

# Try it again!

How behaviours and emotions affect the outcome of conflict



A conflict defusing toolkit for teachers, youth workers, case workers and others who work with young people who have challenging behaviours or lifestyles.

*Communication in conflict*

**dfuse**

Working with Pathways Children's Services & Lifelong Learning in Hounslow, Dfuse has developed two short conflict defusing sessions for young people who have challenging behaviours or lifestyles.

Thanks to the London Borough of Hounslow.

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# Introduction

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Think of a conversation that went horribly wrong. If you could *try it again* what would you do differently? Listen more? Not take it personally? Not get angry? Dealing with conflict is difficult – and when emotions are high it can be hard to behave rationally and stay calm.

This toolkit contains two short sessions for young people on defusing conflict. The first session shows how behaviours can affect the outcome of conflict situations. Will they end peacefully, with a positive outcome for all or be destructive with everyone losing out? The second session shows how emotions can affect our behaviours and explores ways to moderate emotions when in conflict.

Both sessions include a short film as well as activities and discussion threads which encourage young people to consider their own behaviours and emotions when in conflict. Participants are encouraged to consider situations they would like to ‘try again’ and to explore de-escalating behaviours they could apply to similar situations in the future.

The films were produced by the excellent youth led media company Fully Focused ([fullyfocusedproductions.com](http://fullyfocusedproductions.com)). Their team of young producers identified two real-life conflict scenarios which show just how easily things can get out of hand. Watch how escalating behaviours make a situation worse. Pause and discuss what happened. Then watch as the young people *try it again* in the alternative ending. This time they manage their emotions and choose de-escalating behaviours which improve how the situations turn out. The films can be downloaded by logging in to <http://dfuse.org.uk/mydfuse>.

The Try it Again! toolkit is designed for use by teachers, youth workers, case workers and others who work with young people with challenging behaviours or lifestyles. The sessions can be delivered to groups in a lesson or informal workshop. Using this toolkit, you can deliver the sessions yourself, during usual activity time, rather than organising special sessions, which vulnerable young people, or those with chaotic lifestyles, often do not turn up to – which has been the experience of many.

Teachers and workers told us that they would like to explore conflict after incidents, when the impact of not managing conflict effectively is fresh in the young people’s minds. Using the sessions to do this with groups provides an indirect, and non-judgemental, approach for discussing behaviour modification. Notes on adapting the materials for one-to-one sessions are also included.

Combining the films with the discussions and activities will help young people to:

- Identify behaviours which can escalate and de-escalate conflict situations,
- Recognise how their emotions can affect their behaviour,
- Learn ways to de-escalate conflict and give themselves a better chance of getting a good outcome.

In this toolkit we focus on the behaviours of young people and how what they do, or don't do, can affect whether a situation escalates or not. That is not suggesting that young people are always the cause of conflict. You will see in the films that the behaviours of the others are far from de-escalating. Rather, we know that young people will face anger and provocation in their lives and they cannot always rely on the adults, bosses and people in authority to be the 'grown-ups.' Responding to confrontation with aggression will only lead to young people losing out.

The activities in this resource are designed to encourage young people be the 'bigger person' and take responsibility for defusing conflict situations in order to get the outcome they want. In short: young people will come across plenty of people who do not manage conflict well or who will deliberately provoke them. If young people do not take responsibility for de-escalating, then – it's not fair – but they will lose out.

# Session One - Escalating or De-escalating

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The objective of this session is for young people to be able to identify escalating and de-escalating behaviours.

## 1. Definitions

Start by providing definitions of the key words that will be used in the sessions, these are:

- **Conflict:** occurs when people disagree or want different things. Disagreements and wants may be actual, perceived or based on a misunderstanding.
- **Conflict escalation:** is when a conflict situation gets worse due to the behaviours of those involved. Situations can become confrontational, personal and destructive. Once a conflict has escalated the issue becomes harder to resolve as people can become more focused on what happened to make the situation escalate, rather than the original point of conflict. Often all involved lose out.
- **Conflict de-escalation:** is when conflict situations get better (or don't get worse) as a result of the positive behaviours of those involved. At least one person takes responsibility for the situation not getting out of hand. Often all involved feel better about the situation even if they don't get exactly what they want.
- **Escalating behaviours:** are things that people do or say that anger or threaten other people or that show a lack of respect for other people or their point of view. Behaviours may be deliberate or unintentional. They can be actions made without thinking such as: impulsive responses to strong emotions. or misunderstandings.
- **De-escalating behaviours:** are things that people do or say that help people to feel that they and their point of view are being respected. De-escalating behaviours are deliberate. They are designed to help other people feel better about their position so that they can calm down and have a rational conversation.

Note: everything you do or say (or don't do or say) sends a message. You may or may not mean to send a message. The message may be interpreted as it was meant or it may be misunderstood.

How you provide these definitions is up to you, but you are aiming to ensure that everyone understands the words and their meaning before using them in the rest of the session. You could display the headings and ask the participants to suggest what they mean or use handout 1 (page 20) which contains each of the definitions. You could give out the handout and discuss the definitions or cut up the page into cards and ask participants to match the definitions to the headings.

## 2. Examples

This activity helps the group to deepen their understanding of the definitions by exploring real-life examples. Give the group two examples of escalating behaviours (from the list below) and, working in small groups, ask participants to provide two more examples of escalating behaviours.

Then provide two examples of de-escalating behaviours (from the list below) and again ask the small groups to identify two more examples.

Any of the following could be used as your examples, or may be raised by the group.

### Escalating behaviours

- Shouting at the other person
- Personal insults
- Making threats
- Being sarcastic
- Embarrassing the other person
- Being disrespectful
- Ignoring the other person
- Being aggressive
- Pushing the other person
- Dismissing the other person's point of view

### De-escalating behaviours

- Listening to the other person
- Managing your emotions
- Talking in a normal relaxed way
- Saying 'sorry' if you are in the wrong
- Taking time out to calm down
- Asking questions to try to understand
- Showing respect
- Being friendly
- Thinking before acting
- Giving the other person space and time to calm down

Note: One person is not responsible for the behaviour of another. You are not responsible if your behaviour 'causes' someone to become angry, that is their responsibility. However, if you want a situation to calm down, or for a difficult conversation not to escalate, then there are some behaviours to avoid (escalating behaviours) and others to deliberately adopt (de-escalating behaviours). This will increase your chances of the situation not becoming aggressive and you getting what you want. Anger breeds anger. Aggression breeds aggression. But, it is hard to stay angry at someone who is being reasonable, apologising and showing respect.

### 3. Card sort

Use this activity to consolidate and assess the group's understanding of the definitions. Organise the group into smaller groups. Cut out the cards on handout 2 (page 21) and give one set to each group. Ask the groups to sort the cards into two piles: escalating and de-escalating behaviours, and discuss the results.

Note: Conflict and difficult conversations can be managed peacefully and positively, or be allowed to escalate into something more confrontational, aggressive and destructive – which often benefits no one. Situations can escalate when two people keep doing things (either deliberately or unintentionally) that threaten or anger each other. As emotions rise the behaviours become bigger, more destructive and more irrational – up to the point when someone does something extreme or the two 'walk away.'

This activity should be treated as a 'break point'. If the card sort activity shows that participants clearly understand the definitions, then move to stage 4. If not, then the definitions and examples should be investigated again. It is vital that participants understand these definitions in order to successfully complete the activities that follow.

### 4. Identification

The purpose of this activity is for young people to identify the escalating behaviours in a short filmed scenario. Show film one "Stairway" from the beginning to 1 minute 44 seconds.

Ask participants to individually write down the behaviours that they remember as being escalating. Give each young person the worksheet in handout 3 (page 22) to record their responses. Watch the film again (pausing at 1'44") and ask participants to double-check what they have identified as escalating behaviours.

### 5. Discussion

With the whole group have a brief discussion about what was escalating. You may want go back through the film and pause it at the various escalation points to discuss. The key points in the film are highlighted for you on page 15. You could also use handout 4 (page 23), which highlights five examples of escalating behaviours, to prompt discussion. Using the handout should also help those who only identified a few behaviours to continue to be involved in the session.

In small groups, ask participants to discuss what de-escalating behaviours could have been used to stop the situation from escalating? Refer back to the card sort activity to jog memories if necessary. Spend more

time working with those who struggled the most with the card sort activity. Bring the whole group back together, discuss the ideas and record the responses for all to see.

## 6. Identification

Watch the “Stairway” film again, starting this time at 1 minute 52 seconds and play to the end. In this ending the young people *try it again* using de-escalating behaviours. Ask participants to individually write down the behaviours that they remember as being de-escalating. Give each young person the worksheet in handout 5 (page 24) to record their responses. Watch the film again from 1 minute 52 seconds and ask participants to double-check what they have identified as de-escalating behaviours. The key points in the film are highlighted for you on page 16.

## 7. Discussion

With the whole group have a brief discussion about what was de-escalating. Compare what was identified in the film to the suggestions recorded during stage 5. You may want to use the ideas in handout 6 (page 25) which highlights five examples of de-escalating behaviours to prompt discussion.

Finish this session by exploring this question: Did the de-escalating approach turn out better for everyone? Be sure to highlight the benefits of taking a defusing approach. Ask the group to consider: *what were those involved doing before the conflict occurred and what would they like to be doing afterwards?* Which approach would enable them to get what they want?

## 8. Relation

Ask participants to individually think about a situation that they would like to try again, where their behaviours contributed to a situation escalating. Ask them to think about what happened to escalate the situation. What did they do? How did this affect the situation? If they could try it again what would they do differently? i.e. which de-escalating behaviours would they use? Use the worksheet in handout 7 (page 26) to help with this if necessary.

Don't ask participants to share their situation, as this may be sensitive or involve other people in the group. Rather, ask individuals to volunteer to say which defusing behaviour they think would help if they were able to try their situation again. Conclude by highlighting the most common defusing behaviours identified by the group.

## Session Two - Emotions and Behaviours

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The objective of this session is for young people to be able to: recognise both physical and emotional responses to conflict; recognise the importance of managing emotions; and know when to choose de-escalating behaviours.

### 1. Relation

This activity requires young people to identify emotional and physical reactions to conflict. Start by encouraging participants to recall a time they were in conflict. This could be the same as situation in Stage 8 of Session One. Ask them to do this in silence to avoid feeling pressured to share uncomfortable memories. Ask participants to write a list of the:

- emotions they felt during the conflict. You may need to prompt by asking: Did you feel angry; annoyed; upset; confused; etc.?
- physical reactions they had during the conflict. You may need to prompt by asking: Did your body feel different? Were you thinking differently? How did you react?

Use the worksheet in handout 8 (page 27) to help with this activity if necessary.

Bring the group together and discuss the emotional and physical reactions to conflict. Be prepared to lead this discussion in the event that participants do not want to share their thoughts or risk losing face.

Note: Emotional responses are driven by our perception of the meaning of the other person's behaviour. For example, 'they are doing that on purpose to annoy me and that makes me angry.' Or 'they mean to harm me and that makes me fearful.' This may or may not be an accurate assessment of the situation.

For some young people their responses to emotions are pre-programmed. A Dfuse trainer once asked a boy in a Secure Training Centre "have you ever thought about not hitting someone when they annoy you?" The boy had not considered that there may be an alternative approach. Whilst some people have a low threshold for becoming aggressive others do not let their emotions rule their responses.

Fear and anger are the most common emotions to escalate conflict. Both of these emotions cause a release of adrenalin into our blood stream giving physical responses such as: increased heart rate; reduced ability to see and hear as we are focused on the threat; distorted perception; reduced rationality; and reduced ability to do fine motor tasks, as blood is diverted to the major muscles for 'fight or flight.'

Anger may also lead to other physical responses such as: clenching of the fists and jaw; staring; adopting a fighting stance (standing sideways, head down and leaning in), being motionless or using big arm movements; and aggressive gestures (pointing, etc.)

## 2. Card Sort

This activity aims to build on the discussion from the previous stage by consolidating the list of emotional and physical reactions to conflict. Organise the group into smaller groups. Cut out the cards on handout 9 (page 28) and give one set to each group. Ask the groups to sort the cards into two piles: emotional reactions to conflict and physical reactions to conflict.

Bring the groups back together and discuss the results, clarifying which are emotions (left hand column) and which are physical responses (right hand column). These are not exhaustive lists. Extend this activity by asking participants to think about one of the emotions and to suggest how someone might react physically if they were feeling this emotion. For example, if someone was feeling nervous they might react by laughing, crying, fighting or running away.

## 3. Identification

This activity helps to consolidate the learning from Session 1 and extend it by asking young people to identify escalating behaviours, and to consider the emotions that might be driving these behaviours, in another filmed scenario. Show film two "Workplace" from the beginning to 1 minute 2 seconds.

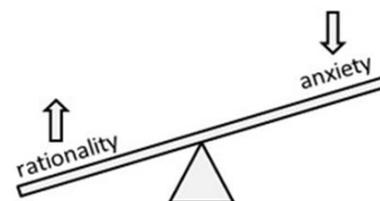
Ask participants to individually write down the behaviours that they remember as being escalating. Ask participants to identify the emotions shown by those involved. Give each young person the worksheet in handout 10 (page 29) to record their responses. Watch the film again (pausing at 1'02") and ask participants to double-check what they have identified as escalating behaviours and the emotions. The key points in the film are highlighted for you on page 17.

## 4. Discussion

With the whole group have a brief discussion about what behaviours were escalating. Use handout 11 (page 30) which highlights five examples of escalating behaviours and emotions to prompt discussion if necessary. Ask the group to share the emotions they identified. Ask which emotions led to which behaviours. Ask the group to think about one of the emotions identified and then to think about how they behave when they feel like that.

Note: Mood affects how someone responds to others. Anxiety, anger or tiredness may lead people to respond more aggressively than normal, they may even act completely out of character.

When anxiety is high, rationality is low. It is not possible to have a rational conversation with someone who is highly anxious. Think of this as a seesaw – as anxiety goes up, rationality goes down, and vice-versa. There is no point trying to get your point across, or to solve the problem, when the other person is highly anxious.



## 5. Identification

Watch the “Workplace” film again, starting this time at 1 minute 2 seconds and play to the end. Ask participants to individually write down the behaviours that they remember as being de-escalating and the emotions shown by the those involved. Give each young person the worksheet in handout 12 (page 31) to record their responses. Watch the film again from 1 minute 2 seconds and ask participants to double-check what they have identified as de-escalating behaviours and the emotions. The key points in the film are highlighted for you on page 18.

Note: Behaviours which follow strong emotions are often spontaneous and can be broken down into the following process: a trigger (someone else’s behaviour); a belief about that behaviour (it’s deliberate, inconsiderate, etc.); and an emotional response to that belief (anger, frustration, etc.) This may then lead to a physical display of that emotion (shout, hit, aggression, etc.)

To reduce the effect of emotional responses we must interrupt the process described above. We could change our beliefs, perhaps be curious about another person’s behaviour rather than make assumptions. We could decide to not take things personally. We could recognise what makes us angry and take steps to moderate that feeling. We could take a step back (get further away from a threat to reduce fear) and take time to cool off. And we could adopt de-escalating behaviours and avoid escalating ones.

## 6. Discussion

With the whole group have a brief discussion about the de-escalating behaviours in the film. You may want to use handout 13 (page 32) which highlights five examples of de-escalating behaviours to prompt

discussion. Using the handout should also help those who only identified a few behaviours to continue to be involved in the session.

Ask what are the de-escalating behaviours? Are the emotions shown in the second ending of the film the same as the first? Is Gary experiencing different emotions or is he managing his responses to those emotions?

Note: Gary's emotions are same in both versions of the film. He is upset and frustrated as a result of his phone call. In the first film he allows his emotions to affect how he responds to his supervisor when she challenges him. In the second film he recognises that him being angry and frustrated is nothing to do with his supervisor and he manages his responses to these emotions. The supervisor is annoyed in both films. In the first ending of the film Gary's behaviour escalates the situation and the supervisor becomes angrier. In the second ending of the film Gary's behaviours encourage the supervisor to calm down which, whilst she is still not happy with him, improves the conversation.

## 7. Role play

This activity provides the opportunity for young people to rehearse applying de-escalating behaviours during conflict. They will show emotions and the behaviours that follow.

Organise the group into smaller groups. Ask each group to come up with a conflict scenario or provide them with one, perhaps:

- An argument with friends, about an accidentally ripped coat or lost phone.
- A run in with people in authority, such as a Police stop and search or invalid bus ticket.
- An argument at home, about which TV programme to watch.
- Being approached by a stranger, being asked by a shopkeeper to move on because "customers have complained that you are intimidating."

Ask the groups to act out the scenario. For the first run through ask them to show escalating behaviours, driven by emotions. Make it clear that role plays should not use real violence. Role plays can escalate quickly, much the same way as real conflicts would, if not well managed.

Ask the participants to *try it again*. This time they should act the same scenario, but at key points manage their emotions and show de-escalating behaviours. You could also try a scenario where one person wants to escalate and the other wants to de-escalate.

You may feel that role play is not suitable for your group, so you could consider alternatives for exploring scenarios, such as: create a story board for a film, create a newspaper article or simply theoretically consider potential responses to a given scenario. You'll need to adjust the next stage if you decide not to use role play.

## 8. Discussion

Pause and then discuss what happened:

- Which physical and emotional responses did they show during the first version of their role play? Were they different in the second run through?
- Was it easy to tell what emotions other people were feeling? How did they look? How did they stand? What were their faces and hands doing?
- What behaviours were shown? Which were the most offensive (and escalating) behaviours? What was said? How was it said? What were the physical gestures? How long did it take to get out of hand? How realistic were the role plays?
- Did it feel better to be escalating or de-escalating the situation? Was it easier to escalate or de-escalate? In real-life you cannot *try it again*, ask participants what they can do to de-escalate rather than escalate a situation?

Try to elicit the responses:

- Think before I act.
- Choose not to escalate.
- Choose the outcome I want, do things that will help get that and avoid things that won't help.
- Manage my emotions.
- Use any of the de-escalating behaviour discussed earlier.

## Delivering One to One

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Delivering sessions with groups provides a diversity of opinion and useful debate, however, there may be times when you'd prefer to work with young people on a one to one basis. You know the young people you work with and may already be familiar with adapting materials for one to one sessions, so take what you want from the ideas below:

- Approaches to conflict vary greatly and individuals have different anger triggers and responses to confrontation. One to one conversations allow for deeper exploration of an individual's responses. It also provides a safe and trusting environment for the young person to talk about their emotions and say things which might be difficult in front of a group. Using activities to initiate a conversation provides an indirect and non-threatening approach for challenging an individual's behaviour.
- Set up the session ensuring the young person doesn't feel like they are being punished or told off. Dfuse's materials work best when they are delivered in a non-judgmental manner, where there is no blame and behaviours are neither good nor bad, but they do have consequences, i.e. some behaviours are likely to lead situations to escalate, which in turn can lead to negative consequences.
- Use active listening skills to keep the conversation going and to encourage the young person to talk freely. Encourage flexibility to allow the discussion to go wherever it might go, using more structured activities to fall back on and re-focus the conversation if necessary.
- Encourage open-ended questions and prompts so that the young person doesn't feel like they are being 'taught' but instead are discovering new approaches for de-escalating conflict themselves.
- Writing or drawing might be a good way in to talking about difficult feelings.
- The timing might feel different in a one to one session. An hour might be too long to stay on topic. Plan the session carefully and keep focused so that you use the limited time you have effectively.
- Have enough activities and conversation starters ready in case some fall flat and lead nowhere.
- If appropriate, share your own experiences of a time when you feel that your actions led to a situation escalating. Choose something similar to the young person's experience to highlight that you too are fallible. Don't use an example that is too personal. Don't over share. Do explain what you learnt from that experience. Don't spend too long talking about yourself.

Here are some ideas for how the tools within this resource might be used in a one to one session:

- **Definitions:** As with a group session it is important to ensure that the young person understands the meanings of the words you use. This needn't be done at the beginning, but do take care explain any new terms and check the young person's understanding.

- **Card sort:** Ask the young person to sort the Behaviour Cards (handout 2) into piles of things that escalate and things that de-escalate conflict. Then ask the young person to identify which of these behaviours they use when in conflict. You might need to give an example of a real conflict situation to help. If you feel the need for a one to one session, then it is likely that the young person will identify mostly escalating behaviours. Ask why they use escalating behaviours and why they don't use de-escalating behaviours. Ask how situations usually end. Are they happy with the outcomes of conflict? What have been the consequences? Ask if they would like conflict to be end differently. Ask them to select some of the de-escalating behaviours they could do more of, and discuss how easy of difficult that might be. Try to encourage some kind of commitment from the young person to try to avoid some escalating behaviours, or to do some of the de-escalating behaviours. Separately, or building on the conversation above, have a similar conversation using the Emotional and Physical Responses Cards (handout 8). Help the young person to identify which emotions drive which of their behaviours. Ask what do you do when you feel...? Talk about why. Talk about the consequences letting emotions drive behaviours. Try to encourage them to identify strategies for managing their emotions and behaviours.
- **Films:** Use the films to start conversations. They can help you to talk about escalating and de-escalating behaviours in a neutral way as you are both observing a third party. Ask the young person how they would respond in a similar situation. Use the two endings of the films to discuss the consequences of escalating behaviours and the benefits of a de-escalating approach. Be prepared for the young person to dismiss the situation or characters as not being relevant to them, for example the conversation might stop suddenly if the young person said "He's an idiot, he should apologise." If this happens you might need to move on to the next activity in your plan.
- **Worksheets:** The worksheets in handouts 7 and 8 provide useful templates for conversations about previous conflicts. This might be something recent that you'd particularly like to address, such as an incident of aggression or violence with another young person. Or it could be something chosen by the young person. Use the questions in the worksheets to guide to conversation, exploring key issues as they arise. If necessary use the cards in handout 2 to prompt the young person's thinking when considering questions about escalating and de-escalating behaviours, and use the cards in handout 9 to help with questions about emotions and physical responses.

## Film Notes: Stairway

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The three young people seem to be friends and are enjoying a joke and hanging out in the communal area of a housing block. Their noise disturbs a local resident who confronts the young people.

### Ending One: The situation escalates

**@27s** the two young men begin to banter about whether one owes the other a pound or not.

**@30s** No Hat's body language starts to change, he begins to show that he is annoyed. He glances to the young woman for support. He then fixes his eye contact on Hat (Joe) and begins to point at him.

**@36s** the young woman thinks this situation could escalate and tries to intervene.

**@42s** both Hat and No Hat move a little closer so that they are in reach of each other. Hat is showing the palm of his hand, perhaps to highlight his honesty, but No Hat pushes the hand away – dismissing Hat's gesture.

**@44s** Hat doesn't like the rejection and keen not to lose face pulls No Hat's hood over his head. Hat is in a dominant position. No Hat doesn't like this, but chooses not to fight back. The young woman doesn't like this and shouts 'get off him.' This adds to the energy of the situation.

**@52s** Hat lets No Hat go, and the two argue.

**@55s** Resident comes out to see what's going on. He looks tired. He might work shifts and is trying to get to sleep. He may also have had previous bad experiences of young people hanging around in the block. All of this could lead him to approach the situation in a bad frame of mind.

**@1m01s** Hat is already agitated and this is likely to affect his response to Resident. No Hat goes quiet.

Resident says 'can I ask what you are doing in the building' and Hat says 'No you can't. Keep it moving bruv.' This is disrespectful and rude and establishes very quickly that this conversation is only going to go one way – it's going to get worse. Hat then fist bumps No Hat to gather support for his behaviour.

**@1m06s** Resident doesn't like being spoken to this way. He pulls Hat around by his arm, gets close and squares up to him.

**@1m08s** Hat responds by shouting at Resident and calling him crazy. He squares up to Resident.

**@1m10s** Resident says 'What?' this is intended to belittle and show that he's not scared of Hat.

**@1m12s** Resident pushes Hat's hat around. This is disrespectful and intended to humiliate (by making Hat look silly). Resident is in Hat's personal space. Hat does not react physically to this, he might be feeling threatened and backs down.

**@1m18s** Resident steps back and Hat may feel less threatened. Hat cannot let it go and has to have the last word "we ain't going nowhere, what you going to do bruv?" This angers Resident and, feeling the stronger of the two, walks towards Hat saying 'go on' encouraging Hat to up the ante.

**@1m25s** No Hat recognises the risk and provides a way out by saying 'it's not that deep.'

**@1m35s** Hat's body language shows he is unhappy with how the situation has gone. Perhaps he didn't

like backing down or feels like he 'lost' the confrontation. Hat still wants the last word, he

shouts at Resident in an attempt to humiliate him and imply that Resident is weak and 'running away.'

**@1m42** Resident is angry and becomes violent.

All of the people in this scenario could have done more to prevent the situation escalating. How did they want their evenings to go? Resident wanted to get back to sleeping. The young people wanted to be able to hang out in a dry and safe place. Can any of them do this now the situation has escalated? Probably not. Someone is likely to get hurt. Someone is likely to call the Police. Could what the young people wanted have co-existed with what Resident wanted? Of course, if the situation wasn't allowed to escalate.

### **Ending Two: What if they could try it again?**

**@2m03s** Hat's initial 'Sorry, what?' has a confrontational tone. Hat is standing his ground, but he isn't rude or disrespectful.

**@2m08s** Hat acknowledges that his actions have affected someone else. He shows that he understands that Resident is entitled to be annoyed about the noise. He apologises and his body language is relaxed, not confrontational.

Hat gives a good reason why they are inside. Saying why you are doing something is very powerful in de-escalating. It helps people to understand your actions and also (if they choose to accept it) gives them a reason to help you.

**@2m13s** No Hat and the young woman join in to help explain. In this ending four people are having a conversation, unlike the first ending. Once a situation becomes 'one versus another' those involved see the other person as the problem and it

is then very difficult to identify solutions. When having a conversation, the conflict can become a shared problem, without it becoming personal.

**@2m29s** Hat, having explained that their options for places to hang out are limited, asks for permission to stay in the block. He is acknowledging that this is the Resident's space and is showing respect.

Resident states his concern – his sleep. This allows all to agree a solution, to keep the noise down.

**@2m45s** Hat and Resident go to shake hands and fist bump. Whilst neither gesture happens this is a display of mutual respect. Both can carry on their evening as intended. Hat and his friends get what they want, to stay in the block. Resident can go back to sleep. No-one got angry. No enemies were made. No-one got hurt. No-one got arrested. No-one's evening – or life – was ruined.

In this ending no-one was trying to make the other person look or feel bad. Everyone was calm, explained their point of view and listened to the others. The reasons given by the young people as to why they were in the block were reasonable and a solution, which suited everyone, was found.

## Film Notes: Workplace

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From the beginning Employee (Gary) appears to be agitated. The phone conversation is not going well and his body language shows that he is not happy: hand gestures, gripping the phone tightly and holding his head in his hands. The last thing that Employee needs is Supervisor (Jessica) on his case right now!

### Ending One: The situation escalates

**@18s** Supervisor comes out and shouts 'hey.'

Employee is clearly frustrated and looks up to the sky. Her presence adds to his tension and further complicates his situation.

**@20s** Supervisor is accountable to her manager for the performance of her team and Employee is making things difficult. Also this isn't the first time Employee has been spoken to, so perhaps she is feeling disrespected.

**@27s** Employee ignores Supervisor and continues to talk on the phone.

**@28s** Supervisor doesn't like being ignored. She becomes impatient and grabs the phone. Any physical 'hands on' response like this is likely to escalate a situation – and it does here. Employee responds angrily to Supervisor – he is already wound up and therefore responds more aggressively than usual saying 'Are you mad?'

**@32s** Supervisor appears to be stunned by the response, maybe even afraid.

**@34s** Employee continues to be angry and dismisses Supervisor "Look, I don't have time for this right now, just go inside yeah." Supervisor's fear quickly gives way to anger. Employee further escalates the situation by saying "Just get out of my face."

**@39s** Employee is not respecting Supervisor's authority which make her angrier. Supervisor pulls rank "I don't know who you think you're talking to." She becomes formal and refers to the work policy on phones. Supervisor shows no interest in why Employee is upset. His behaviours have made it difficult for her to care about what he is dealing with.

**@46s** Employee tells Supervisor to "Shut up".

**@48s** Supervisor has had enough and threatens Employee with being fired. She chooses to get Manager (Mr Williams) involved.

**@50s** Employee rejects the threat and swears "Go and tell the manager, I don't give a fuck." Swearing in a situation like this will often escalate things.

**@53s** Employee displays his anger and frustration by kicking a bin. This creates noise and shows disrespect for the workplace.

**@57s** Manager comes out. He is already feeling negative towards Employee as Supervisor will have told him what is going on (from her point of view). Manager is further annoyed by Employee's unacceptable behaviour - kicking the bins.

**@1m** Employee stops kicking the bins and puts his head in his hands. He knows he has gone too far but it might be too late to save his job.

Employee and Supervisor both let their emotions control how this situation developed. Employee allowed his feelings about his phone call to affect how he spoke to Supervisor and in less than a minute the situation escalated up to the point where he has lost his job.

Employee is experiencing high anxiety and is concerned about the conversation on the phone. He is not in the best frame of mind to have a conversation about working practices. By the time Manager arrives the situation has gone too far. At the beginning Employee was in trouble for talking on his phone, but by the end he is going to be fired because of his displays of anger, aggression and disrespect for Supervisor.

Supervisor's behaviours escalate the situation too, but it is Employee who loses out. It doesn't matter who is in the right or wrong, or who escalates the situation first. What matters is how the situation is managed and how you want it to end.

### **Ending Two: What if they could try it again?**

**@1m13s** Supervisor tries to grab the phone. Employee moves to avoid this. He says "Please, don't." His tone of voice suggests that the call is important. Employee does not allow his frustration with the phone call to affect how he talks to Supervisor. Employee quickly ends the call and gives Supervisor his attention. His body language shows that he is not aggressive: he uses open hand gestures, looks down and away (showing submission) and keeps his distance. He acknowledges that he is doing something wrong and says "I can explain" and "sorry."

**@1m25s** Supervisor is annoyed and does not accept the apology, neither does she listen to the explanation. Employee recognises that Supervisor is upset with him and continues to try to explain, unsuccessfully. Employee does not get angry when Supervisor ignores him.

**@1m31s** Employee takes a second to breathe and thinks about what to do next.

**@1m33s** Manager comes out and is annoyed that a situation is going on. He wants people to get back to work. Employee knows that he is in trouble and takes control of the situation. Employee speaks slowly and politely. He shows respect by referring to Manager by name "Mr Williams."

**@1m40s** Employee apologises and acknowledges his mistake "I know I'm not supposed to be on my phone." This removes the conflict as they all agree that Employee was in the wrong. The conversation then moves to *why* Employee was on the phone.

**@1m44s** Employee apologises to Supervisor. This shows respect and allows Supervisor to save face with Manager. Employee took responsibility and so Supervisor no longer needs to look tough in front of Manager. This allows for a reasonable conversation to take place with Supervisor.

**@1m50s** Employee acknowledges again that he was in the wrong "I know there's no excuses." Employee gives a reason for why he broke the

rules which allows Manager and Supervisor to understand the situation from his point of view.

**@1m58s** Manager is still not happy with the situation, but is willing to accept Employee's

explanation. Manager wants people to get back to work and recognises that Employee might need time to sort things out so that he can carry on without disruption.

In this ending Employee took full responsibility for what he was doing wrong. Instead of hitting out at Supervisor he attempted to get her to understand. When Supervisor initially ignored this Employee kept his cool. When Manager arrived Employee accepted responsibility again and explained his situation. It is hard to stay angry at someone who is reasonable and who says "sorry." Employee showed respect to both Supervisor and Manager and reduced their reasons to be angry with him which allowed for a reasonable conversation to take place. Employee used the conversation to help Manager to understand the difficult position he was in. Manager accepted this and came up with a good way forward.

Again Supervisor did nothing to de-escalate the situation. Employee took responsibility for his actions, managed his emotions and used de-escalating behaviours, which meant Supervisor was less inclined to escalate the situation once Manager came outside.

In the first ending Employee was the problem. He was aggressive and disrespectful and was going to be fired. In the second ending Employee had a problem. He was apologetic and explained his situation calmly. Employee's behaviours allowed him to get a good outcome – to keep his job.

# Handout 1: Definitions

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<b>Conflict</b>	occurs when people disagree or want different things.
<b>Conflict escalation</b>	is when a conflict situation gets worse due to the behaviours of those involved. Situations can become confrontational, personal and destructive.
<b>Conflict de-escalation</b>	is when conflict situations get better (or don't get worse) as a result of the positive behaviours of those involved.
<b>Escalating behaviours</b>	are the things that people do or say that anger or threaten other people or that show a lack of respect for other people or their point of view.
<b>De-escalating behaviours</b>	are the things that people do or say that help others to feel respected, valued and listened to.

## Handout 2: Behaviours Card Sort

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Shouting at the other person	Listening to the other person
Making personal insults	Managing your emotions
Making threats	Talking in a normal relaxed way
Being sarcastic	Saying 'sorry' if you are in the wrong
Embarrassing the other person	Taking time out to calm down
Being disrespectful	Asking questions to try to understand
Ignoring the other person	Showing respect
Being aggressive	Being friendly
Pushing the other person	Thinking before acting
Dismissing the other person's point of view	Giving the other person space and time to calm down

## Handout 3: Film – Stairway Worksheet One

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Watch the film and make a note of the escalating behaviours you see.



## Handout 4: Film – Stairway, Escalating Behaviours

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When the resident says “Can I ask what you are doing in the building? Joe replies by saying “No you can’t, keep it moving bruv.” This is **rude** and **disrespectful**.



The resident **grabs** Joe and **pulls him round**. This **invades personal space** and is an attempt to **show dominance**. Joe responds by **shouting** at the resident. He **calls him “crazy”** and **squares up**.



The resident **dismisses** Joe and **pushes his hat round** which can **humiliate** and is an attempt to **show dominance**.



The resident is walking away when Joe **challenges** him by **shouting** “we ain’t going nowhere, what you gonna do bruv?” The resident **squares up** and **challenges** Joe.



The resident is heading back to his home, but Joe wants to **have the last word** “you’d better go back in your house and watch Eastenders or something.” This is **disrespectful** and tries to make the resident **lose face**. The resident becomes **violent**.

## Handout 5: Film – Stairway Worksheet Two

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Watch the film and make a note of the de-escalating behaviours you see.



## Handout 6: Film – Stairway, De-escalating Behaviours

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When the resident mentions the noise Joe **says “sorry”** and **explains** “we didn’t realise how loud we was being.” This shows that **he understands that his behaviours have affected someone else.**



The group calmly **explain why** they are in the block. This helps the resident to **understand the situation from their point of view.** All four people are having a **conversation** and **listening to each other.**



Joe **explains** that they are waiting for a friend and **asks** if it is ok that they wait for him there. This **shows respect** to the resident and **starts a negotiation.**



The resident **explains his situation** to the group, that he needs his sleep and **calmly states his concerns** “I can’t have you lot out here making a whole heap of noise.”



They **reach an agreement** that the group can stay inside if they don’t make too much noise. The group and the resident **both get what they want.** They finish the conversation with a **friendly gesture** (hand shake and fist bump).

## Handout 7: If You Could Try It Again...

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**What situation would you like to try again?**

**What behaviours escalated the situation?**

**What de-escalating behaviours would you use if you could try it again?**

## Handout 8: When In Conflict...

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**Think of a time when you were in conflict with someone.  
What was the conflict?**

**What emotions did you feel during the conflict?**

**What were your physical reactions?**

## Handout 9: Emotional and Physical Responses

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Nervous	Laughing
Anxious	Tunnel vision
Angry	Unable to think
Stressed	Crying
Frustrated	Shouting
Red Mist	Clenched fists
Powerless	Fighting
Fearful	Running away
Embarrassed	Out of breath
Guilty	Fast heart beat

## Handout 10: Film – Workplace Worksheet One

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Watch the film and make a note of the escalating behaviours you see.



What emotions do you see?

## Handout 11: Film – Workplace, Escalating Behaviours

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Gary **ignores** Jessica. This is **disrespectful** and **rude**, especially as Jessica is **unhappy** with him. Jessica is **frustrated** with his behaviour and doesn't like **being kept waiting**.



Jessica has had enough, she is now **angry** and tries to **grab the phone**. Gary gets **angry** too and **shouts at her**. He looks **aggressive** and says "are you mad?"



Gary is **irritated** that Jessica has interrupted his call and **rudely dismisses** her "I don't have time for this right now, just go inside yeah!" He **doesn't notice (or care)** that Jessica is **annoyed with him** and makes it clear that he feels that **his own issues are more important** than hers.



Jessica is **outraged** that Gary is being **aggressive** and **rude** when **he has broken the rules**. Jessica explains to Gary why he is in trouble. She **doesn't notice** that he is **having a difficult time**. Gary just wants to be left alone. He **swears** at Jessica and **dismisses** what she has said.



Gary knows that he is in trouble, but is so **angry** and **frustrated** that he starts **kicking the bins**. When Mr Williams comes outside he is immediately **annoyed** because Gary is **causing a disturbance**. Mr Williams shouts at Gary.

## Handout 12: Film – Workplace Worksheet Two

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Watch the film and make a note of the de-escalating behaviours you see.



What emotions do you see?

## Handout 13: Film – Workplace, De-escalating Behaviours

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When Jessica tries to grab the phone Gary **doesn't get angry**, he **says clearly** "please don't, I can explain." This shows that there is a **reason** for him breaking the rules.



Gary **ends his call** which shows Jessica that he **respects** her and **that talking to her is important**. He **apologises** for being on the phone when he shouldn't be.



Gary **doesn't get angry** with Jessica when she doesn't listen to him and leaves to fetch Mr Williams. Gary **shows respect** to Mr Williams and **apologises** again. He **acknowledges that he was breaking the rules**



Gary **takes responsibility for what he has done wrong** and **apologises** again to Jessica in front of Mr Williams. This **helps** her to **save face (not look bad)** in front of her manager.



Because Gary has **apologised** and **accepted that he was in the wrong** Mr Williams and Jessica are **no longer angry** with him. Gary can now **explain why the call was important**. Mr Williams **listens** and **gives him time to sort himself out**.

## Notes

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More conflict defusing teaching resources:  
<http://dfuse.org.uk/teachers>

Follow: @DfuseConflict

Email: [mail@dfuse.org.uk](mailto:mail@dfuse.org.uk)

Call: 020 8819 9878