

Aggression and mental health crises can manifest in different ways. Recognising these signs early can help de-escalate situations and offer the necessary support.

### Forms of Aggression:

- Verbal: Insults, raised voices, or threats.
- Behavioural: Pacing, throwing objects, or invading personal space.
- Emotional: Visible anger or agitation, with heightened frustration or fear.

### Signs of a Mental Health Crisis:

- Emotional and Behavioural: Intense panic, anxiety, emotional outbursts, irrational behaviour, or reckless actions.
- Physical: Sweating, rapid breathing, or pacing.

**These indicators suggest the person is feeling overwhelmed and requires support to regain control. By recognising these signs, you can respond effectively and prevent escalation.**



# De-escalating High-Stress and Aggressive Situations

## GUIDE APPROACH

### GREET

Approach them with warmth and calmly let them know you're there to listen. Saying, "I'm here for you" can help them feel understood and safe.

### UNDERSTAND

Listen without interrupting or offering solutions too soon. Allow them to share their feelings while you show empathy and care.

### INFORM

Reassure them that support is available. Gently say, "We can find someone to help," to remind them they're not alone in this.

### DIRECT

If they're open, assist them in contacting a mental health professional or helpline. Stay with them if it helps. If they mention specific plans, take immediate action.

### ENCOURAGE

Reinforce that seeking help is a positive step. Remind them, "It's okay to ask for support." Suggest small self-care activities they may enjoy.

## DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES

**When you notice signs of aggression, these strategies can help calm the situation and prevent escalation:**

- **Stay Calm:** Keep your voice soft and steady. Avoid showing signs of nervousness or frustration, as this may escalate the situation.
- **Use Positive Words:** Choose calming phrases like "Stay calm" or "Let's work through this," and avoid negative or commanding language like "Don't fight."
- **Avoid Arguments:** Do not engage in arguments or challenge their aggression, as this can heighten the tension.
- **Don't Physically Restrain:** Avoid trying to physically control their movements. This could provoke a stronger reaction or more aggression.
- **Take Breaks:** If necessary, suggest a short break to give the person time to collect themselves and calm down.
- **Non-Threatening Body Language:** Maintain a respectful distance, avoid sudden movements, and make sure not to block their exit, allowing them space to feel less trapped.

## WHEN TO SEEK HELP

**If aggression escalates, seek outside help and take all threats seriously:**

- **Call for Help:** If the person becomes dangerous, leave and contact emergency services or a crisis team.
- **Provide Information:** Let responders know if the aggression is linked to mental health or substance use.

**Always prioritise your safety.  
Leave immediately if you feel unsafe.**