Bit by BIT:
De-escalation Strategies

Behavior Intervention Team
BIT Members

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To provide proactive and multidisciplinary supportive approaches to prevention, assessment, and intervention of situations or individuals that may pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of the campus community.
Increasingly, college students are experiencing psychological, emotional, and behavioral issues in the academic setting.
Challenge Cont.

- One in four students have a diagnosable mental illness
  - 40% do not seek help
  - 80% feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities
  - 50% have been so anxious they struggled in school
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among college students
- Young people diagnosed with depression are five times more likely to attempt suicide than adults
- 19 percent of young people in the United States either contemplate or attempt suicide every year
- 4 out of every 5 college students who either contemplate or attempt suicide show clear warning signs
“... the top mental health issues identified in a survey of over 750 college students were depression, anxiety, suicide ideation, eating disorders, and addiction issues.” (Larkin, Crumb, Fountain, Glenn, & Smith, 2015).
“...students from underrepresented groups (e.g., ethnic/racial minorities, religious minorities, lesbian, gay, or queer students) often face additional challenges and pressures in the academic setting that may impact their psychological well-being ...” (Larkin et al., 2015).
All educators should know the basics of how to de-escalate a situation.
Basic Strategies
What does this look like?

• **Create a safe setting**
  
  — Try to engage the student in a semi-private setting if possible (off to the side)

• **If the student is not cooperative, isolate the student**

• **Limit the number of participants in the conversation.**
  
  — Know when to bow out but support – manage other students
What does this look like?

- Provide adequate personal space.
- Do not touch the student
- Use an L Shaped Stance.
- Do not block escape routes.
What does this look like?

- Show open, accepting body language.
- Keep verbal interactions respectful.
- Communicate using simple, direct language.
What does this look like?

- Introduce yourself and state your position if necessary.
- Listen.
- Coach the student to take the responsibility of their behavior.
What does this look like?

• Identify the student’s wants and feelings by using:
  – Active listening
  – Open Ended Questions
  – Labeling emotions
  – Reaffirm what they are stating and how they are feeling
What happens next?

• Document the event
  – Notify your supervisor
  – Submit a BIT referral online
  – Notify campus police if needed

ALWAYS CALL 911 immediately in dangerous situations
## De-escalation Script

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Script</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I see you ___________.</td>
<td>Identify the behavior that tips you off the student is emotionally escalated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are you feeling (angry)?</td>
<td>Inquire if you interpret the observed behavior correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I can see that you are (angry).</td>
<td>Affirm what the student says.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are you (angry) about?</td>
<td>Inquire why the student is feeling that emotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. So you’re (angry) about _____ . Is that right?</td>
<td>Restate what you heard to verify your understanding and demonstrate that you are listening.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### De-escalation Script Cont.

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. What do you want?</td>
<td>Assist the student in identifying what options are reasonably available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What have you tried?</td>
<td>Guide the student through a process of self-reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How well has that worked?</td>
<td>Help the student assess their progress in dealing with the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What else are you willing to try?</td>
<td>Provide alternatives if the student is struggling with identifying other ways to deal with the situation—students chooses the next step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Will you let me know how it goes?</td>
<td>Follow up with the student in appropriate amount of time; this will build trust.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
De-escalation Script Don’ts.

• Force a student to talk
• De-escalate in an overly public manner
• Tell a student how they are feeling
• Get hung up on the flow of script
• Be sarcastic
• React if you feel attacked by what the student says
• Tell a student what to do
• Blame a student for the situation
• Continue doing or saying anything that seems to escalate the situation
• Argue with a student
De-escalation Script Do’s.

- Keep a copy of the Verbal De-escalation script where you can easily access it
- Practice the verbal de-escalation script
- Provide an independent activity for the rest of your students to engage in if a classmate begins to escalate
- Get to know your students and know what might lead to or provoke an escalated response
- Stay calm when engaging in Verbal De-escalation
- A student may need some cool down or processing time during the Verbal De-escalation- provide wait time and check back later
Tips – 3 C’s:

CHECK
CALL
CARE
References