

NHAA Positive Effective Communication / De-Escalation Techniques

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Effective Positive Communication Strategies

Set Up your environment to Reduce the possibility of conflict -Start with Strong Communication

The Cleveland Clinic Heart Program is a service model that allows people to interact in a positive way

START Smile and greet, Tell your name and role and what to expect, Active Listening and assist, Rapport-build a relationship, Thank

HEART Hear- restate the issue or concern, Empathize -share expressed emotion, Apologize (not for the problem, but convey regret for the difficult situation), Respond -share what steps can be taken, Thank-ask if there is anything else that can be done

In NHAA this can be used with parents, players, coaches and umpires

People work best when they have clear expectations of what is expected of them, this includes parents and players. Incidents may occur because people do not know what is expected of them. Kids watch what you do – they look up to you. They will remember how you made them feel long after they remember what happened in the game. You frame the experience!

De-Escalation Techniques

Anticipating Potential Conflict is Important – this is what you can prepare for it – when people are stressed or angry, cognitive (thinking and problem-solving) skills are low so it is important to already have a plan for what you might do in different situations.

Be Aware that a Situation may be escalating- know the verbal and nonverbal clues:

Signs of Conflict Escalation:

A person clenching his or her **fists**, a person tightening or untightening their **jaw**

A sudden **change** in **body language** or **tone** used during a conversation

A person starts **pacing** or **fidgiting**

A **change** in **eye contact**

The **“Rooster Stance”** chest protruding out more and arms more away from the body

Disruptive behaviors – **yelling**, bullying, actively defying or **refusing to comply** with rules

Interrupting, controlling,

Flight vs. Fight reactions can be silence vs violence when things have already escalated

Things you can do to help De-Escalate a situation

First – **calm yourself** before interacting with the person. If you are upset it may escalate the situation, Calm yourself down and **think** of how you can intervene

Take a deep **breath**

Use a low **dull tone of voice** and don't get defensive even if the insults are directed at you. If someone is using a loud or agitated voice **do not match their tone** use a relaxed tone

Be **aware** of your situation -other **people** nearby, **objects** in the area, the **space** around you. If you are inside leave an escape route for the person.

Avoid over reacting – Positive thoughts like “**I can handle this**” and “**I know what to do**” can help you maintain your own calm

Appear calm and self-assured even if you are not feeling that way

Maintain **limited eye contact**

Maintain a **neutral facial** expression (it may not be appropriate to smile if someone is upset and you don't want to look upset)

Place your **hands in front** of your body in an open relaxed position

Don't point your finger at the person or **shrug** your shoulders

Avoid excessive gesturing, pacing **fidgiting** or weight shifting

Maintain appropriate **space** between you and the other person

Make a **personal connection** – something as simple as **asking** the person **their name** can help diffuse the situation

Listen to the person's concerns - **acknowledge** the person's feelings **without** passing **judgement**

Show Empathy, even if you do not agree with the person's position **express the understanding** that you are aware **why** the person **feels that way** and why that person feels that their way is the way to resolve the problem

Clarify the problem by paraphrasing (**summarizing** what they said) asking **open ended questions** etc. to help them understand that you know what their position is

Ignore challenging questions – this can often result in a power struggle when someone questions your authority - **redirect** their attention to the issue at hand

Give the person **clear** simple **enforceable limits**

Get the person to **say Yes** _ it is hard for someone to stay angry with someone they agree with – a shared pool of meaning, something you both can agree on – a mutual purpose

If De-Escalation is not working – Stop

– if the situation feels unsafe – get help

Scenarios to Discuss in a small group - Discuss **the signs of escalation** you see and what your **next steps** should be. *(you wouldn't just tell your players how to hit the ball, you expect them to practice / to get better, that's what we are doing discussing this in groups)*

1. You are at work at your part-time job at Home Depot. A customer approaches you asking for help in finding the correct size bricks to finish his patio. He explains that he was in last week and the previous Home Depot worker told him to buy the wrong size and now he must redo a large portion of his patio. He is obviously in the middle of trying to refinish the patio (dirty and sweaty) and, as he continues to talk to you about the situation, his voice gets louder and he starts clenching his jaw. He starts pacing back and forth in the aisle.
2. You are a high school baseball coach and you just had to make a tough decision about removing a pitcher who was not performing up to your expectations. You can hear the parents on the sidelines making negative comments about the pitcher being removed throughout the rest of the game. (This is a well-liked kid on the team whose parents are hoping he will get a baseball scholarship for college). Unfortunately you lost the game anyways even with the new pitcher you put in. When the game is over the father of the boy approaches you and starts talking in a very loud voice accusing you of spoiling his son's chances for a scholarship. You notice that his posture changes, he puts his hands out to his sides and sticks out his chest.
3. You are an umpire in a little league game between the two top teams in the league. There has been a lot of rivalry between the teams the whole season and this is a very important game. The coaches on both teams have not liked each other since their sons (who are on the teams) got into a fight at school and both were suspended for 5 days. There is a very close play and you make a call that one of the coaches does not like. The coach moves into your personal space, starts staring you down and starts talking in a very agitated voice about how he does not agree with the call and how it should be changed.

Remember Even if you are not directly talking to your players – they are watching everything you do!

(there is a good de-escalation video by Dr. Christian Conte on U tube if you want to use it – it is about 9 minutes long)