

VIDEO II



Verbal and Nonverbal Interventions

Objectives

Participants will learn behavioral skills in verbal and nonverbal communication as intervention techniques with disruptive individuals.

- Participants will learn how to assess others, themselves and their surroundings for factors which may contribute to disruptive behavior.
- Participants will be able to identify the four stages of stress and appropriate staff interventions for each stage.
- By becoming aware of this series of events or stages, participants can develop skills or techniques for intervention which may be used at each stage to prevent further escalation

Interpersonal Effectiveness ***one of the 8 core competencies***

- Builds and Sustains Positive Relationships
- Handles Conflicts and Negotiations
- Builds and Sustains Trust and Respect
- Collaborates and Works Well with Others
- Shows Sensitivity and Compassion for Others
- Encourages Shared Decision Making
- Honors Commitments and Promises

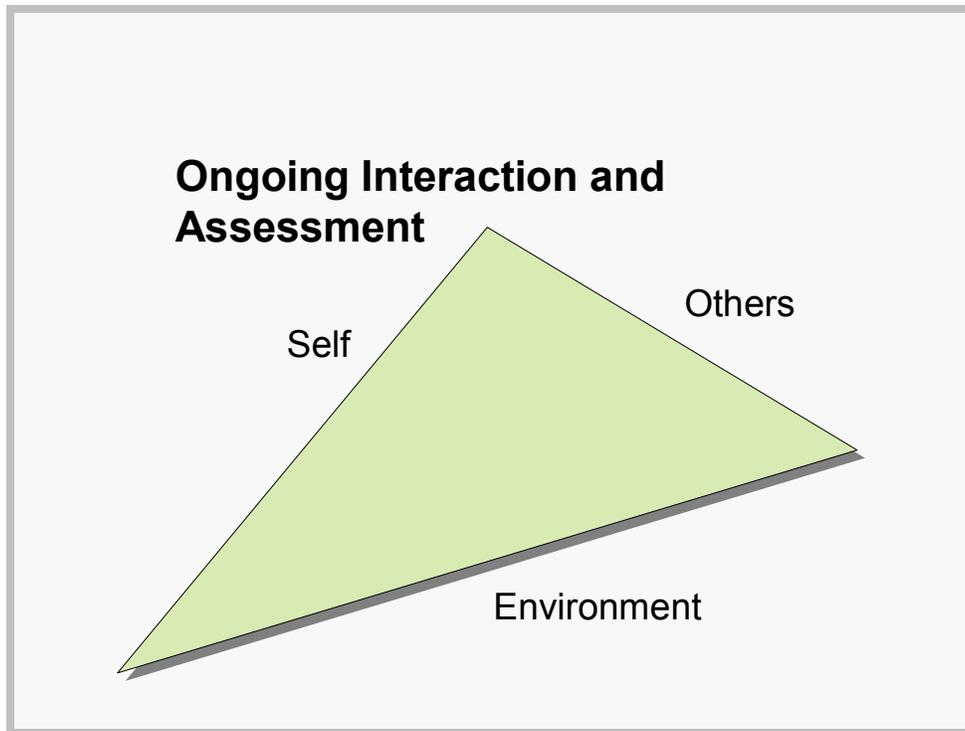
- Interpersonal effectiveness is one of the eight core competencies. You will notice this module incorporates the other competencies, such as personal mastery, customer service, creative thinking, and flexibility / adaptability skills.
- The above lists the observable behaviors in building effective relationships with our co-workers, supervisors, union partnerships, veterans, families, and the community.
- How important are these to you in a work setting or when you are a customer?



PREVENTION is the KEY

- Intervene at Lowest Level of Stress
- Early Recognition of Escalation
- Early Intervention
- Ongoing Assessment

- This section builds on the idea that prevention is the key.
- An ongoing, continuous assessment of the situation is essential in providing a safe work environment.
- In order to intervene at the lowest level of stress we must be able to:
 - Ability to assess ourselves, the person, and the environment.
 - Recognize early warning signs that the other person is escalating.
 - Ability to defuse a stressed or angry person, by turning a negative situation into a positive outcome.



Disruptive or violent behavior is influenced by a combination of interactions among the individual, the environment, and the other people in the setting.

- These three areas are continuously changing, therefore influencing a person's responses.
- Prevention is the KEY: It is essential to develop assessment skills of the environment and other individuals, along with an increased self-awareness of our responses to situations.

Assessment of Persons



- Pacing
- Appearing Fearful or Anxious
- Appearing Agitated or Angry
- Appearing Stressed or Threatened
- Acting Suspicious or Hostile
- Any Change in Behavior
- Potential Weapons

Assessment of the Person:

- When assessing the person, look at:
 - the person's history
 - observations of the person's behavior
 - whether he / she is a person who is potentially at high risk, and
 - the person's level of stress.
- A change in the person's behavior indicates a need for verbal intervention. Any sign of increasing stress should be evaluated for potential loss of control. Most violent behavior occurs with warning; often a good observer can see the buildup of tension and stress in the person's verbal and non-verbal behavior.
- A change in behavior from that which is typical or from earlier behavior is a strong indicator that something may be going on.
- Assess the person for potential weapons. Examples: crutches / canes extend their reach for striking; canes with knives in them; in Europe they have cell phones with guns inside!
- Ask person about weapons (shown in video). Become comfortable with asking about weapons. If they have one, ask if they have others. Follow facility policy in securing weapons.

Assessment of Persons



- Clenched Fists
- Approaching / Avoiding Others
- Nonresponsive to Directions
- Challenging or Threatening Others
- Stating a Plan of Intent to Harm Others
- Slamming Doors / Pushing Furniture
- Talking Loudly / Swearing

- Discussion Point: What things do we notice about others that tell us the person's behavior might be escalating?
- The person doesn't appear to hear or understand you - they are so frustrated they are not understanding or following directions.
- They may be challenging. "I'll bet you don't enforce this policy with the other veterans!"
- Intent to harm others. "Some day soon she will get what she deserves." Typically, people will state their intentions prior to acting out, though often they are not taken seriously by others until after a disruptive incident.

Assessment of Persons



- Physical Appearance
 - Hygiene, Clothing, Odor, Intoxicated
- Claims of Mistreatment
- Behavior Doesn't Match What is Being Said
- Blames Others for Problems
- Significant Dates / Anniversaries
- Cultural / Generational Uniqueness

- Talking loudly/swearing or hitting furniture are signs that a person is not feeling heard or not getting what they want - your attention!
- Appearance. We have an increasing number of homeless veterans or drug and alcohol abusers. Pay attention to the individual's appearance. Take special note of intoxication. Intoxication is a major risk factor in assaults.
- Behavior doesn't match what is being said. They say they are okay, but they are acting frustrated or angry.
- People who continually blame others are less inclined to take responsibility for their own actions.
- Be aware of cultural or generational differences. Examples: personal space among cultures; differences among veterans from WWII to present.
- Significant dates / anniversaries. These are unique to individuals. Be aware of a person's history pertaining to dates or significant military or personal experiences.
- Grandiosity. Some individuals have an expanded self-image. Examples: a patient who acts like a staff member or a person who exaggerates his / her self-importance or accomplishments.

Assessment of SELF



- How am I reacting?
- How's my tone of voice? Defensive?
- How's my body language and posture?
- Check Personal Space
- Am I wearing anything dangerous?
- What do I look like to Others?
- Pay Attention to "Gut" Feeling

- Our **initial reaction** to a stressed or angry person may be to become stressed or angry ourselves. What results? Bad customer services, increased anger on both parties...a win-lose...lose-lose situation.
- Only if you are in control of your behavior will you be able to communicate effectively with the other person.
- Use a calm voice
- How is your body language? Examples: eye contact, open vs. closed arms. Remember to keep your distance / personal space.
- Are you wearing anything which could be used as a weapon? Examples: tie, scarf, large jewelry, stethoscope, scissors hanging from lab coat?
- Note cultural uniqueness. In areas with American Indians, ponytails are culturally significant. They may also be used against you in a violent incident . A safety measure is to place the ponytails down the back of their shirts. A tip for all cultures.
- Pay attention to your "gut" feeling. Often we will ignore or not want to believe that something may be wrong. Pay attention to these early warning signs. Intervention is the key.

Assessment of ENVIRONMENT



- Work Areas – Items as Potential Weapons
- Arrangement of Furniture
- Available Exits
- Confusion / Noise / Overcrowding
- Temperature of Room
- Time of Day / Shift Change

- Previously we discussed an organization's physical layout and annual environmental assessments. Work areas continually accumulate heavy objects which could be used as weapons. Staff need to assess their work areas on a regular basis. Put away, take home or place in a less accessible area to visitors: staplers, letter openers, paper weights, vases, coffee mugs.
- Arrangement of furniture. Set up offices and exam rooms so that you are closest to the door and the visitor is deepest in the room. Avoid cornering yourself in the room. Do not try to stop an angry person from leaving your office.
- Be aware of your exits and emergency phone numbers if you change work areas.
- Confusion, background noises, and crowding increase our stress levels. Reminder: this is an individual thing.
- How is the temperature of your work area? Hot or cold?
- There is an increase of disruptive behaviors during meal times, shift changes, or while transporting veterans.

Assessment of ENVIRONMENT



- Audience – Isolate Situation, Not Yourself
- Parking
- Current Events – Economy, Disasters, Holidays
- Seasonal Changes – Hurricanes, Tornadoes
- Weapons on Person – ASK! And ASK if More!
- Facility Emergency Phone Number

An important step in reducing an individual's stress or avoiding other's becoming stressed is **“removing the audience.”**

One of two ways:

1. Request the individual moves to a quieter place, “to provide assistance”(you may need to be flexible with the schedule or processes - think about the big picture). NOTE: Isolate the disruptive situation, not yourself with a potentially disruptive person. Let a team member know what the situation is and where you will be. Stay in the area of other staff, not at the end of an isolated hall.
2. You or another staff member may remove the other veterans or visitors in the area. In addition, staff members may assist by diverting traffic from that area.
 - The other visitors may likely identify with the upset individual and also become angry (“group think”). You want to create an acceptable “out” or solution for the angry person. It may be difficult for them to back down and they want to “save face”.
 - Parking can be a significant stressor, especially at the larger facilities. How is our parking here?
 - Pay attention to current economic or political events - financial stresses, organizational changes, or layoffs.

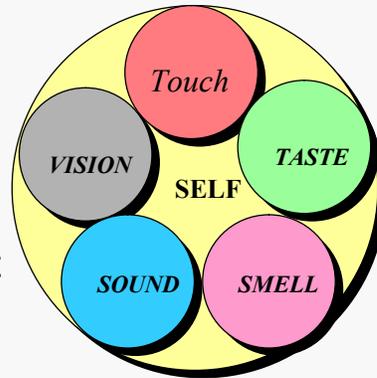
LEVELS OF STRESS

Stress Level	Staff Action
Moderate Stress	Verbal Intervention
Severe Stress	Limit Setting
Panic	Personal Safety Skills or Therapeutic Containment
Tension Reduction	Therapeutic Rapport

- This slide describes the four levels of stress and the staff interventions for each stage.
- Understanding the different levels of stress and the signs and symptoms helps us intervene at an early stage.
- Interventions should occur at every level.
- Our goal is to maintain a positive relationship and therapeutic rapport with the individual.

Normal Stress Level

- Perceptual Field Keen
- Taking in All Environment
- Processing Information

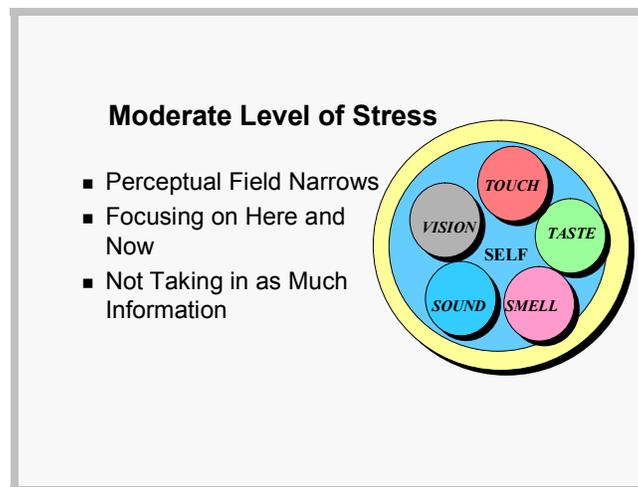


Normal Stress Level:

- This normal stress level represents the level of anxiety that is a part of day-to-day living.
- Mild stress sharpens the senses, increases motivation and may enhance our performance on routine activities.
- At this level of anxiety, people are most alert and the perceptual field is actually enlarged, thereby promoting optimal functioning.
- At this stage, people see, hear, and grasp more stimuli around them, enabling them to solve problems and learn effectively.

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As a person's "normal level" of stress increases, we will use this framework as a guide for which intervention to use at each stage.



Moderate Level of Stress:

- As stress increases, the perceptual field decreases.
- The perceptual field becomes limited to the immediate task at hand.
- The person is focused on the here and now.
- The perceptual field narrows - they do not take in as much outside information. Example: they may not hear information you are providing.

Intervention-would be directed toward providing information, reassurance and support, and encouraging verbalization to decrease stress. Use clear, simple, brief sentences.

Verbal Interventions

Moderate Level of Stress

- Encouraging Verbalization
- Identifying the Problem
- Providing Reassurance
- Focusing on Problem Solving
- Providing Alternatives

- Allow the person to vent or tell their story - at times that is all they want or expect.
- Identifying what is the person's main problem or concern.
- Show a willingness to help.
- Use a collaborative problem solving approach: "We can work this out."
- Provide choices or alternatives when possible.

Examples include:

"It seems as though you are upset about something;"

"Now what has happened to make you so upset?"

"It might be helpful if you could talk about how you feel; I would like to help you"

"It must be very frustrating to feel this angry."

"I know this is a difficult time for you...I'd like to help you."

"Would you to wait in the canteen or the library?"

"What is the main thing you would like accomplished?"

"I can understand how frustrated you must be...let's focus on getting this resolved."

Nonverbal Interventions ***Moderate Level of Stress***

- Use Active Listening
- Convey Calmness
- Project Empathy

Verbal and non-verbal skills work together and reinforce our message to the other person.

Active Listening:

Reflection, paraphrasing, relabeling, reframing, or summarizing what a person is saying.

- “Let me check to see if I have this right...”
- “If I hear you correctly, you are unable to get a response on..”
- Nod your head to demonstrate that you are paying attention.
-

Convey Calmness:

- *Be calm. If you can't be calm, act it.* Remember anxiety triggers or escalates anxiety.
- Keep eye contact, smile, keep hands open and visible.

Project Empathy:

- Demonstrate by a genuine, warm, and caring attitude.
- Empathy, not sympathy, allows an individual to feel like they are heard and understood.
- Empathy can be very effective in de-escalating a potential crisis, however, genuine empathy is easily discernible from situational empathy. If your usual demeanor is not one of empathy, empathy during a crisis is less believable.

Nonverbal Interventions

Moderate Level of Stress



- Respect Personal Space
- Convey Willingness to Help
- Convey That You Are In Control
- Demonstrate Supportive Body Language

Respect Personal Space:

- Maintain arm/leg distance away from individual. Remember crutches, canes, and walkers extend beyond this length.
- Avoid touching an angry person - may be misinterpreted.
-

Convey Willingness To Help:

- Let the person talk. Look interested. Let him ventilate.
- Stop what you're doing; don't appear to be rushed

Convey That You Are In Control:

- Demonstrate confidence in your ability to resolve the situation.

Demonstrate Supportive Body Language:

- Avoid threatening gestures (i.e. finger pointing).
- Avoid laughing or smiling inappropriately.
- Approach person from an angle/side - rather than shoulder to shoulder, which may be perceived as confrontational.

Alternative Interventions



- Walking
- Working out in the Gym
- Offering a Cold Beverage
- Listening to Music
- Relaxation / Visualization
- Exercises
- Use of Quiet Room
- Medication

- There are several alternative interventions that may be considered.
- If you offer a beverage, keep in mind that a hot beverage such as coffee, can be used as a weapon.
- Remember -- music that relaxes one person may do the opposite to another.
- Relaxation / visualization exercises are much more effective if they have been learned and practiced during periods of less stress.

Note: The use of a punching bag may actually escalate the person.