other person.

**Listen:** Give your full attention, nod, ask questions, and avoid changing the subject or interrupting.

**Empathize:** Present genuine concern and a willingness to understand without judging.



## VERBAL COMMUNICATION

**Tone + Volume + Rate of speech + Inflection of voice = Verbal De-Escalation**

**Tone:** Speak calmly to demonstrate empathy.

**Volume:** Monitor your volume and avoid raising your voice.

**Rate of Speech:** Slower can be more soothing.

**Inflection:** Be aware of emphasizing words or syllables as that can negatively affect the situation.

### Instead Of:

"Calm down."

"I can't help you."

"I know how you feel."

"Come with me."

### Say...

"I can see that you are upset..."

"I want to help, what can I do?"

"I understand that you feel..."

"May I speak with you?"



## BODY LANGUAGE

### Instead Of:

Standing rigidly directly in front of the person

Pointing your finger

Excessive gesturing or pacing

Faking a smile

### Try...

Keeping a relaxed and alert stance off to the side of the person

Keeping your hands down, open, and visible at all times

Using slow, deliberate movements

Maintaining a neutral and attentive facial expression



## HELPFUL LINKS

### Power of Hello:

[cisa.gov/employee-vigilance-power-hello](https://cisa.gov/employee-vigilance-power-hello)

### CISA Insider Threat Mitigation Guide:

[cisa.gov/publication/insider-threat-mitigation-resources](https://cisa.gov/publication/insider-threat-mitigation-resources)

 [cisa.gov](https://cisa.gov)  [Central@cisa.gov](mailto:Central@cisa.gov)



*These de-escalation tactics are options for consideration. This is not intended to mandate policy or direct any action.*



# RECOGNIZE

How You Can Notice the Warning Signs of Violence

Co-workers, friends, and family are often best positioned to **recognize the warning signs** in someone who may be on a path to violence.



People who resort to violence are often driven by a combination of predispositions, personal or professional stressors, and assorted resentments.

## KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER



- 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 someone'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.
- Confirmation of a threat requires a solid understanding of context and a holistic assessment of the person's circumstances and stressors.
- When you report, you create an opportunity to prevent potentially violent situations.

**When you notice the warning signs, you can help prevent violence in two primary ways. One applies to urgent situations when violence may be occurring or is imminent. The other enables you to help people by reporting your observations.**

### Clearly communicate the threat while seeking safety

If you recognize that a hostile act is occurring or is imminent, remove yourself from the situation and seek safety while communicating the threat and suggested response in a loud, clear voice (e.g., "Gun!" "Run!" "Bomb!" "Get Out!").

### Inform others

If you recognize a warning sign and there is no imminent threat, inform others of what you have seen or know. Tell a supervisor, manager, security guard, or other employee or team member.

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## STRESSORS

### Situations that cause strain or tension.

These can be positive or negative developments in a person's personal or professional life.

Examples include:

- Financial strain
- Illness or death among family or friends
- Addiction (drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc.)
- Break-up or divorce
- Employment actions (promotion, demotion, termination, etc.)
- Conflict with peers, co-workers, or managers
- Legal problems
- Transfer or relocation



## CHANGES

### Variation in baseline behavior.

Baseline behavior is an individual's normal mood and typical responses to everyday activities. Those most familiar with an individual will be able to notice a change in baseline behaviors.

Examples include:

- A person who is usually moody or socially isolated becoming excessively outgoing
- An outgoing person suddenly becoming socially isolated
- A normally hard worker that no longer cares about work performance
- Someone who develops beliefs or ideas that promote violence



## BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

### Observable behaviors by peers.

Organizational members typically have some degree of familiarity with each other and are frequently able to spot changes in a peer's behavior.

Examples include:

- Disgruntlement toward peers
- Unwillingness to comply with established rules or policies
- Stalking, harassing, or bullying
- Making inappropriate statements or jokes
- Threats of violence, either verbally or written
- Fascination with previous incidents of workplace violence
- New or increased interest in weapons
- Asking about security outside of assigned roles and responsibilities

### Observable physical behaviors.

It is difficult to determine a stranger's intent due to lack of familiarity. Individuals will have to rely on physical indicators of aggression to determine if a stranger is potentially hostile.

Examples include:

- Argumentative or uncooperative behaviors
- Clenched jaw and/or balled fists
- Pacing or restlessness
- Trembling or shaking
- Violating others' personal space
- Making specific threats to inflict harm to themselves or others
- Displaying or making threats to use a weapon



## HELPFUL LINKS

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 **RECOGNIZE**  
 **ASSESS**  
 **DE-ESCALATE**  
 **REPORT**

These recognition approaches are options for consideration. This is not intended to mandate policy or direct any action.



# REPORT

## How To Engage Your Organization and Community

**Reporting is critical** to the prevention of workplace and community violence. Threats that are not known cannot be managed.



**Reporting behaviors that raise concerns or an incident that is escalating plays an essential role in protecting yourself and others from a potentially violent situation by:**

*Alerting first responders to provide appropriate intervention in cases of an imminent or credible threat*

*Engaging your organization to enable assessment and management of a potential evolving threat*

When making a report, the goals are to prevent violence and to get help for the individual of concern. Reporting is not intended to be punitive, to get someone in trouble, to send someone to jail, to cost someone a job, or to damage someone's reputation. Engagement following a report can discourage or stop someone from making a mistake and acting on violent ideas.

### There are two types of reporting:

#### Calling 9-1-1

For **immediate** threats

#### Organizational Reporting

To enable assessment and management of an **evolving** threat

- In either case – ensure your personal safety before making a report

### Calling 9-1-1

If the person of concern is directly threatening you or others, if a weapon of any kind is involved, or you feel that the threat of violence is imminent, move to a safe location and call **9-1-1**.

*The 9-1-1 call taker will need specific information to provide an appropriate response:*



- Your name
- The location of the incident
- The location of the person of concern
- Your exact location
- A description of the situation
- Is the incident still in progress?
- A physical description of the person of concern
- The type and number of weapons, if any
- The number of potential victims

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## ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTING

### Reporting can be an intimidating task.

Some individuals fear there will be negative consequences from getting involved. Others question if they may get it wrong or unintentionally cause harm to someone. To mitigate these challenges, organizations should consider creating systems which encourage reporting through a culture of shared responsibility, making sure that people know that reporting is confidential and designed to help them and the person of concern.

### Key points to include in a report:

- The exact nature and context of the concerning behavior, comments, and/or perceived threat.
- Who or what is/was the intended target.
- Is the person of concern under any new or significant stress?
- The specific words or actions perceived as threatening.
  - *Did the person of concern express a planned course of action?*
    - Does the plan make sense?
    - Is it realistic and specific?
  - *Does the person of concern have the means, knowledge, and ability to carry out a plan?*
  - *Has the person of concern engaged in violent behaviors before?*
    - Developing an idea or plan
    - Approaching, visiting, and/or following a target
    - Attempting to circumvent security or protective measures
- Any available background.
  - *Are the person of concern's actions consistent with the concerning statements?*
  - *Are those who know the person of concern worried that they might act based on inappropriate ideas?*
  - *Are there any personal or professional stressors that may have contributed to the incident?*
  - *Are there factors in the person of concern's life and/or environment which might increase or decrease the likelihood of violent action?*
  - *Does the person of concern have known problems with peers, supervisors, management, or leadership?*
  - *Is there evidence of substance abuse, mental illness, or depression?*
  - *Is there evidence that the person of concern is experiencing desperation and/or despair?*

The answers to these questions can contribute to a threat assessment by a multi-disciplinary threat management team and should provide or corroborate evidence as to whether a person is progressing toward a malicious act.



## HELPFUL LINKS

### Power of Hello:

[cisa.gov/employee-vigilance-power-hello](https://cisa.gov/employee-vigilance-power-hello)

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These reporting approaches are options for consideration. This is not intended to mandate policy or direct any action.



## Microexpressions: A Universal Language You Wear on Your Face

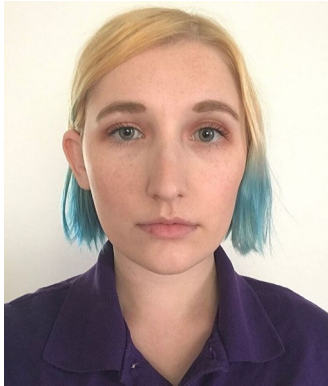
***“A facial expression in a fraction of a second? Microexpressions help us communicate, whether or not we speak the same language!”***

There are about 6,500 spoken languages in the world. Cultures even have different gestures, like peace signs, that are unique to them. Is there any form of communication in the world that everyone can understand – across languages & cultures?

Anthropologist Dr. Paul Ekman says yes – facial expressions! He traveled the world studying emotions in other cultures and found that there are seven human facial expressions called microexpressions that are universally understood – happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, & surprise.

After even more study, Dr. Ekman found that when we experience emotions, we can't help but display them on our faces, even for a fraction of a second. These glimpses into what we're truly feeling are called microexpressions. Our brain is so linked to these muscle movements that we can **make** ourselves feel these emotions by performing the right expressions!

How to practice recognizing microexpressions:



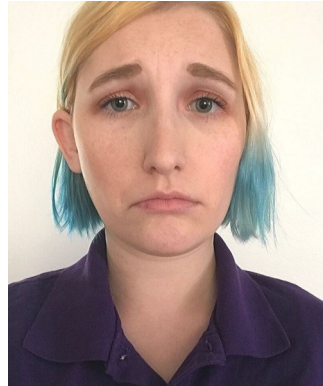
**Relax your face.**

Observe what you look like with no expression – this is your “neutral” face. Note how your muscles feel.



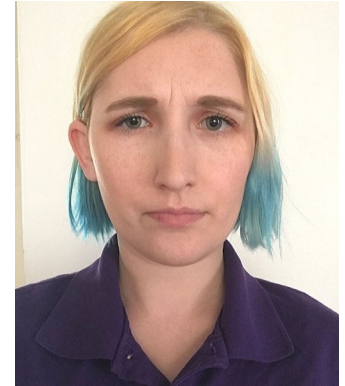
**Happiness.**

Smile! Look at your eyes – are your eyelids narrowed? Real smiles combine the contraction of the zygomaticus major at your mouth and the orbicularis oculi at your eyes. Try to think of a joke and see if your expression changes!



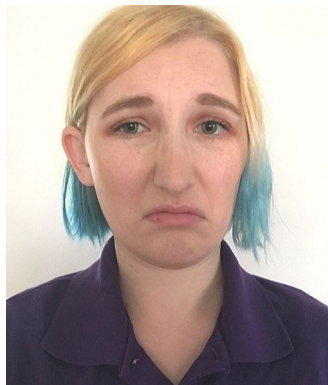
**Sadness.**

Turn your lips down into a frown. Raise your cheeks as high as you can. This part is tricky – see if you can turn the inner corners of your eyebrows upwards. Notice how your face feels – there's a lot of tension in a sad face. Do you feel any emotions?



**Anger.**

Tightened eyelids, eyebrows lowered and drawn together, and lips pressed together are displays of anger. In more intense expressions of anger, the jaw comes forward.



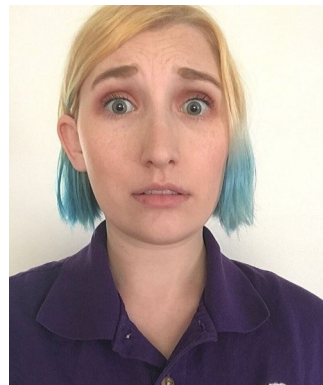
**Disgust.**

Think of a nasty smell – what does your face do? Wrinkle your nose, bring your eyebrows down and together, and make your upper lip into an upside down “U” shape.



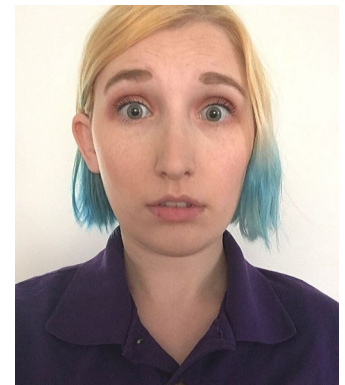
**Contempt.**

Contempt means thinking that someone is beneath you. It's not a nice emotion. Raise one corner of your lips and try to look overconfident. Notice that this is the only emotion displayed unilaterally – on one side of the face only.



**Fear.**

Think about being scared – open your eyes wide and tense your lower eyelids. Raise your eyebrows and bring them together. Try to pull the corners of your mouth backward, towards your ears.



**Surprise.**

This expression is very similar to fear – think about being startled! What does your face look like when a balloon pops? There should be less tension in your eyebrows – raise them, but don't bring them together. Relax your lower eyelids, but keep your eyes wide. Do you look surprised?