



# Communication and De-escalation Skills

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# Definitions

Crisis: any situation in which a person's ability to cope is exceeded. (Hoff, 1968) Examples:

## **Insert perceived before ability**

- ◆ Barricaded subjects
- ◆ Domestic violence
- ◆ Substance Abuse
- ◆ High risk suicide
- ◆ Mental illness
- ◆ Violence in the workplace

Crisis Intervention: the short-term, time-limited intervention, designed to reestablish a person's equilibrium and to solve an immediate problem (Hoff)



# Types of unexpected events that influence crisis:

- ◆ Divorce
- ◆ Loss of a job
- ◆ Sickness, injury or death
- ◆ Deterioration of mental health
- ◆ Loss of health
- ◆ Demotion or loss of status
- ◆ Interruption of plan-police intervention

# Methods of Gaining Compliance

## ◆ POWER

- Physics
- Force

## ◆ INFLUENCE

- Psychology
- Magic





# Goals

◆ **PREVENTION**

◆ **PROBLEM RESOLUTION**

◆ **DAMAGE CONTROL/PERSONAL  
SURVIVAL**



# Roles

- ◆ **Observer/Reinforcer**
  - ◆ **Problem Solver**
- ◆ **Mediator/Negotiator**
- ◆ **Enforcer/Rescuer**

# Identifying Threats

How are they talking?	What is their voice tone?	What is their behavior like?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Respectful</li><li>◆ Negative</li><li>◆ Abusive</li><li>◆ Derogatory</li><li>◆ Threatening</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Normal</li><li>◆ Loud</li><li>◆ Angry</li><li>◆ Rageful</li><li>◆ Mimicking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Compliant</li><li>◆ Passive Resistant</li><li>◆ Active Resistant</li><li>◆ Reactive Assaultive</li><li>◆ Proactive Assaultive</li></ul>





# Communications During a Crisis



# Establishing contact:

Opening statements should be designed to promote productive communication.

- ◆ Engaging in high risk situations
  - Tone should be directive and instructions specific to what needs to occur in order to stabilize the situation.
  - Identify self as a police officer.
  - Officer must be prepared to shift to crisis intervention to gain compliance



## Engaging in low to moderate risk situations

- ◆ If practical, monitor behavior prior to approach.
- ◆ Assume a calm, non-threatening manner.
- ◆ Consider personal space issues.
- ◆ Self introduction
- ◆ Statements should clearly identify position as police officer.



## Introduction of Officer to Person in Crisis:

- ◆ I am \_\_\_\_\_ of the Colorado Springs Police Dept. I would like to help you with your situation.
- ◆ My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am with the Colorado Springs Police Department. I would like to talk to you about what has happened today. I understand that there is a problem and I would like to help.



# Defusing, Building Rapport, & Establishing Communications

## ◆ Calming Techniques

– Show empathy and understanding

- Attempt to calm an agitated subject by showing an understanding of his/her feelings.

– Use modeling

- Attempt to calm by displaying own calmness.  
Speak slowly and evenly.



# Calming Techniques (cont'd)

## ◆ Reassure

- Calm the agitated subject by reassuring his/her fears. Assure safety.

## ◆ Allow ventilation

- Attempt to calm an agitated subject by encouraging communication. Allow person to unload but don't get so caught up that you forget to work on solving the problem.



# Reflecting on Statements

## (Encourages communication)

- ◆ Responding to statements made by the actor to encourage him to continue talking.
- ◆ Examples:
  - I see...
  - Tell me about it...
  - That would be one option
  - What other options do you have?
  - Uh huh, ok...



# Active Listening

There are four types of active listening that officers can use during crisis intervention. Each has its own set of advantages and each is used for different purposes.

- ◆ Paraphrasing-a response in which the officer gives to the actor the essence of his message in the officer's words.
  - Paraphrasing is helpful when the officer needs to respond to the actor, but does not know what to say. It demonstrates that the officer has been listening. It is not necessarily “parrot back” but puts the actor's meaning into the officer's words.



## Active listening (cont'd)

- ◆ Reflecting feelings- a response in which the officer mirrors back to the actor the emotions the actor is communicating.
  - Reflecting feelings helps develop the rapport between officers and actors. It moves the discussion off the factual level to the emotional level. It helps validate the actor as a person.



# Active listening (cont'd)

- ◆ Reflecting meaning- a response in which officers let the actor know they understand the facts and feelings the actor is communicating.
  - Reflection of meaning is used to help identify the actor's needs and to strengthen the relationship. It helps validate the actor and reflects the implications of a situation for the actor.



# Active listening (cont'd)

- ◆ Summative reflections- a response in which the officer summarizes the main facts and feelings that the actor has expressed over a relatively long period.
  - Summative reflection is used to confirm information and to solidify the relationship. It reminds the actor of how far negotiations have come and how much more under control things are now that they were at first. It clarifies issues in a concise way that serves to focus officer and actor on the relevant issues.



# Avoiding Roadblocks

- ◆ Goal: to communicate to the person that they are respected and understood.
  - General Principles
    - Let person talk without interruption.
    - Avoid interrupting or explaining away person's experience.
    - Listener does not talk about their own opinions or advise on unrelated experience.
    - Listen without judging.



# Avoiding Roadblocks (cont'd)

## General Principles (cont'd)

- Reflect feeling
- Repeat main point
- Agree with speaker's reaction when listener has had similar experience.



# Avoiding Roadblocks (cont'd)

- ◆ Three traps for the Officer
  - Talking instead of listening
  - Not acknowledging emotional state (feelings)
  - Not maintaining control by guiding problem toward resolution

# Strategic Considerations when Dealing with Difficult People

<b>Your perception of the situation</b>	<b>Action to be Taken</b>
Verbally and Non-Verbally Compliant and Cooperative	Use normal modes of communication
Verbally Negative while Non-verbally Compliant	Use psychologically based communication
Verbally Assaultive while Non-Verbally Compliant	Use hard style verbal tactics
Verbally Negative and Non-Verbally Non-Compliant	Use hard style verbal tactics and ACT
Verbally Assaultive and Non-Verbally Non-Compliant	ACT
Non-Verbally Assaultive	ACT





# Hard Style Verbalizations

- ◆ Ask for Compliance
- ◆ Set Context- Company Policies
- ◆ Present Options- Comply or Else
- ◆ Repeat Actions
- ◆ ACT

# ACT Guidelines

ACT should be used as an option in the following conditions when either words fail or you are not given an opportunity to use them.

- ◆ **Condition 1:** Whenever your personal safety zone has been violated.
- ◆ **Condition 2:** Whenever others are in imminent danger or property under your control is threatened.
- ◆ **Condition 3:** Whenever the individual engages in active resistance ( i.e. runs past you).
- ◆ **Condition 4:** Whenever you have exhausted all of your verbal options and have not achieved compliance.
- ◆ **Condition 5:** Whenever a matter of high priority develops and requires your attention.

**REMEMBER: ACT with a Plan and ACT Quickly**





# Frustrated & Emotionally Distraught

Behavior: This person exhibits a variety of emotions that may change. Typical emotions may vary from depression to anger to anxiety. The person exhibits behavioral signs of being upset.

Effects on Others: The officer's reaction to this type of individual will vary according to the emotion expressed.

## ◆ How to handle

- Identify yourself and give the purpose of your contact
- Listen
- Acknowledge the person's frustration
- Give them a lot of empathy
- Let them run down
- Provide them with support and alternatives
- Give specific suggestions for them to regain internal control or calm down
- Do not make statements such as “relax” or “calm down”
- Do not make statements such as “relax” or “calm down”



# Hostile Aggressive Behavior

## How to Handle

- ◆ Do not allow the other person to grandstand in front of others
- ◆ Bring them aside so the audience is removed
- ◆ Listen to their complaints
- ◆ Get them to behavioralize
- ◆ If the individual does not respond, set a limit and provide them an alternative
- ◆ Maintain eye contact
- ◆ Do not allow individual to become verbally or physically abusive
- ◆ State opinions and directives forcefully
- ◆ Be ready to be friendly if the behavior changes
- ◆ Maintain calm but firm tone of voice
- ◆ Use diversions such as asking the person to sit down



# Substance Induced Behavior

Behavior: The individual is in a substance –induced state precipitated by either alcohol or narcotics. They may have rapidly cycling emotions or maintain either an agitated or despondent state.

Effects on Others: The main reaction experienced when dealing with this type of person is one of frustration.

## How to Handle

- ◆ Substance induced reactions are basically unpredictable and therefore can become somewhat dangerous
- ◆ The longer a person is allowed to carry on, the more potential for problems.
- ◆ Stay calm but set firm limits. This person should be escorted out as quickly as possible.
- ◆ The same behavioral strategy should be initiated if the acting out is substance abuse induced, but resulting from a thought disorder.



# Conclusion

The science of communication is difficult and much more complex than most people realize. Effective communication takes rehearsal and practice just as any other skill does. Communications involves sending and receiving. Many people learn to be effective senders, and give no effort to becoming active listeners. Unless a person is able to do both s/he will not be an effective communicator.