



Navigating Difficult Interactions Refresher

May 2025



CPI Guiding Philosophy

CARE

Respect, dignity, empathy, person-centered



WELFARE

Maintaining independence, choice and well-being



SAFETY

Protecting rights and minimizing harm



SECURITY

Safe, effective, harmonious and collaborative relationships



Person-Centered and Trauma-Informed Approach

How Should I Respond?



Recognize that the person knows themselves best.



Consider the person's life experiences.



Understand that every person is unique.



Value the person's rights and dignity.

Take a minute to make this training your own

- Think about a challenging situation that you have experienced in the past you think you could have done better, or one you anticipate might come up.
- We will refer you back to this situation throughout today's session.



MODULE 1

Understanding Behavior and Its Risk

Understanding Distress Behavior



All behavior is a form of communication. And distress behavior can be how a person communicates their distress.

Using your scenario and situations in the workplace, what are some distress behaviors that you see that cause you concern?

Knowing this, how does this change your approach to their “challenging” behavior?

Understanding Risk



Which of these distress behaviors present an imminent or immediate risk of harm?

Be very thoughtful when you decide if the behavior does really cause harm or not.

Understanding Risk

Identify the likelihood of the behavior and the severity of harm of that behavior. Then, use the *Decision-Making Matrix*SM to assess the risk.

Severity of Harm	Catastrophic Death will occur, or the level of injury will lead to permanent or irreversible ill-health	MEDIUM	HIGH	EXTREME	EXTREME	EXTREME
	Major Psychological or physical injury will require treatment leading to long term incapacity or disability	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	EXTREME	EXTREME
	Moderate Psychological or physical injury will require treatment and/or lead to medium term incapacity and ill-health	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	EXTREME
	Minor Psychological or physical injury will be non-permanent and/or cause no lasting ill-health	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH
	Negligible Psychological or physical injury will be minimal	LOW	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
		Rare Will probably never happen	Unlikely Is not expected to happen, but it could	Possible Might happen	Likely Will probably happen	Certain Will undoubtedly happen
		Likelihood of Behavior				

OVERALL RISK RATING GUIDE (Color code)			
Green (G)	Yellow (Y)	Orange (O)	Red (R)
Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk	Extreme Risk

Mitigating Risk

Preventive Approaches

Early intervention to avoid crises, safety, & de-escalation

OR

Reactive Approaches

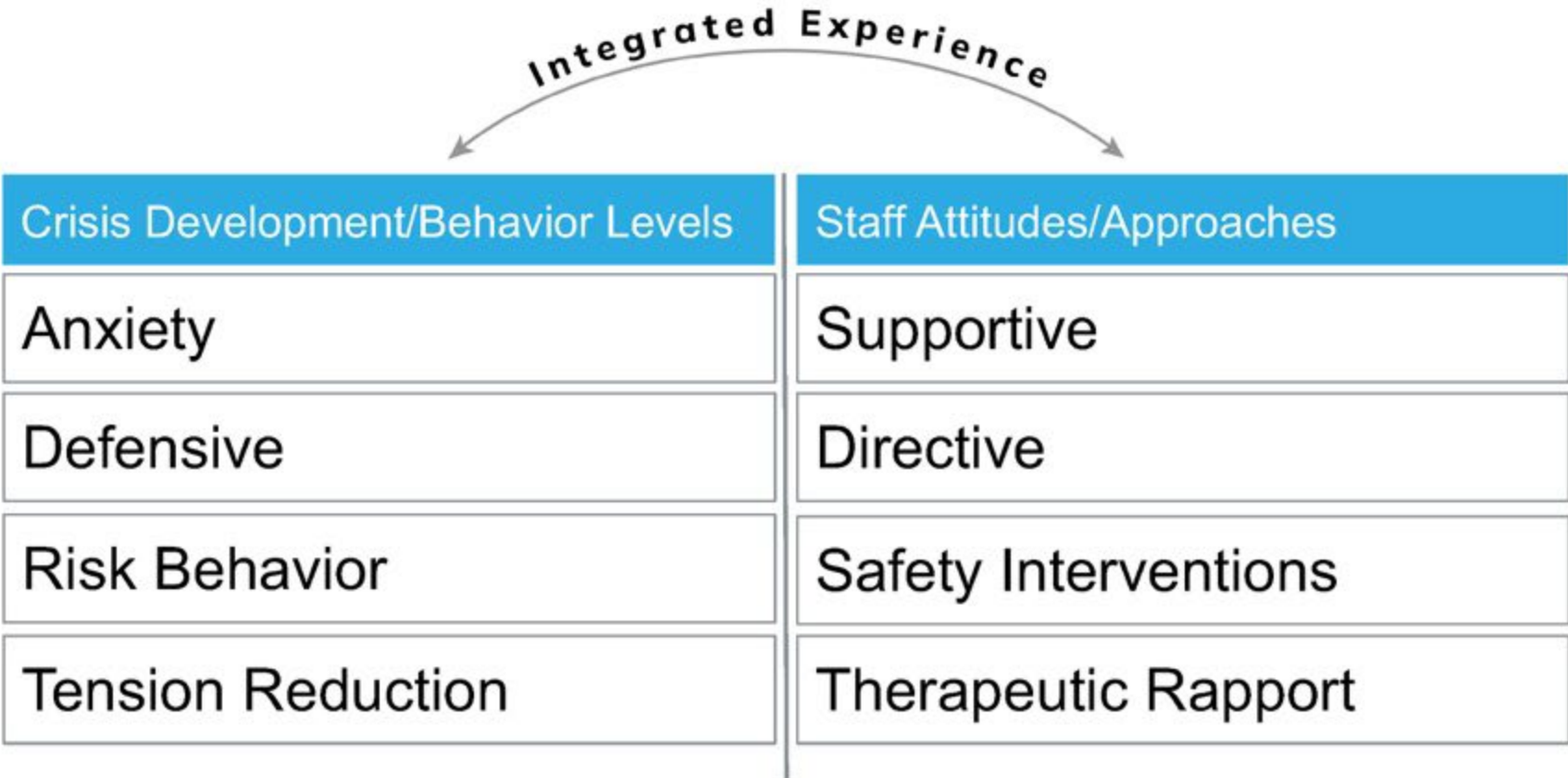
Manage and respond to crises



MODULE 2

The CPI *Crisis Development Model*SM

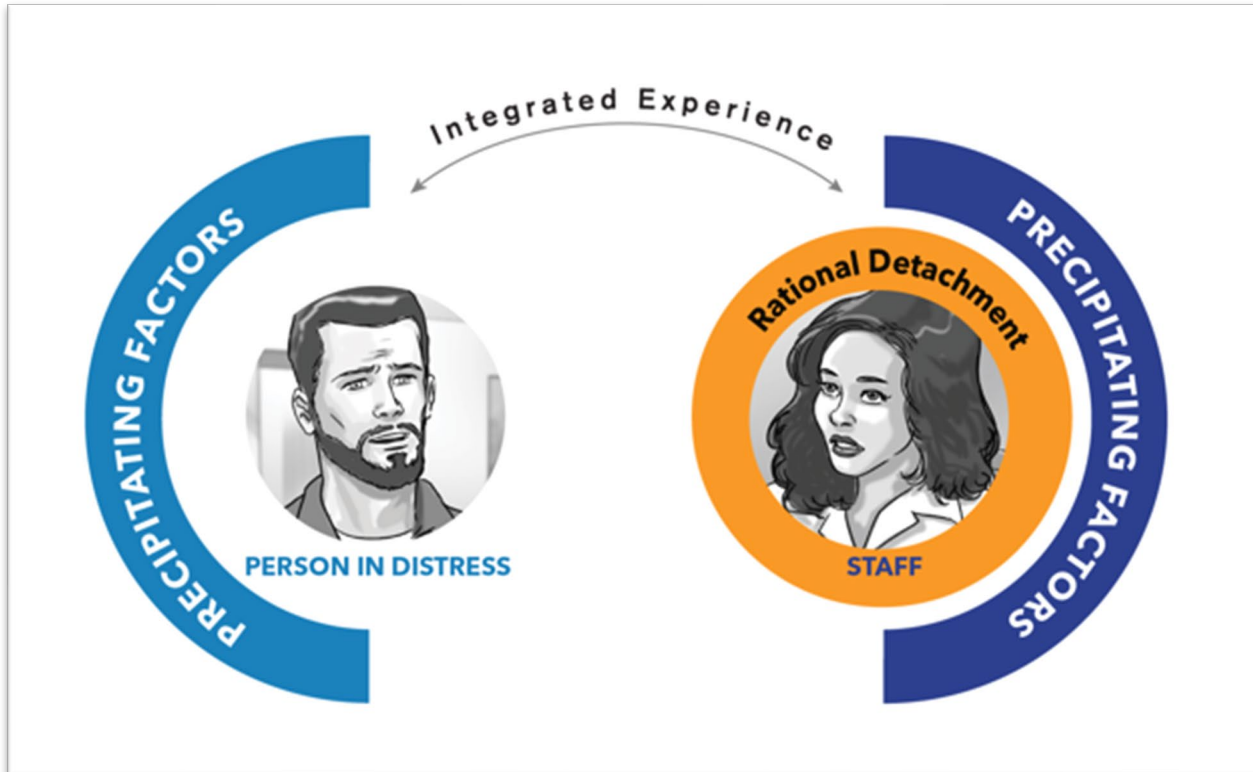
The CPI *Crisis Development Model*SM





Integrated Experience

Integrated Experience



Precipitating Factors



What are Precipitating Factors?



Precipitating Factors

Precipitating Factors are factors that influence behavior. They could be temporary due to a recent event, or they could be something the person has been living with for a long time.

Weather: Heat, drought, storms, floods, property damage, etc.

Financial: Job loss, markets/prices, unexpected costs, etc.

Stress: Running late, missing deadlines, loved one is upset, not feeling heard, etc.

Precipitating Factors



Which factors do you think you can influence? How would you do that?

Precipitating Factors



How does knowledge of your own Precipitating Factors help you interact with people at work?

Rational Detachment



Rational Detachment

Rational Detachment



What is Rational Detachment?

Rational Detachment is recognizing the need to remain professional by managing your own behavior and attitude.

Strategies to Help with Rational Detachment

- <https://platform.crisisprevention.com/Training-Center/Classroom-Videos-and-Resources/Training-Videos#>

Rational Detachment Strategies in a Crisis Moment

STRATEGY



Breathe

HOW DOES THIS HELP?

Research has shown that deep breathing enables more air to flow into your body. This can calm your nerves, reducing stress and anxiety.

Rational Detachment Strategies in a Crisis Moment

STRATEGY



Use grounding

HOW DOES THIS HELP?

Focusing on some aspect of the physical world rather than your thoughts and feelings can help you regulate your emotions.

Rational Detachment Strategies in a Crisis Moment

STRATEGY



Think, then say

HOW DOES THIS HELP?

Thinking about what you will say helps you choose your words carefully.

Rational Detachment Strategies in a Crisis Moment

STRATEGY



Observe

HOW DOES THIS HELP?

Objectively observing behavior can prevent your emotions, past experiences, and implicit bias from influencing how you see the behavior and the situation.

Rational Detachment Strategies in a Crisis Moment

STRATEGY



Ask for help

HOW DOES THIS HELP?

Sometimes, you recognize when your Precipitating Factors are impacting your ability to rationally detach. In these times, you need to step away. Allow a coworker to take over. Continuing to engage in the situation can escalate the situation.

Precipitating Factors & Rational Detachment Summary

- Your own attitude and behavior influence the other person's behavior and the outcome.
- Precipitating Factors help you understand behaviors, concerns, and needs.
- By being aware of your Precipitating Factors and rationally detaching, you can maintain calm and focus.

Rational Detachment

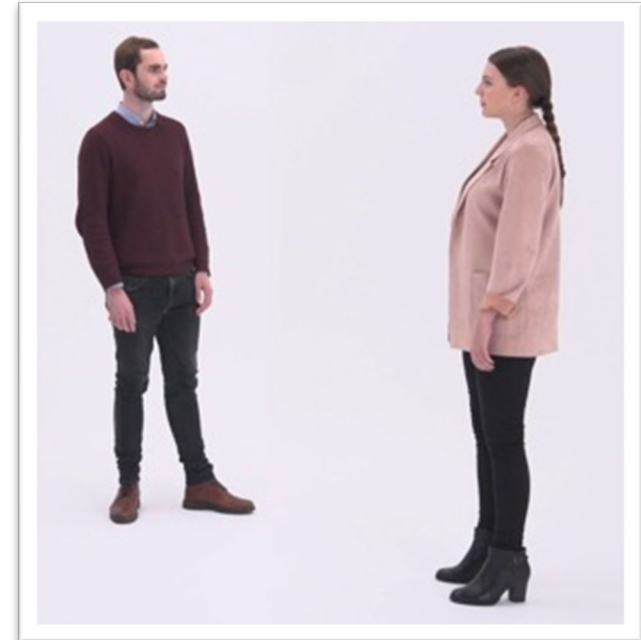
Rational Detachment strategies you can use in a crisis moment.

In your groups, discuss and use these phrases to complete the table:

- Ask for help
- Observe
- Use grounding
- Breathe
- Think, then say

Refer to the challenging situation you identified at the beginning. How could rational detachment help in this situation?

Supportive Communication Skills



Forms of Communication

VERBAL



The words used to send the message.

PARAVERBAL



The way words are said, such as the tone, volume, and speed used.

NON-VERBAL



Body language such as gestures, facial expressions and eye contact, personal space, posture, and use of touch.

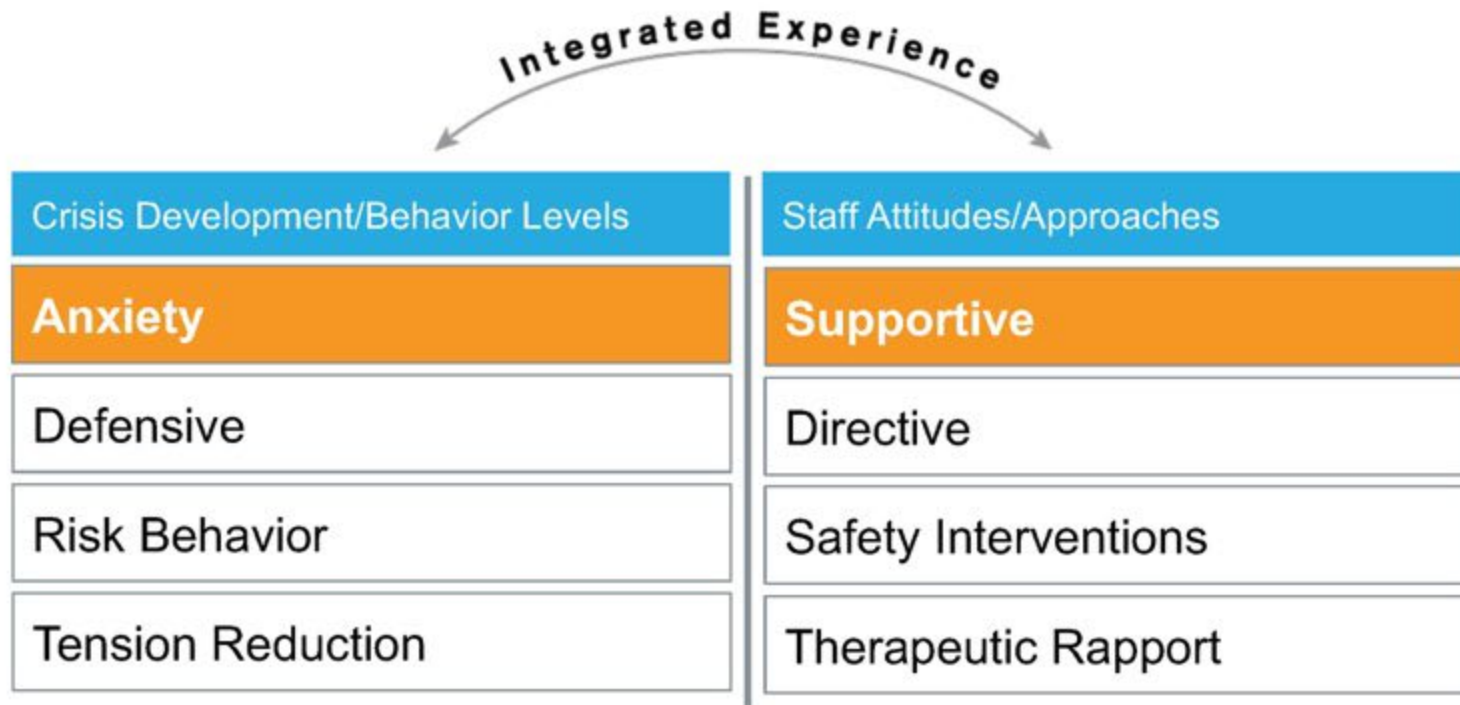
Identifying Behaviors at the Anxiety Level



How does a person show anxiety using the different forms of communication (verbal, paraverbal, and non-verbal)?

The Supportive Approach

The CPI *Crisis Development Model*SM



Communication Considerations



AGE



**COGNITIVE
FUNCTIONING**



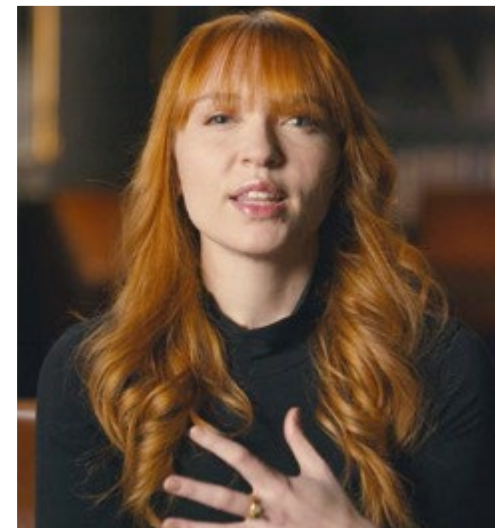
CULTURE



**GENDER
IDENTITY**



**PREVIOUS LIFE
EXPERIENCES**



Summary

- Good communication skills establish and maintain rapport.
- Be supportive.
- The *Supportive Stance*SM helps you communicate respect, appear non-threatening, and maximize safety.

Responding to Defensive Behaviors



The Directive Approach

- Use short, simple phrases that the person can follow easily.
- Provide limits and choices.
- Objectively analyze the situation.
- Supplement directive responses with other interventions.

Directive Strategies

Information-Seeking Question

Give a rational response to the question asked.

Intimidation

Always take a threat seriously. Assess the threat and the risk of harm and then choose the best response.

Refusal/Release

Provide safe and respectful choices and explain the possible outcomes (limit setting). Give the person time to process.

Release

Let them vent and acknowledge their feelings.

Challenging Question

Downplay the challenge and stick to the original topic.

Discussion Questions

What factors would help you determine if an **information-seeking question** is defensive? (Consider context.)

Why does downplaying the challenge and sticking to the original topic work best when a person asks a **challenging question**?

There are many factors that could contribute to their **Refusal** behavior. How would you alter your response in this situation?

How would you differentiate signs of **Release** from signs of Risk Behavior?

How would you respond to **Intimidation** if the threat expresses *no* imminent or immediate harm? And how would you respond if the threat expresses imminent or immediate harm?

Review: The Directive Approach

When responding to defensive behavior:

- Keep it short and simple.
- Stick to the topic.
- Provide choices.
- Allow venting.
- Provide time to let the person process.
- Assess the level of risk.
- Call for help if needed.

Limit Setting

Remember

Limit setting is using short, simple statements to offer a person clear choices and clarify boundaries of acceptable behavior.

Write down one example of a limit-setting pattern that you can use during stressful situations.

Summary

- Assess the situation before you react. Use a range of responses depending on the defensive behavior.
- Manage your fear and anxiety, use rational detachment, and continue to be supportive when appropriate.

Identifying the Severity of Harm

- Age and gender identity
- Cognitive ability of the person
- Level of their anger
- Potential to cause harm—a bigger, stronger person may have greater potential to cause harm
- Intent to cause harm—a bigger, stronger person may have greater potential but may not intend to cause harm
- Misuse of alcohol or other substances
- Presence or absence of others
- Items that could cause further harm or injury (some common items may seem harmless but could still be used to inflict injury)
- Their potential and intent to use the item (the severity of harm can increase if the person uses it as a weapon)
- Availability of support from colleagues

Understanding Risk

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Identifying the Severity of Harm

Remember and Discuss:

The level of risk in the moment of Risk Behavior depends on the severity of harm that can arise.

In groups, using your original challenging situation: Discuss what you would consider about the behavior, the person, and the environment to accurately identify the severity of harm.

Summary

- Use the *Decision-Making Matrix*SM to assess the risk of a behavior and the severity of harm. Then identify the safety intervention that is a last resort, reasonable, and proportionate to manage the risk.
- Always consider verbal and environmental non-restrictive interventions first.
- Know when and how to use a collaborative approach or call for help.

Role-Play Activity: Using Supportive and Directive Approaches

Person in Distress

Respond to the situation by showing behaviors at the Anxiety and Defensive levels.

Challenge your partner by showing a range of behaviors at these levels. When you feel that the staff member is using the right approaches, de-escalate to Tension Reduction.

Staff Member

Be supportive and directive to the person's behaviors.

Supportive

- Use of the *Supportive Stance*SM
- Verbal, paraverbal, and non-verbal communication
- Listening with empathy
- Observing the person's verbal and non-verbal cues to adjust the supportive approach

Directive

- Limit setting
- Using short and simple sentences
- Providing time to let the person process
- Allowing venting
- Assessing risk and calling for help if needed

Breakout 1: Role-Play Activity: The Supportive Approach

Extension: A local farmer comes into the office looking distressed. His face is red, his shoulders are slumped, and he's frowning. He wants to talk to someone about selling his farm, as he just can't take the stress of the drought and the heat on his land and livestock anymore. A staff member he knows comes and sits with him, acknowledging how hard times are and tells him we do care about him. They tell him that we can work together to pull some people together to help him during this stressful time.



Breakout 2: Role-Play Activity: The Supportive Approach

Extension: A new educator has joined your local office team. During the welcome meeting with the team, a long-time educator seemed cold and didn't stay long to meet their colleague. As the week goes on, this educator seems more irritable and disengaged with the team. On Friday at lunch, the long-term educator starts asking the new employee questions, which seem to be more of an interrogation. An office support staff member happens to be in the office kitchen while the conversation takes place. They ask about their work history, how long ago they got their degree, if they know people who work in their program area, etc. Then they loudly exclaim, "Well, you must have connections with somebody to get this job and hired at an Associate level when the rest of us had to start at an Assistant!! I'm so sick of all the lies and favoritism that happens here! I doubt you'll last 5 years!" Unfortunately, a class was being held at the office during this time and participants overheard the entire conversation.



Breakout 3: Role-Play Activity: The Supportive Approach

Extension: A programming staff member holds a mandatory training for farmers. This training is provided in the evening to meet the farmers' needs. The staff asks another educator to join them, as she has received several calls with farmers upset about the cost of this training. Just before the training begins, a man walks in and shout, "Oh, no way is a woman is gonna train me on this crap!" His comment is left with a few chuckles, but mostly silence from the group. The staff member ignores the comment and proceeds to begin the program. Again, the man loudly makes a derogatory comment about the female staff. At this time, another audience member stands up and shouts, "Shut up or I'll shut you up!"



Breakout 4: Role-Play Activity: The Supportive Approach

Extension: At your county fair, a 4-H parent is seen from afar, walking with determination toward a 4-H Assistant. The parent looks angry or upset and has fists clenched. The 4-H Assistant doesn't see the parent coming and is met with the parent asking who the judges were for photography. The 4-H Assistant responds that she can't remember and will have to look. The parent moves to block the Assistant from walking to the office and points their finger into the Assistant's chest, yelling, "I will NOT have my child get a red ribbon—you WILL get me the judge's name and number NOW!!"



Role-Play Activity: Using Supportive and Directive Approaches

Person in Distress

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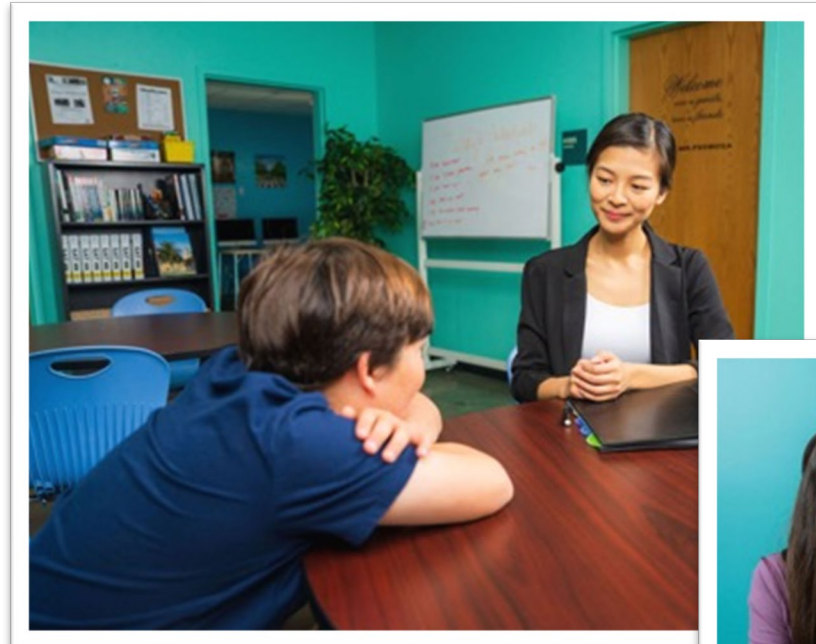
Supportive

- Use of the *Supportive Stance*SM
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Directive

- Limit setting
- Using short and simple sentences
- Providing time to let the person process
- Allowing venting
- Assessing risk and calling for help if needed

Post-Crisis



Supporting in the Present

1. How would you show your support to the individual after a crisis?

- Use supportive verbal, non-verbal, and paraverbal communication.
- Ask open-ended questions to identify how they are feeling.
- Listen with empathy.
- Acknowledge their feelings and show care and concern.
- Don't rush them to talk about the incident.

2. You, as staff, cannot provide effective Therapeutic Rapport before you reach physical and emotional calm yourself. What can you do before interacting with the person in distress?

- Take some time to gain your composure.
- Ask for a staff member to step in if you need to leave the room.
- Coordinate with other staff to address the immediate needs of staff involved.

Planning for the Future

What are some questions you can ask the individual to identify preventive approaches and improve staff interventions?

- What will help you feel settled and calm when you're stressed?
- What are some things that I can do or say to help?
- What are some things that do not help?
- How much time do you typically need before you're ready to talk about an incident?

Building Your Resilience

Managing a crisis can be traumatic for you, as staff members, as well.

- Reflect on how the incident affected you.
- Practice self-care techniques.
- Invest in additional long-term support strategies if needed.

**Thank You
for Your Participation!**

