D·PREP

Managing Disruptive and Dangerous Behavior

Brian Van Brunt, EdD
Director of Behavior and
Threat Management
D-Prep, Inc.

Types of Violence

AFFECTIVE VIOLENCE
- Emotional reaction
- Based on situations and environmental stress
- Driven by adrenaline
- Lacks forethought or planning
- Can Be seen in FIGHT-FLIGHT-FREEZE

TARGETED VIOLENCE
- Non-emotional reaction
- Deliberate planning (weeks-months-years)
- Based in perceived/actual grievance
- Willing to sacrifice life for cause

Types of Threat

Howlers
Do not engage in approach behaviors and lack the intent to carry out their threats. When howlers threaten, their threats are TRANSIENT.

Hunters
Engage in serious targeted violence, and their intent is to complete the attack. They do not draw attention to themselves by making threats, so when hunters threaten, the threats are considered SUBSTANTIVE.
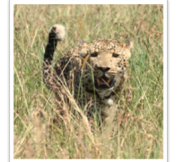
TRANSIENT THREATS
These types of threats to not express lasting intent to harm.

SUBSTANTIVE THREATS
These threats represent a continued attempt to harm someone.

TYPE OF THREAT	EXAMPLE
Direct	"I'm going to blow up the library."
Indirect/Vague	"Something bad is going to happen to the library."
Direct w/action/time imperative	"I'm going to blow up the library Tuesday at 3.
Conditional ultimatum	"If you don't give me a good grade, I'm going to blow up the library."
Transient	Frustrated about an assignment, a student throws a book and yells, "Burn this down!"
Substantive	"I'm going to bring a nalgene bottle of gasoline to spread on these books and light it up."
Howling	"You can't treat me like this. I'm going to set fire to the world and roast marshmallows!"
Hunting	"I have what I need. I know what I'm going to do. #fire #library"
Vague but direct	"Something bad is happening in the library soon."
Direct but vague	"They might want to invest in fire extinguishers around here."

We are more effective in our management of crises when we consider individual differences.

Cultural competence is the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from different cultures and beliefs than your own.

Teams should be diverse in gender identity, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, political affiliation, religious beliefs, physical and mental disability, and age.

Building Rapport

Build a Strong Bridge of Connection

- **Smile.** This is a universal gesture of goodwill regardless of culture, nationality, or religion. Research indicates that individuals who receive a smile from another feel accepted and not judged.
- **Listen carefully.** Most people do not listen to each other in an open and patient manner. If the interviewer is attentive, is nonjudgmental, and shows interest in other people, a very positive emotional dynamic will be put in place, even if the interviewee is very distrustful and hates what the interviewer represents (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Americans).
- **Find something in common.** Identify a characteristic that is shared between the interviewer and interviewee and point that out. It could be marriage, a child, a common geographical area visited, a certain amount of education, or interest in a certain sport. Find it and say it.
- **Mirror the interviewee.** This refers to mimicking the interviewee's body language and words, which takes attention and practice. If it is done too obviously, it will be noticed and rapport will not arise. It may mean sitting the same way, making similar gestures, using some of the same words, even using similar emotional tones of voice.
- **Avoid blunders.** Allowing the soles of one's shoes to face another person is considered an insult in the Arabic culture. Displaying a cold and unfriendly demeanor is considered an insult. Conveying impatience, such as glancing at one's watch or tapping one's fingers on the table, is considered an insult. Certain gestures may be an insult. Study the culture and know what the blunders are.
- **Find hooks, beware of barbs.** Hooks bring us closer together (common interests, similar backgrounds). Barbs drive us apart, raising defensiveness.

Putting It Into Practice

Motivational Interviewing

- **Express empathy.** Respect their point of view, freedom of choice, and ability to determine their own self-direction.
- **Develop discrepancy.** Explore the consequences of their actions and how they will not lead to the desired outcome.
- **Avoid argumentation.** Instead, explore more deeply what they are saying and reduce their defensiveness with open-ended questions.
- **Roll with resistance.** Avoid direct confrontation and stay focused on goals and outcomes, supporting their developmental growth and personal responsibility.
- **Support self-efficacy.** Praise them when they take positive steps and acknowledge that a positive outcome is possible.

Transtheoretical Change Theory

- **Pre-contemplation.** They aren't aware of the problem or ready for change. Raise doubt; increase their perception of risk and the problems with their current behavior.
- **Contemplation.** They are thinking about change, but haven't taken steps. Help them see the risks of not changing and strengthen their self-efficacy for making changes.
- **Preparation for action.** They are ready to make a plan to bring about change. Work with them to find the best course of change.
- **Action.** They are putting their plans into action to bring about change. Provide encouragement and resources to make change.
- **Maintenance and relapse prevention.** They maintain positive steps and adjust elements that aren't working. Teach them relapse prevention skills.
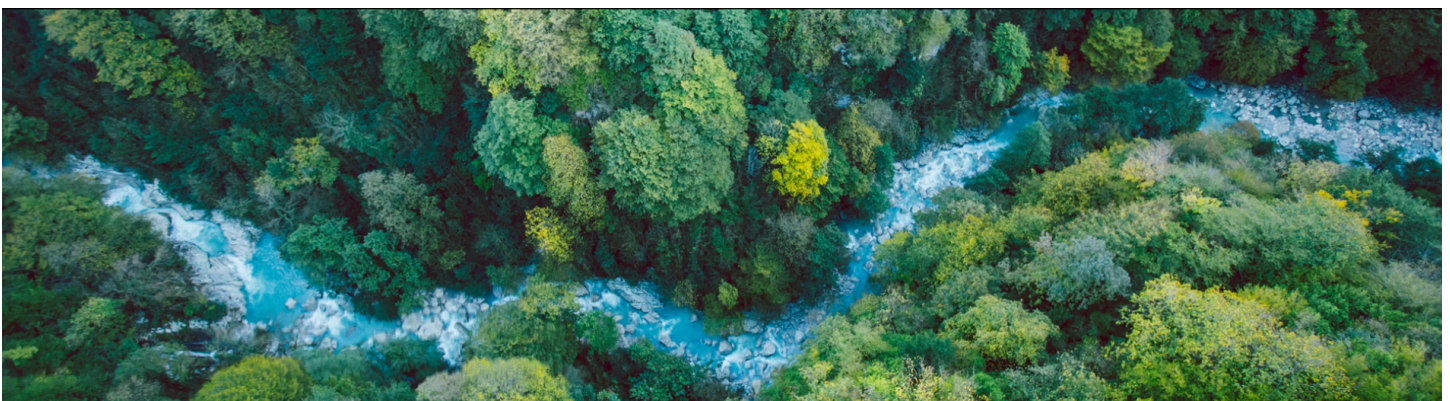
Crisis de-escalation needs to offer something different from a "one and done" approach and needs to include referrals and longer term, collaborative interventions that remain in place until the risk has been reduced.

Calming the Initial Crisis

This entails adopting a calm, cool and collected stance in the face of upsetting or frustrating behavior, activating back-up as needed and applying crisis de-escalations skills to address the concerns. This approach is both an art and a science that requires study and experience to accomplish well.

Motivating and Inspiring Change

Once the initial crisis has been addressed, the staff can adapt a bit more of a cheerleading/supportive role with the student, helping them with problem solving and overcoming obstacles. This should be done with an appreciation for the values and boundaries that are set forth as part of the job description. In other words, how does the staff member encourage the student to begin to develop their own critical thinking skills to better problem solve the difficulties they encounter?

Managing the Ongoing Behavior

In many ways, this is one of the more difficult challenges for staff. The initial crisis is resolved and staff have done all they can to form a relationship and help the student develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. But. They. Keep. Coming. Back. The behaviors don't change and staff begin to become stressed to the point of burnout attempting to deal with the behaviors in front of them. In this stage, we encourage the use of additional resources, exploring supportive philosophies such as positive psychology, goal setting and building self-care capacity for staff and departments.

Keep in Mind

• Choosing the right approach for the given situation is critical. Yelling back at an escalating, rude or entitled individual isn't the right tool (no matter how cathartic it might feel). For example, embarrassing a student who is misusing technology when it's their turn in line to be helped isn't the best way to address that behavior. It's using a screwdriver to hammer a nail into a board. You might be able to get the job done, but there are easier, more effective, ways.

• It is important to appreciate the unique abilities, knowledge, and experience of staff as they apply a given technique. Some excel at using humor to engage an individual without offending them. Others' attempts at humor end up feeling forced and often make a crisis worse. Some display genuine concern and caring through personal questions. Some treat individuals with a degree of humanity and empathy that immediately garners respect. Others attempt this same stance and end up coming off as pushy or prying. The right technique, applied to the right situation with experience and skill is the ideal. A single technique or comment made at the wrong time can lead to an intervention that fails to persuade the student to comply.