

# Help Sheet

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching And Support Service

## How to use different strategies to de-escalate a situation.



### Why?

- If a child is not yet at the stage when they can manage their own emotional responses effectively, or communicate feelings appropriately, then it is important that adults who work with them help them to manage their behaviour.

### You will need:

- To be aware of anxiety triggers and read the alerting signals which the child gives out when their emotional state is changing.
- Record and analyse dysregulated behaviour to understand the child's emotional needs.
- To be flexible and adapt to the child, whilst at the same time establishing definite limits of what is considered acceptable behaviour.
- To avoid confrontation, wherever possible, if a child is finding it difficult to cope. This can be done by employing various strategies depending on the situation.

### How?

- **Speak in a calm quiet tone and give clear directions:** Say you are here to help and listen. Tell the child where you want them to go and what you want them to do. Give praise when he / she makes the right choices.
- **Offer 'forced choice' alternatives:** Give 2 options of what to do and give time to think and respond. Make the one you want the child to do the easier option.
- **Distraction:** Offer something to do which he / she finds motivating.
- **Diversion:** Give a task to do e.g. take the register to the office.
- **Reassurance:** If he / she loses control then later on reassure them that what has happened has finished now.

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- **Planned ignoring:** If the child is attempting to engage in connection seeking behaviour ignore what they are doing and change the situation. Praise any good choices.
- **Contingent touch:** To gain attention say the child's name and touch them on the arm to reassure.
- **Negotiation:** Make a 'deal' and stick to it.
- **Processing time:** After giving options allow processing time. Tell the child you are there when he / she is ready.
- **Transfer adult:** Change places with another adult to continue de-escalation strategies. A change of face can be an effective way to divert thinking.
- **Reminders and consequences:** The child should be clear about rewards and sanctions. These should be discussed and agreed in advance when the child is calm. Rewards and consequences should be meaningful, based on the child's own motivations and may have to be different to the usual class rewards.
- **Humour:** Where appropriate use humour to diffuse situations.
- **Success reminders:** Remind the child of other times that he / she has found difficult and what happened to bring about success. Photographs of the child experiencing success could be collated and used to reinforce the positive behaviours.
- **Keep a record:** Not all the strategies above will be successful in every circumstance. Use the De-escalation Plan Template to record strategies to try and strategies to avoid to inform practice.

### Things to note:

This help sheet is part of the Strategies for De-escalation Toolkit.

- [Strategies for De-escalation Help Sheet](#)
- [Strategies for De-escalation Template](#)
- [Strategies for De-escalation Template - Example](#)

### Resources / Evidence base – informed by:

Team Teach