

# Basics of Verbal De-escalation

Deputy Robert Schiltz  
Walworth County Sheriff's Office  
SWAT Negotiator

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## Safety First

- Throughout this program I am going to be discussing ways to diffuse a situation but you must always remember that your safety is the number one priority.
- You always have the option to walk away.
- You always have the option to call security

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## Objectives

- Define a conversation
- Define what is a "Crisis state."
- Discuss and demonstrate the importance of empathy.
- Explain how to communicate and de-escalate effectively with persons in crisis.
- How to influence behavioral change using the behavioral change stairway.

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# How are you?

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## Anatomy of a Conversation

### CONVERSATION:

1. A process where two or more people
2. Sharing roles of sender and receiver
3. Exercise mutual responsibility to create meaning

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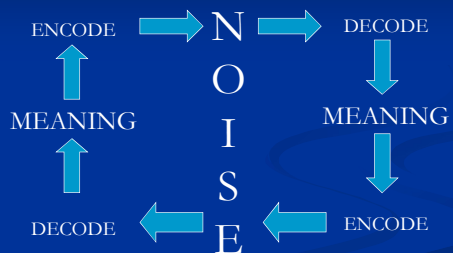
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## Anatomy of a Conversation



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## Anatomy of a Conversation

**ENCODING:** The cognitive thinking process of transforming ideas and feelings into symbols and organizing them into a message.

**DECODING:** The process of transforming the messages received from another back into your own ideas and feelings.

**NOISE:** Any stimulus that interferes with the sharing of meaning.

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## Anatomy of a Conversation

**Internal Noise:** Thoughts and feelings that interfere with the communication process

- Thinking about your safety
- Thinking about other students safety
- Wondering if your doing the right thing
- Thinking about what you are going to say

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## Anatomy of a Conversation

**External Noise:** Sights, sounds, and other stimuli in the environment that draws people attention away from conversation.

- Noises from the playground
- Loudspeaker announcements
- Weather conditions

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## Anatomy of a Conversation

**Semantic Noise:** Unintended meanings aroused by certain symbols that inhibits the accuracy of decoding.

- Derogatory Comments
- Ethnic slurs
- Verbal/non-verbal clash
- Foreign Language

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## Noise

Most people do not listen with  
the intent to understand;  
They listen with the intent to  
reply

Stephan E. Corey

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## 1972 UCLA Study

**55%** of communication is body  
language, **38%** is the tone of  
voice, and **7%** is the actual  
words spoken.

Albert Mehrabian (1972) Professor Emeritus of Psychology, UCLA, has become known best by his publications on the relative importance of verbal and nonverbal messages

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## Harmony?



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## How do we Deescalate

We begin an *intentional conversation*, using our *active listening skills*, to bring about our *desired goals*

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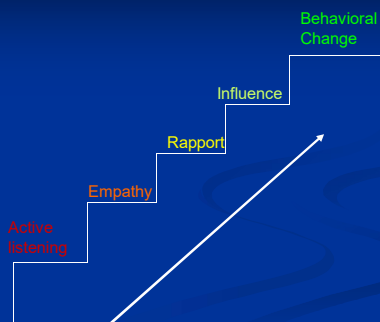
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## Behavioral change stairway



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## Intentional conversation

Succeed in an intentional conversation by:

1. Learning to take insult with dignity and style
2. using mind-mouth harmony
3. Learning your triggers
4. not multi-tasking
5. going with the flow

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## Intentional Conversation

6. Not equating your experience with yours.
7. Keep your goals in mind and share what you learn with others.
8. Not being rude, condescending, or lecturing.
9. Not returning anger with anger
10. LISTENING!

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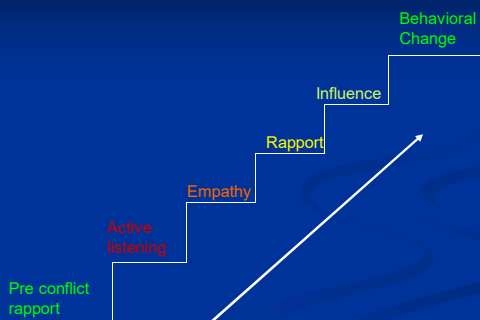
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## Behavioral change stairway



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## Pre-conflict Rapport

### POSITIVE CONTACTS

- Smile
- Be cheerful
- Give a personal greeting
- Be proactive in assistance
- Be empathetic
- Be sincere

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## Goals

Make each contact with the public as positive experience as possible from approach through the completion of the contact.

We do this by:

- Treating everyone fairly
  - Treating everyone with respect
  - Showing concern and empathy
- We do this simply because it is right

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## Goals

Positive experience is important:

- You are often the first point in the continuum of services.
- What you do sets the stage for success further down the road.
- Trust and honesty are important.

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## F.O.R.M

- **F**amily - Kids, grandkids, married
- **O**ccupation - What do they do, do they like what they do, do they live with you, how long
- **R**ecreation - What do they do for fun, travel, hobbies, sports
- **M**essage – describe how you are going to enrich those areas? Show and explain.

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## Crisis State

- A precipitating event has occurred within the last 24-48 hours and the subject's normal coping mechanisms have failed to resolve the situation.
- When normal coping mechanisms do not work, the subject goes into crisis.
- The subject is behaving on an intense emotional level rather than a rational/thinking level in response to a highly stressful situation.

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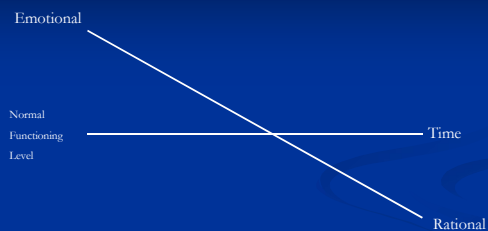
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## Why do we have to deescalate?



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## How do we deescalate

We use verbal strategies and techniques, called active listening, to show empathy and build rapport so that we can influence a person and get the behavioral change intended.

### WE DEESCALATE

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## How do we Deescalate?

- Avoid overreacting
  - The more a person loses control, the less they hear your words and the more they react to nonverbal communication
    - Remain calm, rational, and professional.
    - Focus on feelings
    - Be mindful of your nonverbal
    - Use your nonverbal intentionally

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## How Do We Deescalate

- Any communication method
  - Face to face
    - Preferred
    - Most dangerous
  - Telephone
  - E-mail

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## How do we Deescalate

- Your approach is very important.
  - Single person?
  - Multiple persons?

Safety is the key consideration- but keep in mind that you need to work with this person to gain compliance

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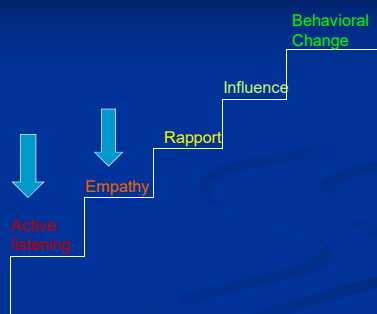
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## Behavioral change stairway



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## ACTIVE LISTENING

A technique of actively providing feedback to **demonstrate** understanding.

- We actively listen for:
  - Opportunities to display understanding
  - Things the subject values (hooks)
  - Disclosures by the subject (solicited or not)

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## ACTIVE LISTENING

- People communicate on two levels

**CONTENT**-The simple facts (the story)

**EMOTIONS**-The emotional reaction to the facts (feelings about circumstances)

- Feelings are universal
- Experiences are not

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## Active listening

### Suicide

A form of behavior, coming from a feeling of Hopelessness and helplessness, designed to deal with and solve a problem.

A goal-oriented coping method and a way to take control of a perceived uncontrollable situation.

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## Active listening

### Suicide

The earlier you can intervene the better.

Very dangerous when someone who has exhibited signs of suicide suddenly become very happy and state they are feeling well.

They have made up their mind and are at peace

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## ACTIVE LISTENING

- Emotion-labeling
- Paraphrasing
- Reflecting/Mirroring
- "Effective" pause
- Minimal encouragers
- "I" message
- Open-ended questions

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## Active listening skills

### Emotion labeling:

Stated observation of the emotion heard

"You sound...", "You seem...", "I hear..."

Excellent way to begin; and is also extremely effective throughout the De-escalation process.

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## Active listening skills

Easy to back off from:

"I didn't say you were angry, I said you sound angry,"

If possible never let a feeling go by without labeling it; people love to have others understanding how they feel.

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## Active listening skills

### Emotional Labeling in Depth

Identification of feelings *implied* by content or emotion displayed.

**Extremely Effective-** Can often build tremendous rapport through feedback of emotions that the subject is unaware of.

"I can hear anger in your voice, and it seems like this situation has hurt you too."

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## Active listening skills

**Paraphrasing:** Put meaning in *your own* words

Restate or give the meaning in another form

Used for brief confirmations of meaning and to display attentiveness

**Subject** – "She doesn't pay attention to what I say to her and it makes me angry."

**Negotiator** – "You get angry because she doesn't listen to you."

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## Active listening skills

**Subject** – goes on a long rant and stops for a breath

**Negotiator** – Whoa hold on, wait a sec, lets be sure I heard you right.

90% of your success will lie in your delivery style.

Nonverbals will be very important.

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## Active listening skills

### **Effective Pause (silence):**

Immediately **before** or **after** saying something

The "Effect" desired is to help focus thought and interaction.

A pause before a statement implies that what I am going to say is important.

A pause after a statement helps educate the subject that a conversation is a turn taking process

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## Active listening skills

### **Minimal Encouragers**

Indicate your presence... "Uh-Huh...OK, , etc."

Best used when the person is talking through an extended thought or for an extended period of time.

Use wisely as they may invite the opportunity for our minds to wander or be distracted

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## Active listening skills

### **OPENED ENDED QUESTIONS**

"What else?" "How?" "When?"

"Tell me more about....."

"I'd like to hear more....."

### **Benefits:**

Conveys your interest in listening.

Gives more freedom of response.

limits feelings of interrogation.

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## Active listening skills

- Cannot be answered with yes or no questions.
- You do not have to work as hard to form questions and allows you to concentrate on the content of their response.
- Helps the subject feel like they are not being interrogated.

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## Active listening skills

### "I" Messages

"when you....., I feel....., Because...."

"I feel....., when you....., Because...."

Used to confront subject about a behavior that is counter productive, *without being accusatory*.

**"when you yell at me , I feel frustrated, because it stops me from listening to you.**

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## Active Listening Skills

"I" Statements give ownership to the statement

Used when you are being verbally attacked, when the subject is trying to manipulate you, or when an intense emotion is directed at you.

Great way to redirect a person when they de-humanize a person. IE..." you and your fellow Nazis"

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## Active listening skills

### CONFRONTATION

- Failure to confront counterproductive , manipulative or abusive behavior will:
  - Cause a deterioration of the subjects respect for you;
  - Allow the subject to view you as someone to be victimized and unworthy of an equal relationship, credibility, or influence.
  - Undermine the use of active listening;

(Use period of silence followed by an "I" message)

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## Active listening skills

### CONFRONTATION

- Confrontation may also be used to point out the conflict between the subjects words and actions.
- The confrontation must be done in a non threatening manner.
  - Delivery is critical (tone of voice, choice of words)
    - Avoid "but"
  - May be an appropriate way to provide a "Reality Check"
  - Focus on behavior

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## Active listening skills

**Mirroring/Reflecting:** Brief follow along, "gist" statements, repeating the last few words.

**Subject** – "She doesn't pay attention to what I say to her and it makes me angry."

**Negotiator** – "It makes you angry."

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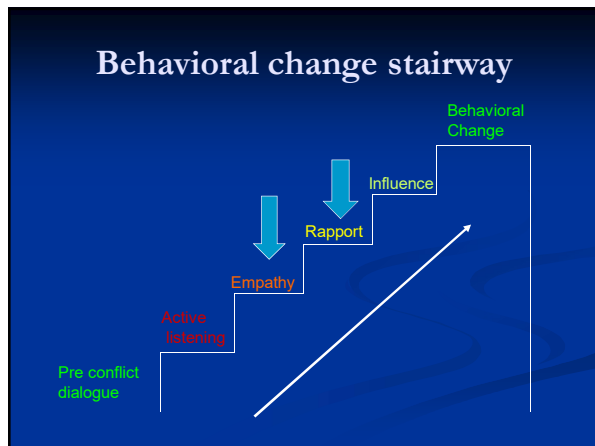
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## EMPATHY

**EMPATHY IS NOT SYMPATHY**

Sympathy is an expression of pity or sorrow for the distress of another.

**Empathy is the identification/understanding of another's situation, feelings and motives.**

It is neither opposition or agreement

"I can understand how that would make you angry"

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## RAPPORT

Rapport is a relationship built on mutual trust.

- Avoid damaging phrases
  - "Calm Down"
  - "I understand"
  - "you should" or "You shouldn't"
    - Unsolicited advice is considered the worst form of communication.

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## INFLUENCE

- People are more likely to comply with someone they view as:
  - Willing to listen
  - Understanding
  - Worthy of respect
  - Non-threatening

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## INFLUENCE

- Use “we”
  - Why don't we start filling in the paperwork.
  - What can we do about getting you a ride
    - What if we call a friend
    - What if we call a cab
- Offer a way to save face.
- Once you get compliance, thank the person for cooperation

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## IMPORTANT NOTES

1. Just because someone is not responding does not mean they are not listening to you.
2. Your tone, demeanor, and projected sincerity are more important than any single phrase (good or bad)
3. You can resume Deescalation after a VERBAL mistake, but it is hard to go back to deescalating following a nonverbal mistake.

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## IMPORTANT NOTES

1. You will make mistakes. Do what you would do to a close friend and apologize.
2. The subject needs to be allowed to SAVE FACE and maintain some level of DIGNITY.
  - Important in any type of negative contact.

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Intentionally left blank

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## Personal space

- Is the region surrounding a person which they regard as psychologically theirs
  - Entering too soon causes
    - Discomfort
    - Anger
    - Anxiety
  - When **allowed** into someone's personal space you are being accepted and Active Listening is working

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## Proxemics

- Deals with the amount of space that people feel is necessary to set between themselves and others.
  - Social space
    - 4 to 12 feet
  - Personal space
    - 1.5 to 4 feet
  - Intimate space
    - Less than 1.5 feet

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## Intimate distance

- Reserved for close friends, spouses, children and close family members
  - Shows that you have built rapport and trust
  - Person is willing to accept you as a confidant
  - You may begin attempting to influence.
- If person pulls away, go back to active listening with the intent to build rapport

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## Intentionally Blank

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### Resolution model

You may get to a point where you are not getting any compliance and you need to switch to this 5-step resolution model.

1. Ask Again – Don't make assumptions. Make sure that you understand the problem.

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### Resolution model

2. Set the context – Deflect negative statements while staying calm. "yes, I understand." "I can appreciate that."  
This is a good time to call on a higher authority as in...  
"The Supreme Court rules that guide us requires that we do not provide legal counsel or in any way act as an attorney.

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### Resolution model

3. Present options. " You have a couple of options here. You can consult with an attorney or you can look on-line." You can offer a starting place for their search.  
This allows the subject to feel that they have control which gives them a face saving opportunity.

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## Resolution model

4. Confirm Non-compliance. "Sir/Ma'am, is there anything that I can say that will help you understand my difficulties in helping you?"

5. Act!: After confirming non-compliance, break off the contact, close the shade and walk away from the window or call security if needed.

You may want to end with a statement similar to "I am sorry that we could not come

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