

OREGON PEACE OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION
DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES



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Handout

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AGENDA

INSIDE JOB

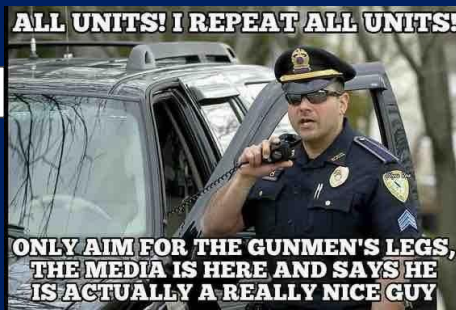
- ✓ Identifying reasons to de-escalate
 - ✓ Officer safety
 - ✓ Human beings
- ✓ Strategies for maintaining one's own emotional and mental state

OUTSIDE JOB

- ✓ Initiate contact with a person that is emotionally disturbed
- ✓ Non-verbal communications
- ✓ Verbal communication tactics for:
 - ✓ Rapport
 - ✓ Influence

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DISCLAIMER



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SOURCES

- CNT/HNT Training Material / Text
- Crisis Intervention (including ECIT)
- Conflict Resolution
- Marriage & Family

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SECTION ONE

Inside Job: Why De-Escalate?

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Guys with hair like this have a 125% chance of giving you a ticket:



MINDSET

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RESILIENCE

- 1) Can You Learn To Be Resilient?
 - a) Where Do You Learn It?
- 2) Or Is It A Trait You Have /Don't Have?
 - a) What Is The Trait/ Characteristic?



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MENTAL ILLNESS

- 1) Can You Learn To Be **Mentally Ill**?
 - a) Where Do You Learn It?
- 2) Or Is It A Trait You Have /Don't Have?
 - a) What Is The Trait/ Characteristic?



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Family of 5

Both parents abuse alcohol, drugs, each other & their kids.

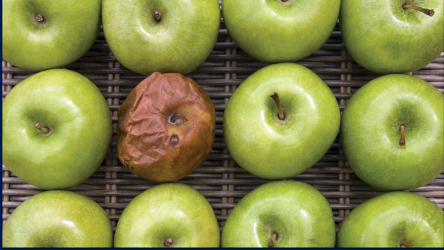
One kid repeats the parents' behavior.

One kid doesn't repeat the pattern but fails to thrive. Works a menial job and barely gets by in life, relationships.


One kid becomes a cop.

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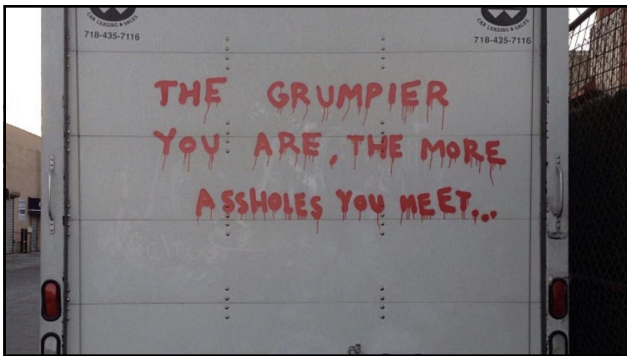
THREE APPLES



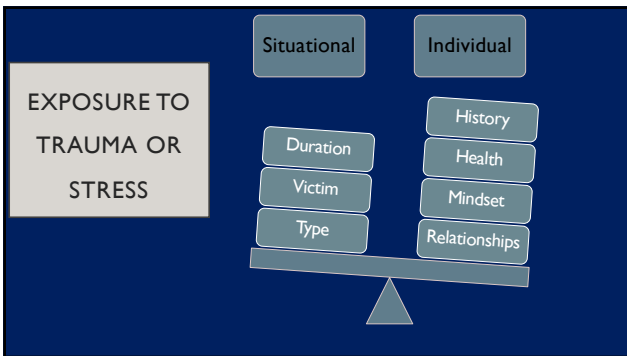
American Police Beat Article



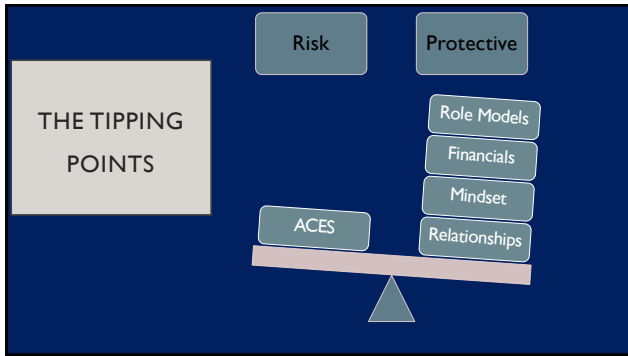
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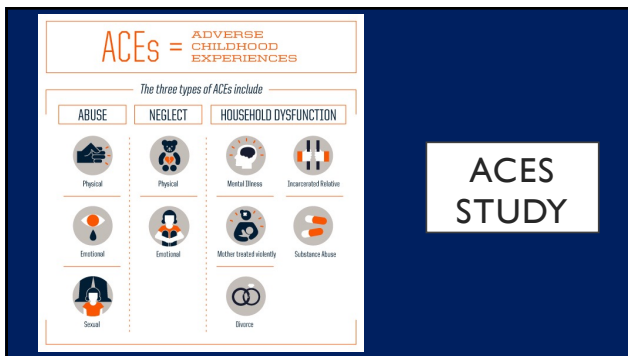
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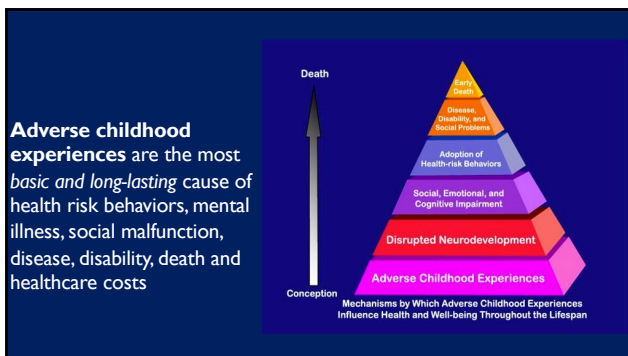
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CONNECT
OR
PROTECT



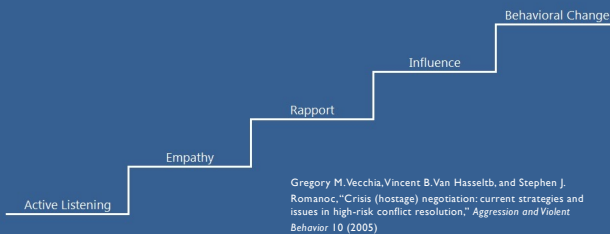
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SECTION TWO

Outside Job: Communication Strategies

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Behavioral Change Stairway Model



Active Listening Empathy Rapport Influence Behavioral Change

Gregory M. Vecchia, Vincent B. Van Hasselb, and Stephen J. Romanoc, "Crisis (hostage) negotiation: current strategies and issues in high-risk conflict resolution," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10 (2005)

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DUAL FOCUS

- Officer Safety
- Information Gathering
- Needs of suicidal / EDP person



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SLOW. IT. DOWN.

- Let's heightened emotions lower
- Keeps your mind in front of your mouth
- Builds rapport
- Allows for information gathering
- Buy time- say you're going to share that with someone else – “middle-man mentality”
- Tell them you really want to help but you are having trouble keeping up – ask them to help you out by slowing down a bit. “ *I don't want to miss anything you are saying*”

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NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Silence
- Facial Expressions and eye contact
- Body Language & Posture
- Distraction (remove them)

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NON-VERBAL

- Vocal
 - Easy-going, light & encouraging (when the person is scared)
 - Downward inflection to convey you have things under control/ self-assured (when person is more aggressive)

Voss, 2016

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HOW ROOKIES SHOW UP TO ROLL CALL



ON THEIR FIRST DAY OFF PROBATION

Nonverbal behavior sends a powerful message. Often, the first impression you make is based upon how you look. The challenge is how to make that impression useful in the service of crisis intervention.

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ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Language
 - Match their vocabulary
 - Match their sensory modality
 - "SEE what I mean?" followed by "I SEE what you are saying"
 - Attend to cultural considerations – age, rank, titles, etc.
 - Avoid acronyms that would add to their confusion
- Tone
 - Empathy / concern

(McMains & Mullins, 2001)

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ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Volume
 - Slightly softer than the person
- Speed
 - Slightly slower than the excited person and faster than the depressed/ impaired person
 - Pause to keep your thoughts ahead of your words

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3 STYLES FOR 3 KINDS OF SITUATIONS:

- Impulsive/trapped person - *fellow traveler*
 - We're in this together – let's work it out
- Emotionally-disturbed - *Columbo-dumb but trying*
 - Help me understand your experience so I can help
- Depressed/disoriented/dependent - *leader*
 - Firm, accepting-directing, non-judgmental, & helpful

(McMains & Mullins, 2001)

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IF POSSIBLE, START OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT

- How it begins, it will end
- Introduce yourself by name and ask for their name
- State your intent to help- sets/changes the tone
 - "I want/we want to help you get through this"
- Be aware of your own state of mind
 - Don't let their emotional state become yours – it should be the other way around

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LISTENING



If you take a few seconds to listen, you will learn what's going on for them, allow them to vent (and hopefully calm down a bit), and develop a bit of rapport because you did not interrupt them by taking control of the conversation.

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MY FACE WHEN SOMEONE
WONT STOP TALKING



AND THEY DONT UNDERSTAND

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LISTENING



- Listen to words/content
- Listen for the underlying message/feelings
- Listen for their perspective / point of view
 - How they see the situation
 - Reflect your understanding of this:
 - "You seem to be feeling _____ when _____ happens because _____. Is that right?" (More on this later)

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STAY CURIOUS



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ACTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES

- Restatement
- Paraphrase
 - Thoughts
 - Emotions
- Reflection
- Clarification
- Summarization

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REDUCE DEFENSIVENESS

- Be POLITE!
- Eliminate absolute language: always, never, everyone
- "Externalize" the problem
- Don't pose statements as questions

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ACTIVE LISTENING

- Minimal encouragers
 - Verbal - mmm-hmm, ya, I hear ya'
 - Non-verbal – head nod, shake, breath
- Silence is **golden** (at times) (internal processor?)

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HARMFUL COMMUNICATIONS

BAD

- I know what you're going through
- Don't worry about it
- Calm down
- Just do....
- Everything happens for a reason

BETTER

- I can/can't imagine what you're going through
- I can see it's hard not to worry about it
- What do you think might make this more bearable right now?
- I can see this is consuming for you
- It's hard not to know why this stuff happens

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EMPATHY

- Go beyond naming the emotion
- Tactical empathy- what is driving the person's behavior
 - Helps to *influence* it

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EMPATHY

- Reflect a **Feeling or Emotion**
- NOT a theory:
 - “You feel like you someone is out to get you.”
- NOT a motivation:
 - “You feel like smacking someone.”
- What is the underlying feeling to the theory & motivation?
- Name feeling, soften the theory/ motivation

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EMPATHY

- *It seems like.....*
- *It sounds like....*
- *I'm hearing.....*
- Not “It sounds like you feel like you're getting railroaded here.”
- Instead “It sounds like you're angry about this”

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EMOTION-LABELING EXERCISE

Example:

“I'm raising two kids on my own. I'm broke. I'm never home because I'm always working. Nothing good ever happens to those who really need it.”

Emotions Identified: _____

Statement to Reflect awareness of said emotions:

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BUILDING RAPPORT

- Be respectful, kind, but firm
- Foster a sense of control
 - State your recognition of their ability to choose
 - Granting small concessions
 - Forewarn without giving away tactical info
- *Acceptance Paradox*
 - Not judging the person but accepting them as they are makes them more likely to change / be influenced
- Empathy, empathy, empathy

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BUILDING RAPPORT

- Look for opportunities to act inconsistently with their expectations.
- Bring up a police stereotype and a stereotype that police have of people in the person's situation. *"WE are not going to let that kind of thinking get in the way of us working together. We both want this to be resolved, you to get help... etc."* (mutual problem solving)
- "I don't want you to scare/startle others, so would you mind ..."(whatever you need them to do to reduce threat perception)

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BUILDING RAPPORT

- Build self-esteem with praise, encouragement, reinforcement
 - *"I appreciate _____. It takes a lot of courage to do _____."*
- Look for any concession being made by the person
 - *"Thank you for putting the knife in the other room."*
- Attend to, and reinforce, any positive thing they do
 - (Making the call in the first place, reveal something embarrassing/private, etc.)

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RAPPORT: BE IN THE MIDDLE

- I-part agreement (mutual goals) plus alignment

“You and I agree on this but, sadly, we weren’t asked what we thought was right”

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CONTRAST STATEMENT

I don’t want to scare you more. I want to help.

The brass putting up motivational posters around the station



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COMMUNICATION TOOLS

- Keeping the person engaged
 - Don't underestimate the power of hallucinations/delusions
 - Keep using their name
 - Help them stay focused on you, rather than distractions in the environment
- Minimal encouragers
 - "I see", "u-huh", "ya", "mm-hmm"
 - Carefully placed – you do not want to reply in an affirmative way to something negative
 - "I should just die" followed by "uh-huh"

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COMMUNICATION TOOLS

- Paraphrasing
 - Go beyond the words being said (repeating) by stating the underlying message
 - *"It sounds like this feels/you feel..."*
 - Slight softening of intent to harm
 - Suggest a softer version of their crisis without minimizing it
 - Accumulate "yeses" – Paraphrase and ask, *"Is that what you mean?"*

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COMMUNICATION TOOLS

- Emotion-labeling
 - Matching level of intensity
 - Validating, not negating by cheerleading
- Open-ended questions
 - Buys time, allows ventilation, keeps them engaged

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COMMUNICATION TOOLS

- Reflecting meaning
 - Demonstrates understanding on a deeper level
 - When _____ happens, you feel _____ because _____.
- "I" vs. You messages
 - Expresses your concerns
 - *I am concerned for your safety.*
 - *I don't want you to accidentally pull the trigger.*
 - Avoids any accusatory statements
 - *"I understand that..."*



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“I” VS. “YOU” MESSAGE EXAMPLE

“I understand you believe you are Jesus Christ and that people are trying to plant a chip in your brain. How scary.”

NOT

“You are not Jesus Christ and nobody is trying to plant a chip in your brain.”

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“I” VS. “YOU” MESSAGE EXERCISE

“You are upsetting your children.”

Reworded to:

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GIVE THEM AN “OUT”

• When people mention going to jail “People in these kinds of situations tend to get more consideration and compassion” – Downplay the punishment/consequences (tentatively)

- Give them a way to save face
- Flexibility in the surrender ritual
- What they did was the best they knew to do at the time



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Tips to become a better conversationalist

LESSON 10: ASK PEOPLE QUESTIONS THAT GIVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES.

QUESTIONS

- Buy time
- Provide information (situation, mental state of the person, allow ventilation)

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EXAMPLES OF HELPFUL QUESTIONS

- What happened that got you here today?
- Follow up: How did you get *here*?
- Validation: "This is a tough situation" or "I understand why you might feel that way"
- What's the most important thing to you right now?
- What are you most _____ of right now?
- Future: What is the best potential outcome for this situation

Drew Prochniak, 2021

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MIRRORING

- Last 3 words (or critical words) of their statement
- It is an unconscious manner of "insinuating similarity" "*We copy each other to comfort each other*"

(Voss, 2016)

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MIRROR TECHNIQUES

- Are effective when placed at a natural pause in the conversation
- May be used to redirect the flow of a tangential conversation
- Can be used break an escalating emotional spiral

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CLARIFICATION

Ensures that the listener's understanding of what the speaker has said is correct, reducing misunderstandings. Clarifying can involve asking questions or occasionally summarizing what the speaker has said.

Examples of non-directive clarification-seeking questions are:

"When you said...what did you mean?"

"Can you repeat...?"

"I'm not quite sure I understand what you are saying."

Clarifying involves:

Asking non-judgmental questions

Summarizing and seeking feedback as to its accuracy

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INFLUENCE: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

- Attention-grabbing hooks
 - "You're going to want to hear this"
 - "I have something important to say"
 - "Check it out"
- Social Proof Principle:
 - Others in your situation have found XYZ to be helpful. What do you think?

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INFLUENCE: FOOT IN DOOR

- Can I get you to....? (small concession)
- Thanking them for what they've already done
- Employ consistency principle

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INFLUENCE: ACTIVATE THE RULE OF RECIPROCITY

- Try to offer them something first (& often)
 - Bottled water

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I WONDER....

- Gets them to thinking about what you are thinking about without the pressure

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INFLUENCE: GET A "NO"

- Exaggerate their intentions/ position
- Are you wanting to harm everyone, regardless of the consequences?
- What DON'T you want?
- Have you given up on this working out?

(Voss, 2016)

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INFLUENCE: ACCUSATION AUDIT

- Name it for them
 - You probably think I'm just here to send you to jail/ take your things/ hurt you....
- It deflates it for them

Voss, 2016

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INFLUENCE: SOLICIT "HELP"

"Can I get your help on this?"

"I think you'd be a great help here"

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BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

- Providing direction on what to do
- How to do it safely/ without being misunderstood
- If someone asks a direct question, it is usually best to provide a direct answer, unless the answer will cause an escalation of the crisis

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FREQUENT FLYERS

- Issues of trust
 - Specific to you
 - Directed at police personnel
- Repair / rebuild trust by giving away what you can
- Empathize with their plight
- What might you feel if you believe you have been betrayed, deceived, or mistreated?
 - (justified or not)
- Do not lie!! Speak in tentative terms – probabilities
 - "I wouldn't think that a jury would ignore the fact that you had this happen to you....etc."

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FREQUENT FLYERS

help me...

- Change the Game (Ury, 1991)
 - Acknowledge their bad experiences with the police
 - Then shift focus from hating the police to talking about the problem
 - "Sounds like you've had a hard time with a few bad apples. I am terribly sorry that happened to you. What can WE do so that it doesn't happen again?"

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SUICIDAL PERSONS

- Don't be afraid of being up concerns for suicidal behaviors/ warning signs
- Suicidal people have reported feeling that others did not care because they did not ask about them
 - *"I can hear that you are hurting. You have my attention. I am here to help."*
- They often feel out of control and hopeless.
 - Offer a feeling of control and some hope:
 - *"You can always choose to kill yourself tomorrow or next year. I am just asking you to give me a chance to get you some help. Can I do that for you?"*
- Paraphrase, label emotions, use minimal encouragers.
- Don't let a moment of silence alarm you too much. They may be crying, slow to respond due to depression, or confused about their feelings.

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SUICIDE BY COP



- Assure the person that the police are trained to help them and that nobody wants to hurt them
- Reiterate that they always have the choice to take their life, but that we can help them discover other options.
 - *It sometimes takes multiple tries, failures and setbacks in order to get through a problem.*
 - *"It is very difficult to face a problem alone and come up with all the answers. Let us help you connect with support"*

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COMMUNICATING WITH A PERSON SUFFERING FROM PSYCHOSIS

- They may be hearing voices, making them very easily confused and their senses heightened
 - Ask about the presence of voices
 - Ask what the voices are saying
 - Help keep them focused on you by using their name
 - Speak firmly, calmly, and limit the number of instructions



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COMMUNICATING WITH A PERSON SUFFERING FROM PSYCHOSIS

- What to do with hallucinations/delusions?
 - Don't argue for or against them
- They are REAL to the person – just acknowledge that and the subsequent fear/confusion/grief it must be causing



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COMMUNICATING WITH THE IMPAIRED PERSON

- Make a statement indicating you are not judging the person:
 - Substance abuse may be a method of coping
 - *"It sounds like you drink to help you manage the stress (pain, grief, etc.)"*
 - Crisis may occur while person is socializing with alcohol / drugs
 - *"You did not expect this to happen while you were having a good time"*
- Help the person maintain focus by using his/her name, asking direct questions, exercising patience.



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CONCERNED PARTIES

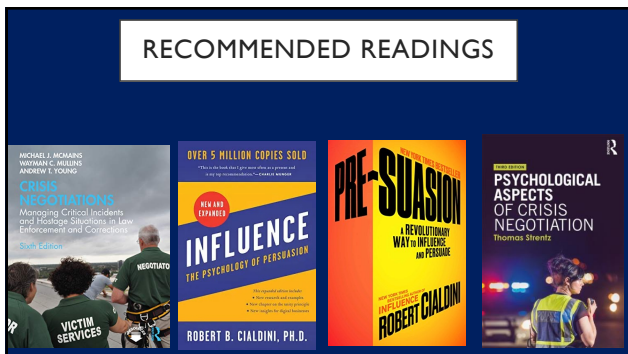


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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relatives & Friends• Listen, validate their concerns, give a statement of intent to help.• Tell them how they can help.• Assure them you take their complaint seriously.• If repeat issue- see frequent flyer recommendations | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Witnesses & Bystanders• Communicate that you hear their concern & take it seriously• State your intent to help• Tell them how they can help<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>"Please help me help this person by"</i> |
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