

Managing Confrontations at Disaster Scenes

- How to stay safe during a confrontation
- Know de-escalation techniques
- Know techniques to manage your emotions



Husband upset wife died scenario; set the stage. When people find themselves in an upsetting situation, they often lash out at those who are trying to help them. These strategies are what EMS crews use when encountering an angry or agitated person at a scene



Bottom line up front: STAY SAFE! Your safety is priority #1

1. "read the room"
2. if de-escalation techniques not working and the situation seems potentially violent; leave and call for backup!
3. Maintain distance; stand at an angle w/open posture. Break eye contact ...direct eye contact can be seen as confrontational. "Let's sit down for a moment"—passive behavior that promotes calm and can break the tension.
4. always keep an escape route available and unobstructed.

De-escalation Techniques

Stay calm and composed

Active listening


Show empathy and acknowledge feelings

Set boundaries

Offer choices

Give space and time

1. Stay calm and composed: control your own emotions! Upset individuals will often mirror the behavior of those around them. Speak in a low, pitch, low volume. Use calm body language: don't cross arms, clench fists, excessive staring. Instead keep open posture, hands in front. Control your own emotions.
2. Active listening: address anger..."you are angry, how can I help?". don't patronize, "it'll be alright" and avoid self-revelation: "my husband died recently also so I understand how you feel".
3. Show empathy: "I can see you're upset, I'm trying to help". I can see you are angry, how can I help?
4. Set boundaries: clearly communicate unacceptable behaviors. "it's important for you to be calm in order for us to continue to do our job". Communicate your limits: clearly state what you will and will not tolerate.
5. Offer choices: "is there someone nearby who can stay w/you.....assist you?". Do you want to stay here in the house or go to a neighbors? Stay focused on the issue.
6. Give space and time: Call OPS to see if transport to CAS possible to speak w/a faith leader



Managing your Emotions: “SOAR”

- **S** = **STOP**: Deep breaths before reacting.
- **O** = **OBSERVE**: Notice your emotions and the situation without judgment.
- **A** = **ACKNOWLEDGE**: Accept your emotions as data, not as a definitive truth about the situation.
- **R** = **RESPOND**: Make an intentional choice about how to act.

Even if can't remember what the acronym stands for:

Breathe in through nose, exhale through mouth. Imagine someone pulling your hands and shoulders to the ground...now SOAR! Make an intentional choice about how to act.

QUESTIONS?



HOW WOULD I WANT TO BE TREATED?