De-escalation Strategies & Techniques

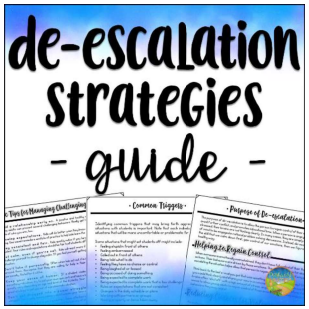
This resource includes over 50 de-escalation strategies that teachers, counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other adults can use when working with kids and young adults to de-escalate a situation. Kids and young adults who become emotionally overwhelmed or irritated in a situation may begin to express their emotions in aggressive or violent ways. Some examples of these behaviors might include aggressive posturing, yelling, throwing items, swearing, and making threats. Quite often, without training, these situations become a power struggle between the young adult and the teacher. These power struggles only make the situation worse, though.

The best way to handle these types of behaviors is to de-escalate the situation as soon as possible. It's very important to recognize that this does not mean letting the student get away with the behavior. Instead, de-escalation focuses on helping the student return their emotions back to a normal level. It is critical that the student is calm for a period of time before behavior and expectations are discussed again.

Some situations that might set students off might include:

- Feeling stupid in front of others
- Feeling embarrassed
- Called out in front of others
- Being told what to do
- Feeling they have no choice or control
- Being laughed at or teased
- Being accused of doing something
- Being expected to complete work
- Being expected to complete work that is too challenging for them
- Rules or expectations that are not consistent
- Changes in the daily schedule or plans
- Working with partners or groups
- Having property or items taken away

If this resource is helpful to you, consider purchasing the full De-escalation Strategies Guide:



This guide focuses on de-escalation strategies and proactive solutions that teachers, counselors, administrators, and other adults can use when working with kids and young adults. It includes training materials, reference list, practice scenarios, and more.

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1. Act calm even if you're not.
2. Say, "Let's talk about this later".
3. Use humor to lighten to mood.
4. Lower your voice.
5. Give a choice.
6. Walk away.
7. Ask, "What would help you right now?"
8. Change the subject to a positive one.
9. Give personal space.
10. Say, "I see where you are coming from."
11. Distract with a photo of something they like.
12. Show that you are listening.
13. Remove the audience.
14. Say, "I want to help you."
15. Talk about something they like.
16. Make a joke.
17. Encourage the person.
18. Remind them of something amazing they did.
19. Say, "You can do this."
20. Call another adult for help.
21. Say, "Let's call... I think they can help."
22. Be willing to find a solution.
23. Offer to change the way you are doing something.
24. Re-state what the person is saying.
25. Validate their thoughts.
26. Avoid over-reacting.
27. Use active listening.
28. Offer a solution.
29. Let the person talk without interrupting.
30. Say, "I see your point."
31. Offer to take a walk with the person.
32. Clarify expectations.
33. Remind them of something they love.
34. Apologize for something you did wrong or the way it was taken.
35. Invite them to do a preferred activity.
36. Ask if they can explain more about how they're feeling.
37. Try to understand the person's perspective.
38. Slow yourself down to avoid getting worked up.
39. Say, "So, you're upset because... right?"
40. Don't say "calm down".
41. Show empathy.
42. Encourage the person to use a coping strategy.
43. Don't take items or personal property from them.
44. Encourage the person to take a walk or get a drink.
45. Give the person an "out" (i.e. letting them go to another room or walking away).
46. Ask, "Would it help if... ?"
47. Keep escape routes open to the door.
48. Coach the person with positive remarks.
49. Acknowledge where you agree with the person.
50. Remind the person, "You're not in trouble".
51. Tell the person, "I'm here for you."
52. Say, "Talk to me," and listen.
53. Tell the person to take a minute to themselves.
54. Ignore the behavior.
55. Distract by saying, "Hey, let's go..."
56. Be respectful in your tone.
57. "Do what works" in the moment.
58. Spend time de-briefing after the incident to identify ways to improve.
59. Ask them to draw a picture of what happened.
60. Avoid needing to get the last word.

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