



## Active Bystander Intervention and De-Escalation

Sept. 19, 2022

### *Resources*

Intro. To NVC- [Yoram](#) (12 min.); [Maria](#) (11); [Roxy](#) (30)

[NVC Framework](#)

[How to use NVC](#)

[Feelings and Feelings Wheel](#)

[Needs](#)

[Requests](#)

[CLARA Method](#)

### *Agenda:*

Goals and Examples of ABI

Strategy and Tactics

Role-Play

Tuff Story and Tactics

Role-Play

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### **Bystander Intervention: Goals**

- **Re-humanize** the parties involved, particularly the person being harassed.
- **Defuse** the situation.
- **Unleash the constructive power of the person being harassed.** Our intervention should promote a sense of agency and should not hinder their ability to respond or guide the response.

**Snackman Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJeSJhb3Hc4>

### **Growing in Nonviolence**

1. Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.

2. Nonviolence seeks understanding and movement toward partnership.
3. Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.

**Working description of nonviolence:** positive reverence for dignity and life and constant effort to avoid dehumanization and participation in other types of violence.

- a spirituality, way of life, and distinct virtue
- the power of love in action,
- the path to fuller truth,
- cross-cutting and intersectional approach to social issues
- a strategic methodology and constructive force for social justice, transforming conflict, breaking cycles of violence (direct, structural, cultural)

### **Strategy and Tactics**

**You might wait to intervene if** the conflict seems constructive, healthy or the targeted person seems to be doing something positive.

**You might choose to intervene if** the conflict seems quite destructive and unhealthy, the targeted person seems quite afraid or anxious, physical posturing is intensifying or physical harm is occurring.

### **Tactics:**

1. *Center yourself*
2. *Presence, Posture, and Eye Contact*
3. *Distraction*
4. *Dialogue and Empathy*

#### *1. Center yourself-*

Centering is a practice that enables our mind to be less reactive and more creative in difficult situations. Research has demonstrated this over and over. It also shows our brain becomes more balanced and harmonious. You can center through deep breathing, with a mantra, such as a person, word or phrase that draws you to our ultimate unity, sense of connection or purpose, with an image, color, music, etc

#### *2. Presence, Posture, and Eye Contact-*

Person being harassed: stand or sit nearby; eye contact with person being harassed  
Aggressor: hands up, one hand out; make eye contact (if staring intensely might avoid eye contact); be confident, helps aggressor see others as humans

#### *3. Distraction and Humor:*

--distract the situation with surprising/out of context statements; like that shirt on you, asking for directions; for the time; want some water?; singing, dancing, falling, etc.

#### 4. Dialogue and Empathy

Person being harassed-

- asking is everything ok; do you need anything here?; and if they want our help
- asking what they need and how we can best help them
- offering possible solutions (that the person being harassed may reject)
- offering emotional support and empathy (befriending/connect)

CLARA:

Center

Listen for feelings, experiences, values, or needs.

Acknowledge by acknowledging the feelings, experiences, values or needs that you hear. [Not about agreeing with their position, statement, or behavior.]

Respond offering open ended or choice questions; addressing the issue; make a clear request

Add further resources for them to look into later.

#### Scenario:

At a polling station with a line of voters, and you see an individual with a MAGA hat wandering slowly up and down the line. As you get closer, you notice they are engaging with the voters and saying things like “you know who to vote for; make this country great; don’t get tricked by these liberal AOC democrats.” One voter snaps back at them to leave them alone. So the MAGA person gets to about 3 feet away and shouts “don’t mess with me little snowflake, you aren’t going to take our freedom away, we will win or we will take power if we need to.” As a volunteer you get closer and the MAGA person starts shouting the same to you, how might you draw on CLARA to or other tactics to de-escalate the situation?

Listen: what feelings, experiences, needs did you hear? feelings- frustration, anger; needs: freedom, choice, honesty

Ack: “I hear you. I sense your frustration. I hear you are hoping for some more consistency with our country and freedom in your experience.

Respond: “I can’t hear you clearly when you’re shouting and I’d like to hear what you’re saying. Will you stand over here with me so I can hear you better?” or “You are really important and I would like to understand better what might be helpful. Would you share that with me? or I wonder how they feel with you shouting at them in front of others? or “I wonder if this person is feeling some desire for choice and participation?”

#### Requests/Proposals:

- o **Positive** language stating what we do want and what could be done more than what we don’t want;
- o **Specific**: concrete and doable rather than vague or abstract
- o has **flexibility**, and is truly a request and not a demand (i.e. willing to accept a ‘no’- As information that not all important needs are being

included in the proposed strategy.. so a “no” can be an invitation to more conversation);

- “I want you to understand me.”—not specific action request
- “Would you be willing to tell me the one thing that is most important to you about this issue?”—yes
- “You better back away and get out of my face.”- no
  - I hear you and I’m also concerned about my safety right now, so would you be willing to take a couple steps back?

### **Connection Requests that check if the other is understanding me**

- Can you tell me what you’re getting (from what I said)?
- I’m not sure I was totally clear. What are you understanding?
- I’d like to make sure we’re on the same page. What are you taking away from this?

### **Connection Requests that check if the other is feeling understood**

- Am I getting it?
- How is it for you to hear all of this?
- What can I say or do that would help you to feel more understood?

### **Requests that move toward a solution**

- Is there more? Anything else you’d like me to understand?
- Would this be an okay time to shift to talking about where we go from here?
- Do you have any ideas about what might work for both of us?

**Action Requests create an opportunity to help meet needs:** positive, specific, flexible

### **Role-Play a Scenario:**

Use the above situation or pick your own.

*Instructions:* Participants practice in groups of 3 or 4 with the chosen scenario or pick another scenario. Remember to include body movements and posturing. Rotate roles as time permits.

One of you will play the aggressor, one the person being harassed, and one the bystander. Start by engaging the person being harassed. As you practice, try to imagine the feelings, needs, and stories behind each role.

### [Antoinette Tuff story](#)

Faith Under Fire: movie about Tuff’s story- <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7234698/>

5. *Dignity Phrases:*

6. *Ask questions/Give options:*

7. *Interconnectedness/Solidarity:*

8. *Delegate*

9. *Peel Away Enablers*

10. *Interposition*

11. *Distance*

12. *Delay*

13. *Document*

5. *Dignity Phrases:*

Person being harassed: dialogue/empathy; other ex.'s: she is human like you; she has feelings and needs as well; she has a mother that cares about her; she has children; she cares about others; others care about her; God loves her;

Aggressor: We can acknowledge their human dignity by saying "you are valuable," "your ideas matter," "God cares for you," "I care for you," etc.; you are better than that, you are smarter, you are more creative,

6. *Ask questions/Give options:*

Aggressor:

- What is going on here? What do you need? Are there other options here? Will you put the weapon away? Will you work with me?
- if they are really hostile or have a weapon, most that pull a gun are trying to threaten or control, not kill, so provide a way out: "I will listen to what you have to say, if you can take a deep breath;" "we can talk through this, if you lay down the weapon;" "if you lay down the weapon, you can walk away/I will stay with you;" "I will stay with you" (in potential suicide)

7. *Interconnectedness/Solidarity:*

Aggressor: We can meet everyone's needs here. Let's do this together; one family; let's break this cycle of violence; we can find a way out;

-share suffering: [Tuff] "I have been afraid before also, I have been really angry before also; I have had a hard time with relationships; I have messed up before"

**-knife story: Let's slow down**

8. *Delegate:*

--ask for others nearby to help or do something specific with the person being harassed; enlist a friend

--identify other possible credible messengers for the person being harassed or the aggressor; gender, age- other kids a bit older, race, community leader, religious leader,

9. *Peel Away Enablers:*

Aggressor often is performing for friends or others; identify and try to get the attention of an enabler, to minimize their enabling of the aggressor; [fishing story]

### *10. Interposition:*

-could include standing nearby, one hand out and one hand up, both hands up slowly moving down/up, standing in b/w, sitting in between, lay on ground as buffer, (physical force not always same as violence- story of being in street and about to be hit by car: push out of way) hold hand/arms; block, pull off

-slowly walking back the aggressor, forming a circle w/ an opening; encircle aggressor w/ a space; V or U shape with a few others to slowly walk back the aggressor,  
-encircle the person being harassed and walk them out of danger;  
-form a wall/link arms (and start singing);

Try to protect, face and throat area, stomach, solar plexus (top of abdomen, below ribs),- hands open and out, stand to side/at an angle with hands up and open- so can move to side rather than just in a line forward/backward

*Avoid:* crossing arms, putting up fists, signaling a physical fight; no punching or dehumanization;

### *11. Distance*

Person being harassed: if the person being harassed is willing, help them move out of the situation; come sit with us

Aggressor: direct people out of the area; try not to create more chaos; try not to turn your back if close to the aggressor.

*12. Delay* -- Stay to check on the person being harassed

13. Document: ex. written, video; Only when the person being harassed is already getting help or you are far away or don't feel ready to engage. Do not post on social media without their consent. ACLU App: in some but not every state. Good for police brutality especially.

ACLU App: <https://www.aclu.org/issues/criminal-law-reform/reforming-police/mobile-justice>

### Mental Health Tips

Reassure them, "I hear you. I got you."

Speak slowly and confidently with a gentle, caring tone of voice.

Don't restrict the person's movement. Don't crowd them.

Scenario: At a polling station, a group of about 6 people appear at a nearby corner. They have large U.S. flags, signs saying "don't tread on me" and about 3 of them are armed with visible guns. As voters begin showing up and getting in line, you notice many glancing over at this group with nervous looks, slowing down, and some even appearing to walk away from voting. The group goes from singing the National Anthem to shouting at voters, "do the right thing, parents control our schools, no critical race theory." As a volunteer nearby with a few other volunteers, how might you intervene and de-escalate this situation?

*Possible Tactics:*

- 1) engage in dialogue/empathy: ex. CLARA
- 2) ask questions/give options
- 3) peel away enablers
- 4) distraction: sing, ask about unrelated topics
- 5) interposition: form a wall
- 6) delegate: ex. find another credible messenger, hire a local peace team to be present

**Closing:**

Appreciations and Next Steps

[Feedback Form](#)

*Upcoming Sessions:* [also visit [www.dcpeaceteam.org](http://www.dcpeaceteam.org); sign up for our [e-list here](#)]

**Upcoming Training:**

9/24 (Sat.) ONLINE Active Bystander Intervention: Mental Health and Domestic Violence Situations from 9am-12pm ET. Details and [REGISTER HERE](#).

10/1 (Sat.) ONLINE Introduction to Nonviolent Communication from 11am-3pm ET. Details and [REGISTER HERE](#).

10/5 (Wed.) ONLINE Restorative Justice Practices for Supporting Youth: An Overview from 7-8:30pm ET. Details and [REGISTER HERE](#).

10/8 (Sat.) ONLINE Introduction to Active Bystander Intervention from 10am-3pm (1 hr. break) ET. Details and [REGISTER HERE](#).

10/12 (Wed.) ONLINE Restorative Justice Practices for Supporting Youth: Restorative/Relational Schools from 7-8:30pm ET. Details and [REGISTER HERE](#).

10/19 (Wed.) ONLINE Restorative Justice Practices for Supporting Youth: Restorative Parenting from 7-8:30pm ET. Details and [REGISTER HERE](#).

10/22 (Sat.) ONLINE Anti-Racism Workshop: Exploring Justice Work through a Racial Equity Lens from 9am-12pm ET. Details and [REGISTER HERE](#).

10/26 (Wed.) ONLINE Restorative Justice Practices for Supporting Youth: Building Beloved, Restorative Communities from 7-8:30pm ET. Details and [REGISTER HERE](#)

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**Additional Resources:**

**NVC and Social Change**

[Rosenberg Video](#): in Middle East- Palestine

**Books**

Nonviolent Communication by Marshall Rosenberg

Speak Peace in a World of Conflict by Marshall Rosenberg (social change)

Center for Nonviolent Communication:

[NVC Instruction Self-Guide](#)