Defusing Hostile People

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Program Outline

1. Understanding Mind Set of Hostile People
2. Communicating with Hostile People
3. Defusing Hostile People
4. If Violence Appears Imminent
Understanding Hostile Mind

• Imagine you’re a chronically angry, hostile person
Understanding Hostile Mind

Underlying Issues:
• Rejection
• Failure
• Discomfort/Inconvenience

Ego-Related:
• Correlation with low self-esteem
• Must feel superior to others in order to:
  • Feel O.K. about self
  • Be in control
Understanding Hostile Mind

Triggers:

• Unfairly treated
  • Hostile people almost always feel *unfairly treated*

• perceived wrong
  • needs to be made “right”

• Ego Issues
  When they feel:
  • Disapproval from others
  • Weak or incompetent
  • Out of control
Provokers

- Pointed finger
- Not listening/ Disagreeing
- Disapproving facial expressions
- Arrogant voice tone/words
- Aggressive body language
- Encroaching on personal space
- Attacking person’s character, ego or pride
- Questioning honesty
Intervention

Adage:

• “You must meet people where they are before you can influence them in a desirable direction”
Intervention

Effective communication is the single best defuser

• **Inverse relationship between:**
  • Effective communication and
  • Hostility/misunderstandings

↑ ↓
Communicating

... with Hostile People

• Go with the Flow
  • “Tell me more”
• Empathy/Show Caring
  • See it from their perspective
• Establish Trust Through Commonalities
  • “We both don’t like some of the policies around here”
Communicating

... with Hostile People

- Positive Reframing
  - “I can see you’re a passionate person and I appreciate that”

- Guided Imagery
  - “Year from now only a distant memory”

- Ask for Their Help
  - “Solution that would work for you?”
Communicating

... with Hostile People

- **Deflect Insults**
  - “I understand that, however.”
  - “You may be right, but...”
  - [Let it bounce off / then focus on resolution]

- **Build Self-Esteem**
  - Find ways to like him/her
  - Positive traits, e.g., honest, hard worker, caring parent...
Keeping Your Cool

Event: Individual calls you a "stupid jerk."

Reaction: Defensive response. Loose your cool. Verbally attack the individual . . . or, worse!!

Interpretation: No right to call me that. You’re the stupid jerk.

Keeping Your Cool:
Let them say what they want to say .

As long as they do what you want them to do
“l choose not to upset myself”
Calm Assertiveness

• Write it down:
  • Problem(s)
  • Anticipation
  • Solutions
  • Impact

To get your mind around the situation
Calm Assertiveness

4-Count Breathing:

- **Breathe:**
  - In for 4"
  - Hold in 4"
  - Out for 4"
  - Hold out 4"

Clear your head technique

Hold in 4"

In 4"  Out 4"

Hold out 4"
Defusing Threats

“This is not worth losing your . . .”

- Freedom
- Money
- Career/Job
- Family
- Reputation

...“You’re too good for that”
Verbal Judo

- Go with threatening person’s energy
- Align with the threatening person, and
- Then move them in a positive direction

Go with the flow

Resistance causes persistence
3 Key Intervention Components

1. Feeling **heard and understood**

2. Bolstering **self-worth**
   - Success
   - Acceptance

3. Sense of **fair treatment**...
   - Win-win resolution
Defusing Hostility Verbally

Build Dignity and Self-Esteem
“I can tell you’re a decent person”

Concerns heard/understood
• “We agree this is a concern. Tell me more.”

Address Unfairness (discuss win-win solution/options)
• “I don’t like to feel unfairly treated either.”
“I Have a Question Technique”

To redirect toward resolution, align, get information for win-win:

1. **Say:** “I have a question . . .”
2. **Ask the Question:**
   Want or need to resolve?
3. **Repeat the Response:**
   Ensure understanding
4. **Defer the Decision**
5. **Set a Specific Time To Get Back**
Building Ego

Defuse by building self-esteem

• “I can tell you are a person who cares about working”
• “You’re a good person who seems to feel unfairly treated at this point”
• “I can tell you’re a passionate person with a strong sense of right and wrong”

Practice “one liners” in normal settings
Escalation Toward Physical

When verbal strategies are failing . . .

• Notice warning signs
• Anticipate aggressor’s moves
• Plan safe escape
Pre-Attack Signs

- Leaning or Moving Forward
- Target Glancing
- Fast Breathing
- Holds Breath
- Jerky Movements
- Glazed Eyes
- Clinched Fists
- Flushed Facial Expression

Make your plan NOW!!
Anticipate Aggressor’s Moves

- Expand your vision
- Avoid “tunnel vision”
- Notice available resources
  - Obstacles
  - Defense tools
  - Escape route

Plan you move!!
Plan Your Response

- Call for a Time Out
- Obstacles
  - Desk, chair, table
- Defense Tools
  - Keyboard, chair, briefcase
- Escape Route
  - Maintain balance
  - Fastest/safest direction
Maintain “Safe” Distance

- Avoid “too close” zone of danger
- Stay 6 feet away
- Keep something between you
Anticipate Aggressor’s Moves

85% of the population is right handed

- They step with left . . .
- Hit with right
- You glide step
- to right side and away
Probability Visualizations

Visualize vulnerable places in your world . . .

- Make a plan NOW
- What would you say and do?
- Available resources?
Prevention & Preparedness

The best way out . . . is to not get in

- Use wise judgment
- Stay vigilant
- Plan ahead
1. Chronically Hostile People
   • Low self-esteem, superiority, need to control

2. Defusing Hostility
   • First meet people “mentally” where they are
   • Go with the flow/verbal judo/heard & understood
   • I have question, fairly treated/win-win, build ego

3. Keeping Your Cool
   • Choose not to upset yourself/Calm assertiveness

4. Responding to Physical Aggression
   • Anticipate, make a plan, ready to execute

5. Using Visualization to Prevent and Respond
   • Imagine most likely scenarios. Plan now.
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