



Bit by BIT: De-escalation Strategies



Behavior Intervention Team

BIT Members

- Urisonya Flunder, Executive Director of Student Life (Chair)
- Kristi Clemmer, Executive Director of Student Success
- Leslie Alexander, Chief of Police
- Jeremie Middleton, Director of Student Housing
- Becky Rivera-Weiss, Special Populations Outreach Specialist
- Eden Davis, Licensed Professional Counselor Intern

Mission

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.

Challenge

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

Challenge

“... 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).

Challenge

“...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).

Purpose

All educators should know the basics of how to de-escalate a situation.

Basic Strategies

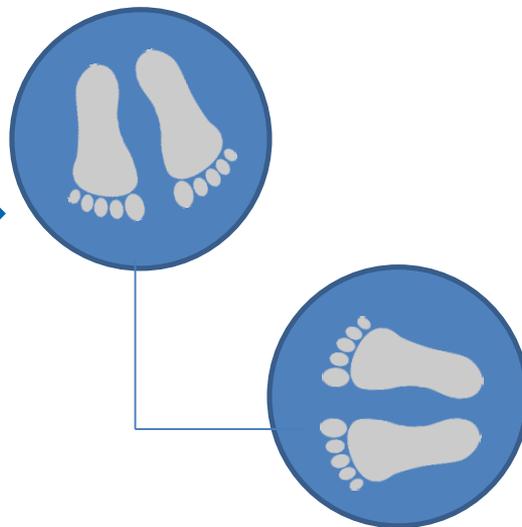


What does this look like?

- **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

The Script	Additional Information
1. I see you _____.	Identify the behavior that tips you off the student is emotionally escalated.
2. Are you feeling (angry)?	Inquire if you interpret the observed behavior correctly.
3. I can see that you are (angry).	Affirm what the student says.
4. What are you (angry) about?	Inquire why the student is feeling that emotion.
5. So you're (angry) about _____. Is that right?	Restate what you heard to verify your understanding and demonstrate that you are listening.

De-escalation Script Cont.

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



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
RO
M

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: Handout

CHECK

CALL

CARE



References

- Larkin, R., Crumb, L., Fountain, Y., Glenn, C., & Smith, J. (2015, June). Managing mental health situations in the advising office. *Academic Advising Today*, 38(2). Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Managing-Mental-Health-Situations-in-the-Advising-Office.aspx>