

DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES:

Adapted from <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Guidance-for-New-Zealand-Schools-on-Behaviour-Mgmt-to-Minimise-Physical-....pdf>

Use preventive de-escalation techniques first

Your first aim is to avoid needing to use physical restraint.

Use the following strategies for unexpected “one-off” incidents, as well as for young people who regularly present with high-risk behaviours. These are general suggestions. For young people with high-risk behaviours, have an Individual Behaviour Plan developed, tailored to the young person’s needs.

Preventive techniques

Understand the young person

- Get to know the young person and identify potentially difficult times or situations that may be stressful or difficult for them.
- Identify the young person’s personal signs of stress or unhappiness and intervene early.
- Monitor wider behaviour carefully for potential areas of conflict.

Respect the young person

- Demonstrate a supportive approach: “I’m here to help.”
- Be flexible in your responses: adapt what you’re doing to the demands of the situation.
- Be reasonable: a reasonable action, request or expectation deserves a reasonable response.
- Promote and accept compromise or negotiated solutions, while maintaining your authority.
- Take the young person seriously and address issues quickly.

Preserve the young person’s dignity

- Address private or sensitive issues in private.
- Avoid the use of inappropriate humour such as sarcasm or mocking.

De-escalation techniques

Safety first – create space and time

- Remove the audience – ask other participants to take their work and move away.
- Give the young person physical space.
- Name the emotion in a calm even voice: “You look really angry”, “I can see that you are very frustrated”.
- Wait.

Communicate calmly

- Talk quietly, even when the young person is loud.
- Try to remain calm and respectful.
- Monitor your own body language and allow the young person the opportunity to move out of the situation with dignity.
- Focus on communicating respect and your desire to help.
- Keep verbal interactions respectful.
- When appropriate, give the young person clear choices and/or directions to help them feel more secure and regain control.

Think ahead in case the situation escalates

- If escalation occurs, move further away.
- Make sure you have an exit plan.
- Constantly reassess the situation.
- Send for help if necessary.

What may escalate the behaviour

- Threatening the young person.
- Arguing or interrupting.
- Contradicting what the young person says – even if they are wrong.
- Challenging the young person.
- Trying to shame the young person or showing your disrespect for the young person.