



# Conflict Management and De-escalation

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**NATIONAL**  
**HARM REDUCTION**  
**COALITION**

# **INTRODUCTIONS**

**Using the chat box, please share your...**

- . Name**
- . Pronouns**
- . Organization/Role**

National Harm Reduction Coalition creates spaces for **dialogue and action** that help heal the harms caused by racialized drug policies.



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Policy &  
Advocacy



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National &  
Regional  
Conferences



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Trainings &  
Technical  
Assistance



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Overdose  
Prevention



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Resources &  
Publications



# **Accessibility**

**If you have any accessibility needs,  
please direct message one of the  
facilitators.**

**We will be using closed captions  
through this training.**

# ZOOM HOUSEKEEPING

- + Add your **pronouns** to your name
  - + Desktop-click on hamburger icon “...” on your image and click “Rename”
  - + Mobile-click ‘Participants’ and your name, click ‘Rename’ to add pronouns
- + Please **mute your mic** unless you are speaking
- + Click the “**chat**” menu so that you can comment and see people’s responses to questions
- + Feel free to use the hand clap and thumbs-up emojis to **let us know** how you are feeling
- + **Tech issues happen**, let’s just roll with them!



# Workshop Overview

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## Workshop Overview

Introduction  
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## Conflict and Escalation

Understanding Trauma  
Defining Conflict

## Recognizing Conflict

How does escalation look, feel, sound like?  
Role of provider self-awareness

## Strategies for De-escalation

De-escalation and provider self-awareness  
SPLAT

## Closing/Evaluations



## **PURPOSE**

**To provide strategies for identifying what escalation looks like, a plan everyone can use to manage conflict, and tools to support people through the de-escalation and conflict management process**



## **GROUP AGREEMENTS**

**Take Space, Make Space**

**Use "I" Statements**

**WAIST (Why Am I Still Talking)**

**Vegas Rule**

**Say It Rough!**

# WHAT IS TRAUMA?



**NATIONAL**  
**HARM REDUCTION**  
**COALITION**



## **THE THREE “E”S OF TRAUMA: EVENTS, EXPERIENCE OF EVENTS, AND EFFECT**

*From SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, July 2014*

**“Individual trauma results from an *event*, series of events or a set of circumstances that is *experienced* by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse *effects* on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social emotional, or spiritual well-being.”**

# STRUCTURAL/HISTORICAL/INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA:

*From SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, July 2014*

- **Communities as a whole can also experience trauma.**
- **Natural disaster (e.g., a flood, fire, hurricane)**
- **Circumstances inflicted by one group on another (e.g., the “war on drugs,” usurping homelands, forced relocation, servitude, or mass incarceration, ongoing exposure to violence in the community)**
- **The resulting trauma is often transmitted from one generation to the next in a pattern often referred to as historical, community, or intergenerational trauma.**





**WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT  
TRAUMA SHOWS UP WITH THE  
PEOPLE WE WORK WITH?**

# HOW CAN TRAUMA AFFECT PEOPLE?

**What are some physical reactions to trauma?**

**What are some emotional reactions to trauma?**

**What are some ways that trauma can impact someone's ability to engage in services?**

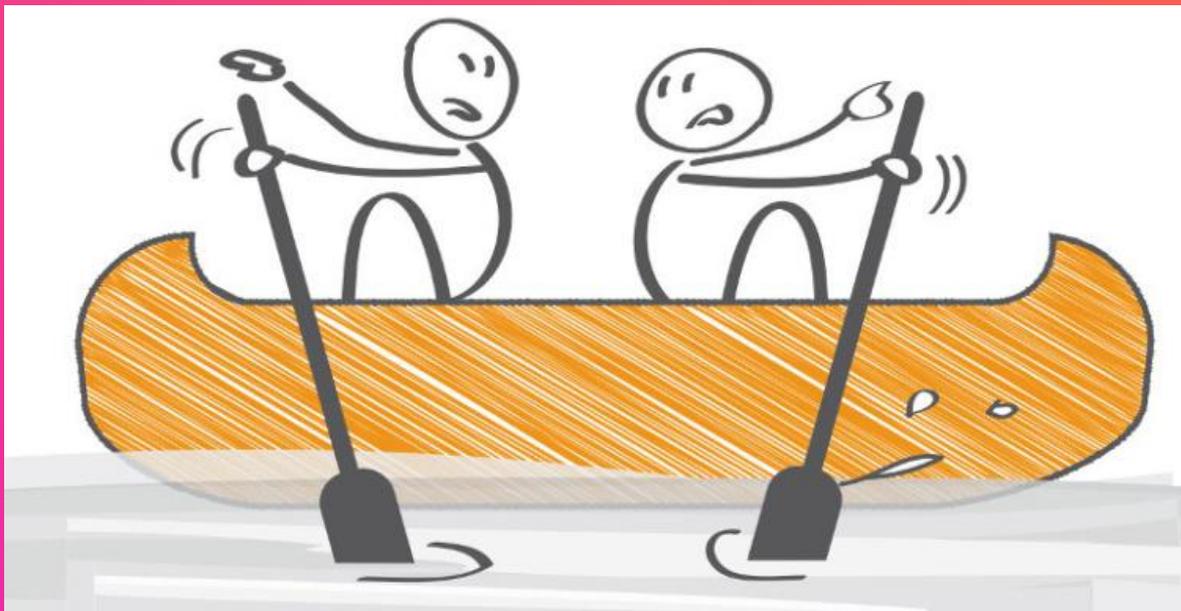


Getty Images/Robert Alexander



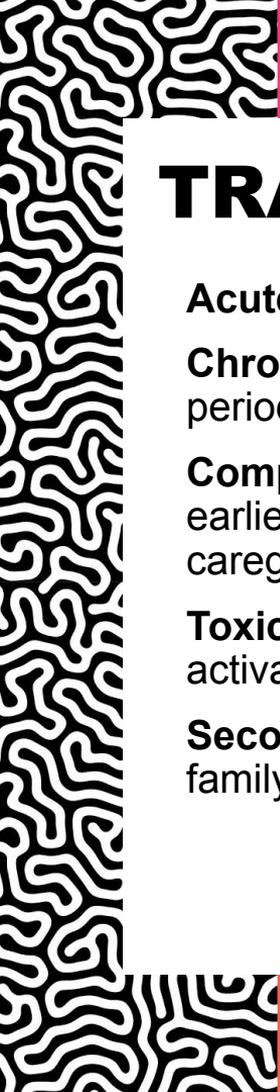
**WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF TRAUMA  
EXPERIENCED BY THE PARTICIPANTS  
YOU SERVE?**

# WHAT IS CONFLICT?



# CONFLICT

- **A disagreement in which those involved see a threat to their needs being met or their concerns being addressed**
- **A key element of conflict is the idea that each person may have a different perception of any given situation.**
- **Conflict does not exist in a vacuum. Those involved bring with them all of their history with conflict, feelings, moods, and perceptions**

A decorative maze graphic is located on the left side of the page, extending from the top to the bottom. The maze is composed of black lines on a white background, forming a complex, winding pattern. It is partially obscured by a pink rectangular area at the top and bottom of the page.

# TRAUMA AND CONFLICT

**Acute Trauma:** A single time limited event

**Chronic Trauma:** Multiple traumatic exposures and/or events over extended periods of time

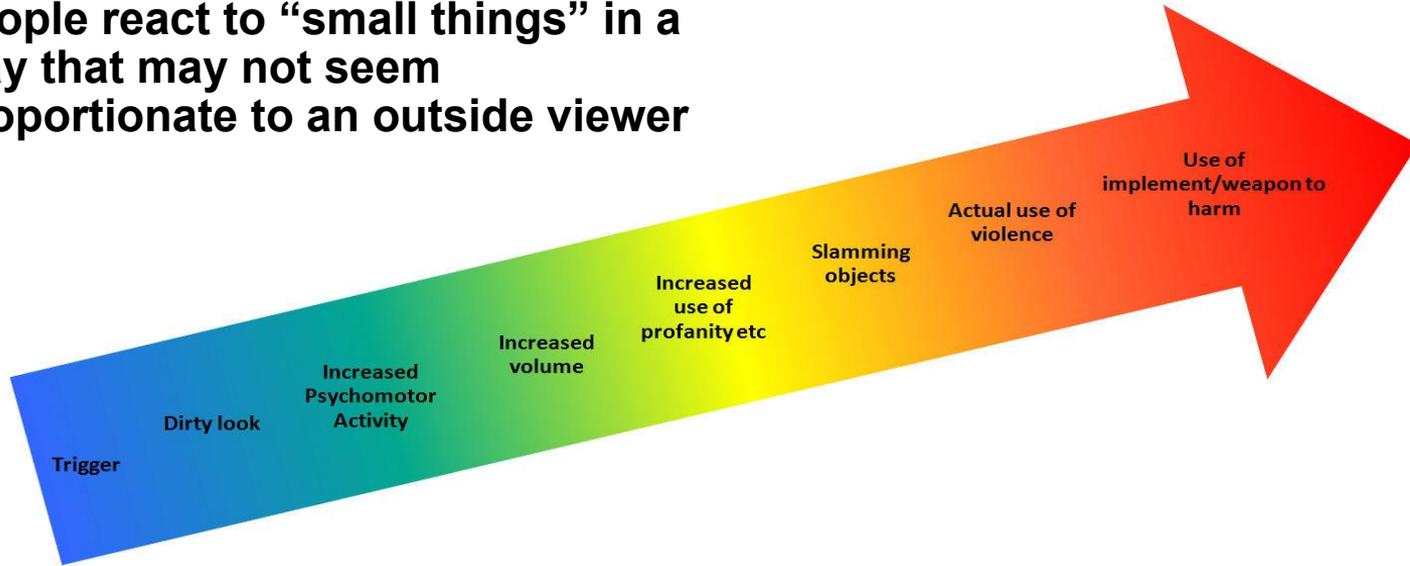
**Complex Trauma:** Experiences of multiple traumatic events, usually beginning earlier in life and the impact of exposure to these events (often occurring within the caregiving system)

**Toxic Stress:** Adverse experiences that lead to strong, frequent, or prolonged activation of the body's stress response system

**Secondary/Vicarious Trauma:** Exposure to the trauma of others by providers, family members, partners or friends in close contact with the traumatized individual

# TRAUMA AND CONFLICT

Sometimes trauma means that people react to “small things” in a way that may not seem proportionate to an outside viewer





# **BREAKOUT GROUP ACTIVITY:** ***Trauma, Conflict and Escalation***

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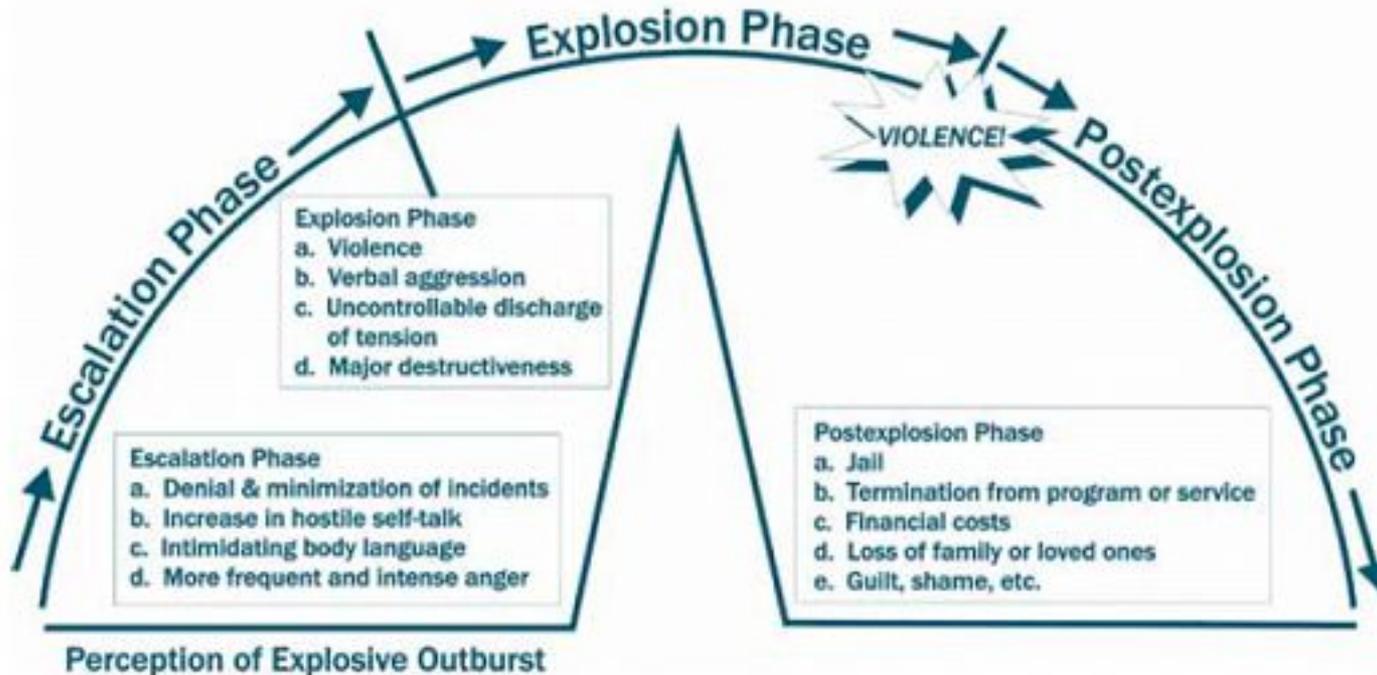
**WHAT ARE SITUATIONS THAT CAN CAUSE CONFLICT?**

**WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF CONFLICT THAT ARISE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?**

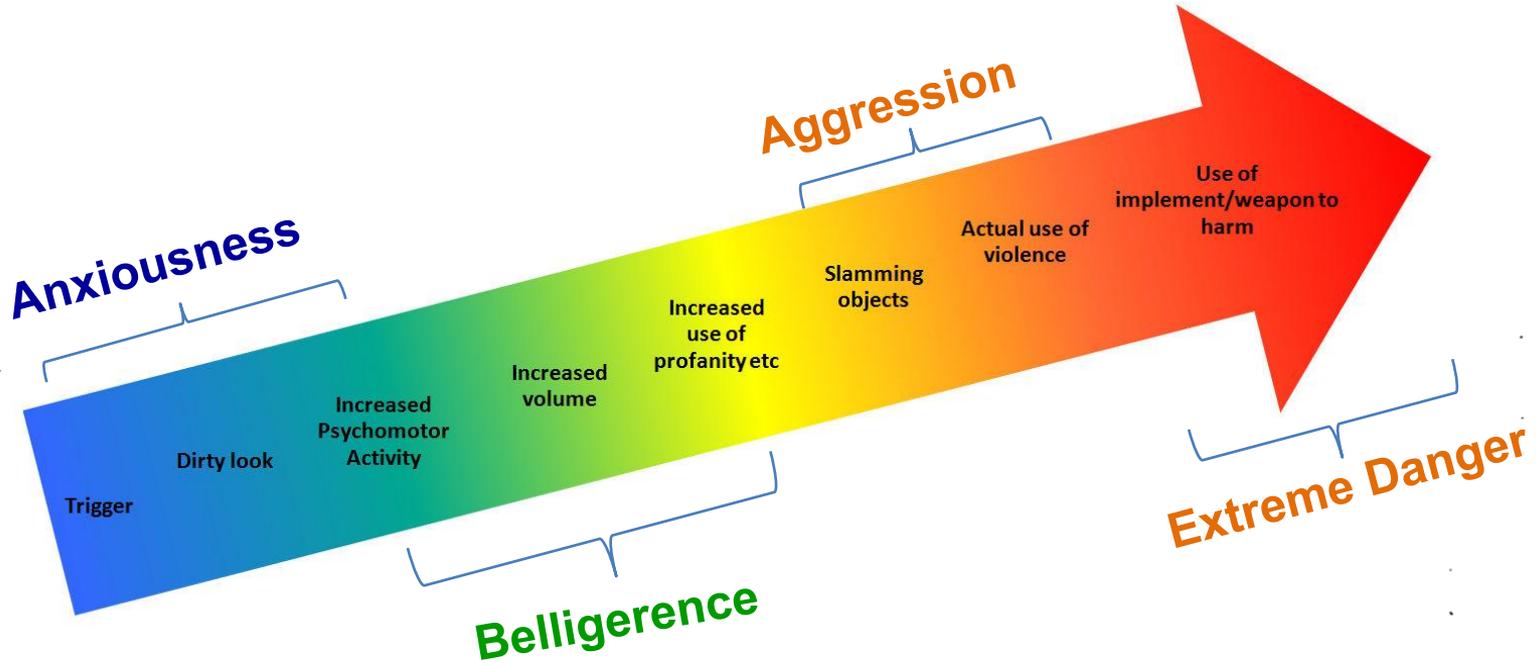
**WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN A SITUATION IS ESCALATING?  
WHAT DOES IT LOOK/FEEL/SOUND LIKE?**

# ESCALATION

A rapid increase or rise in emotions, usually in a negative context



# STAGES OF ESCALATION



# **DE-ESCALATION**

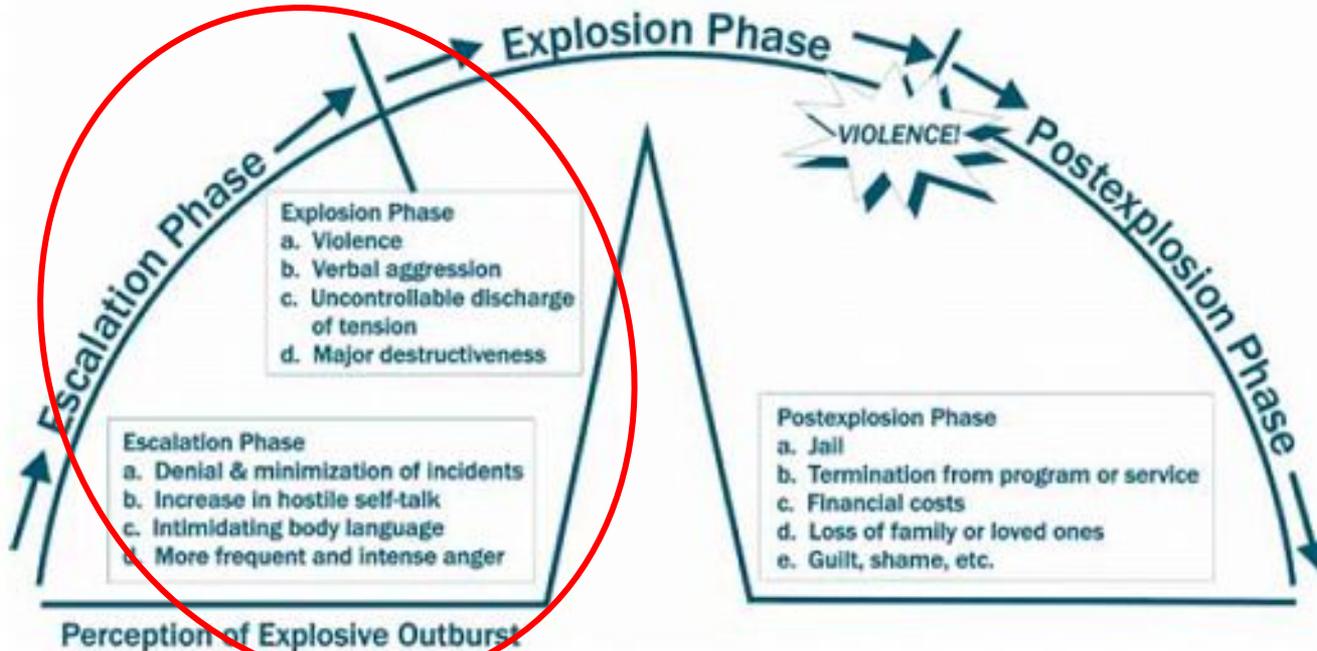
**De-escalation is a technique used during a potential conflict situation in an attempt give a person a space to express and process their emotions in a safe way and reduce the chances of them causing harm to us, themselves, or others**

**It is **NOT**:**

- **A teaching opportunity (although it is a chance to LEARN)**
- **Dealing with a nuisance**
- **Something you will only ever have to do once**

# DE-ESCALATING CONFLICT

Part of intervening effectively in a crisis situation is helping the participant feel an immediate de-escalation of anxiety, fear and panic.



# DE-ESCALATION AND POWER

- **Being aware power dynamics in a situation can help you understand it a lot better**
- **Providers and participants rarely have a fair power dynamic by nature of one providing things that the other needs**

# DE-ESCALATION AND POWER

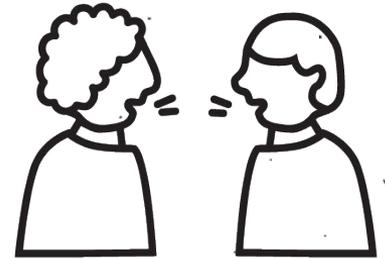
- **There are also a myriad of other power dynamics rooted in oppression, marginalization, and stigma that can play a part in the interaction**
  - Race, ethnicity, and nationality
  - Stigma related to drug use, homelessness, and mental health
  - Gender, gender presentation, and sexuality
  - Poverty and access to resources



# STRATEGIES FOR DE-ESCALATION

# ESTABLISHING CONNECTION AND BUILDING RAPPART

- **Caring, warm, genuine tone**
- **Clear and appropriate greeting with name**
- **Use simple, plain and direct language**
- **Stay engaged and in the present**
- **Avoid rushing the participant, and give them time and space to respond to what you are saying**



# RELATIONSHIPS PREVENT CONFLICT FROM ESCALATING

## RELATIONSHIP BUILDERS

- **Ask questions to show you care**
- **Give compliments**
- **Good deeds (even smiling or water)**
- **Remembering names and details**

## RELATIONSHIP DESTROYERS

- **Criticism**
- **Defensiveness, especially in protecting dogmatic rules**
- **Stonewalling (refusing to talk, repeated mistreatment)**
- **Contempt (often through body language)**

# WORKING AS A SERVICE PROVIDER

- Don't make assumptions about mental health and substance use.
- Treat clients with respect: speak clearly and calmly; when possible, take them to a private space.
- Employ empathy, don't be cruel.
- Know your own and organizational boundaries; set them kindly, but firmly.
- Take a moment to understand what the source of the conflict is coming from.



**10% = Words**

**55% = Body Language**

**35% = Tone of Voice**

# **THINK ABOUT A PERSONAL CRISIS YOU HAVE FACED**

**How did you feel during that experience?**

**What did you want from others?**

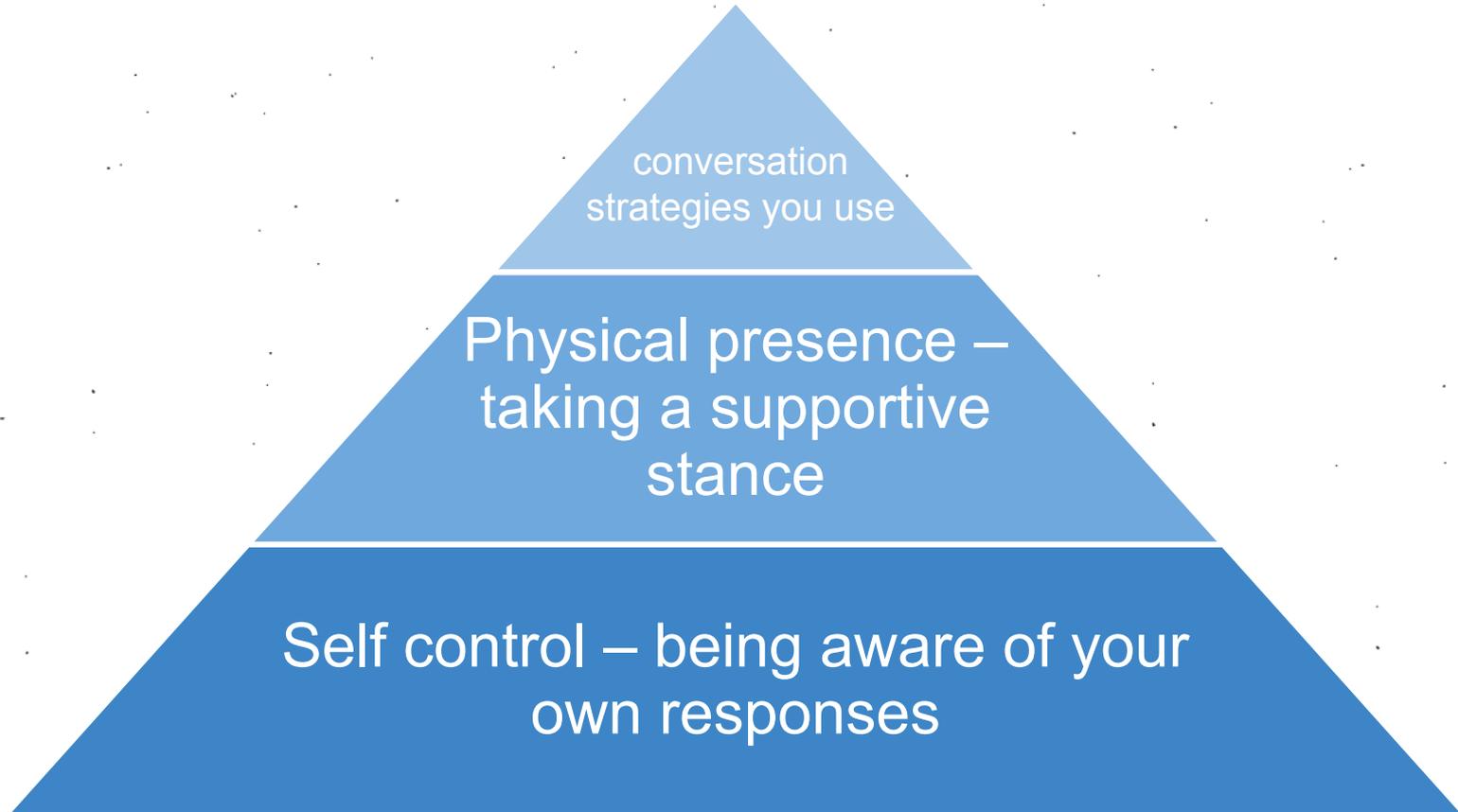
**What helped you deal with the crisis?**

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: **SPLAT**

- **S**elf Control
- **P**revent
- **L**isten
- **A**dapt
- **T**hink

Source: FDOT  
ftson.org

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: SELF-CONTROL



# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: PREVENT

## Be clear on Community Guidelines

- Post, understand & communicate guidelines
- Get feedback and community consensus on guidelines
- Don't play favorites

## Be aware of your surroundings

- Know what is going on, both in your facility and outside
- Listen for cues of escalation

## Be available

- Listen to people's concerns and validate feelings
- Offer options and choices

# **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: LISTEN**

- **Maintain a calm and concerned demeanor**
- **If you don't know them, ask them their name and introduce yourself**
- **Try to separate them from others to have the conversation**
- **Let them talk**
  - If they are yelling/screaming listen, and respond in a calmer manor

# **CREATING A SAFE CONVERSATION**

- **Stay facing participants always be at the same eye level.**
- **Ask the participant if they would be comfortable having the conversation in a more private space, or ask any others to leave the space to avoid having an audience**
- **Encourage the participant to be seated, but if they needs to stand, stand up as well.**
- **Allow a comfortable physical space between you & participant**
- **Keep hands visible**
- **Switch out with another colleague if necessary**

# STRATEGIES FOR DE-ESCALATION

## Project calmness

- Moderate the tone, volume, and rate of your verbal communication
- Be conscious of your non-verbal cues
- Introduce a trusted 3<sup>rd</sup> party to the situation, if possible, who can change the dynamics

## Encourage the person to talk; listen closely and patiently

- Acknowledge the person's feelings, reflect them back
- Avoid bargaining or make promises
- Paraphrase the situation
- Point out choices/options, break big problems into smaller ones

## Stay with person

- Work with them until they have calmed down
- Take the appropriate time to address the situation

# HOW TO NOT ESCALATE

Remember **T.A.C.O.S.**

If the goal is to de-escalate, **DO NOT:**

- **Threaten** the individual
- **Argue** or contradict the individual
- **Challenge** the individual
- **Order** or command the individual
- **Shame** or disrespect the individual

# **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: ADAPT**

- **It's not about what PEOPLE tend to need, it's about what that person needs**
- **Operate from a positive place with the goal of getting people what they need**
- **Focus on what you can do, not what you can't. Give people as many options as you can**
- **Be flexible, some of these tactics will not work for everyone**

# **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:**

## **THINK**

- **When in conflict, we can jump to moving with our emotions**
- **Take a moment to think before you respond**



# **BREAKOUT GROUP ACTIVITY 2:** ***Self-Awareness and Conflict Management***

## **Pink Groups (1-3)**

**WHAT DOES CONFLICT BRING UP FOR ME?**

**WHAT EMOTIONS/REACTIONS DO I NEED TO REGULATE?**

**WHAT STRATEGIES DO I/WE USE TO PREVENT CONFLICT?**

**WHAT ARE SOME OTHER ONES I/WE COULD INCORPORATE?**

## **Green Groups (4-7)**

**HOW DO I NEED TO ADJUST MY BEHAVIOR DURING CONFLICT TO MAKE SURE PEOPLE CAN VOICE THEIR NEEDS?**

**WHAT BEHAVIORS OR ACTIONS MAKE ME FEEL RESISTANCE TO BEING FLEXIBLE?**

**WHAT ARE SOME WAYS I CAN ADAPT TO MEET PEOPLE'S NEEDS?**

## **Blue Groups (8-10)**

**WHAT BEHAVIORS OR ACTIONS MAKE ME FEEL RESISTANCE TO BEING FLEXIBLE?**

**WHAT ARE SOME WAYS I CAN ADAPT TO MEET PEOPLE'S NEEDS?**

**WHAT IS A TECHNIQUE I CAN USE TO TAKE TIME TO THINK AND GROUND MYSELF DURING CONFLICT?**

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: SPLAT

- **Self Control**

- What does conflict bring up for me? What emotions/reactions do I need to relegate?

- **Prevent**

- What strategies can I/we use to prevent conflict?

- **Listen**

- Am I creating space for this person to voice their needs?

- **Adapt**

- What options does this person have to get their needs met? How can I be of assistance

- **Think**

- Have I taken a moment to breathe and think about these qu

# SPATIAL SAFETY

**Become familiar with all doors, windows and exits of the facility.**

**When possible, doors/windows/exits should be free of obstruction, and furniture should be situated in a manner where no individual feels “locked” in or cornered.**

**In case of a life-threatening emergency,**

- locate the nearest clear exit
- Maintain a safe distance from the facility

**What is your organizational Policy on when to call the Police?**



# **A NOTE ON LAW ENFORCEMENT**

- **Calling the police can often lead to unexpected, unintended, and dire consequences for many participants**
- **The presence of police or calling police is an escalation, and can shift a situation a great deal**
- **Calling law enforcement should be a last resort for truly dangerous and life threatening situations**

# **AFTER THE SITUATION IS OVER**

- **Adequate staff support**
- **Debriefing**
- **Accountability process, if necessary**
- **Next steps**

# **MAINTAIN PERSONAL SAFETY**

## **Trust your instincts**

- You will know fairly quickly if it's beginning to work

**If you think that de-escalation is not working,  
STOP!**

## **Make sure you are safe**

- Leave the situation
- Call for assistance
- Call the police if **ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY**
- Physical force is **ABSOLUTE** last resort

# TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Staff connection

Recognize  
escalating  
behavior: Note  
all cues

Clear  
communication

Be aware of  
your  
surroundings



**THANK YOU** FOR ATTENDING  
**THIS WORKSHOP**

Please fill out the evaluation.

**Presenter Name**

name@harmreduction.org

harmreduction.org

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**NATIONAL**  
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**COALITION**



**INTERCONNECTION**

IS OUR STRENGTH