

How to De-escalate

De-escalation can have different goals: ensuring physical safety, reducing the likelihood of violence, maintaining the desired tone or mood of an action, or reducing violence such that a fight can be worked out. Every situation is unique: there is no formula for dealing with hostility or conflict. When entering an action, it's best to think through possible difficult situations and prepare ahead of time.

Here are some behaviors that can help de-escalate hostile situations.

- **REMAIN CALM** – Avoid panicking and hectic responses, to reduce provoking impulsive reactions. Learn about your own ways to develop inner strength and centeredness, and maintain it in threatening situations. When facing violence or hostility, take a moment to be conscious of yourself. Breathe.
- **BECOME ACTIVE** – Do not become paralyzed by fear. It's better to do something small to change the situation than contemplate big actions you might not be able to do.
- **TRY TO ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION WITH THE AGGRESSOR** – If someone is being aggressive or disrupting the goals of the action, keep an open body language and communicate with them. Look for common ground that moves away from the current situation (i.e. introduce yourself). This can divert their attention from being disruptive, and help your group focus on their goals.
- **LOOK FOR HELP; ENLIST ALLIES** – You are likely not alone. Rather than appeal to a large crowd for help, which may result in impulsive group reactions, make eye contact with one person and ask for help. Others may feel encouraged by your direct request. Trust your gut in selecting someone for help. And, if that person does not work, try another person until you find an ally.
- **WALK AWAY** – If, after trying different ways, you cannot find a successful way to de-escalate the situation, it's okay to walk away. It's better that you are safe and nobody is hurt, than doing something you're unprepared for or might regret.

Originally written by Hagen Berndt (Kurve-Wustrow), adapting Milan's list of rules. Later adapted by Daniel Hunter.
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