GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- Discuss basic techniques for de-escalating complex client encounters, incidents, and crises
- Move beyond De-escalation 101
- Connect theories with practice
- Promote self-awareness of the practitioner as we mitigate crisis
- Touch upon some agency- and systems-level considerations, crafting and implementing agency policies and procedures which support both staff and clients in these situations
- Practice with exercise(s)
WHAT IS DE-ESCALATION?

Assertive Communication Skills used to:

- Calm down someone who is agitated, angry, or temporarily out of control
- Take charge of a situation to reduce potential violence
- Deal with past hurt, take action in the present, and move toward a future solution
GOALS OF DE-ESCALATION

- Validate feelings
- Calm the situation and the hurt
- Find the core issues and speak to them
- Manage the situation
- Maintain clear communication
- Make sure everyone feels heard
WHAT IS A CRISIS?

“A time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger.”
RESPONSES TO CRISIS

Fight

Flight

Freeze

Fawn

Flop
WHAT HAPPENS IN AN INTERPERSONAL CRISIS?

- Personal history
- Current state
- Personal lens
- Environment
- Tone, language, word choice, etc
- Time
- Hearing ability
- Body language
- Distance
SOME TECHNIQUES TO EMPLOY

- Match & model - behavior, body language, tone
- Avoid pointing
- Be careful with using touch or Terms of endearment
- Listen to your gut
- Ask about their needs
- “No, but ...”
- Minimize distractions
- Be genuine
- Validate and Repeat
- Allow for safe venting
- If your attention is split - be clear about it!
- Reason and logic must come after calming down
- Don’t use command language (“You need to...” or “Calm down,” etc)
- Don’t mistake anger for aggression
"... those idiosyncratic reactions that reflect more specifically on what you, personally, carry into your relationships from past or current shaping experiences."

INTEGRATING DE-ESCALATION TACTICS INTO YOUR PRACTICE

BREAK IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

DE-ESCALATION TOOLBOX

VS
8 KEY CONCEPTS / PRINCIPLES TO EMBODY

- Provide client-centered, trauma-responsive care
- Remain calm & try not to take it personally
- Validate feelings & reorient those that are misplaced
- Respect free will & allow for choice
- Provide a safe space for clients to self-express
- Help the client recognize & explore their options & consequences
- Recognize & name the power structures at play
- Know yourself & your limits
5 intersecting practice areas:

- Cultural Humility
- Harm Reduction
- Emotional Intelligence
- De-Escalation
- Motivational Interviewing
Cultural Humility
H: Humble about the assumptions you make
U: Understand your own background and culture
M: Motivate yourself to learn more about the others’ backgrounds
B: Begin to incorporate this knowledge into your work
L: Life-long learning
E: Emphasize respect and negotiate service plans

3 Ways to Challenge Your Bases
1. We must be willing to accept that we do, in fact, have bases, and to make ourselves aware of them.
2. We must be determined not only to unearth our own stereotypes, but also to challenge them.
3. We must learn to exchange automatic bases for different, more inclusive, notions. Knowing they will be automatic and that we need to catch them, be reflective in our work, process, and construct new thought patterns

Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.

Harm reduction incorporates a spectrum of strategies that includes safer use, managed use, abstinence, meeting people who use drugs “where they’re at,” and addressing conditions of use along with the use itself.

Because harm reduction demands that interventions and policies designed to serve people who use drugs reflect specific individual and community needs, there is no universal definition of or formula for implementing harm reduction.

Harm Reduction

Motivational Interviewing
Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a guiding style of communication, that sets between following (good listening) and directing (giving information and advice)
MI is designed to empower people to change by drawing out their own meaning, importance, and capacity for change
MI is based on a respectful and curious way of being with people that facilitates the natural process of change and honors client autonomy.
from Miller and Roseau (2012) Motivational Interviewing: Helping People to Change (2nd ed)

MI’s core skills are often described using acronyms. OARS is one such approach:
O: Open questioning — Explore the root of the issue without putting words in client’s mouth
A: Affirming — Validate their feelings and struggles
R: Reflecting — Together, analyze the way that systemic power is creating barriers and biases
S: Summarizing — Repeat back what client has shared, demonstrate that you are actively listening, and plan next steps

Emotional Intelligence
Emotional Intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand and manage our own emotions and: recognize, understand and influence the emotions of others.

Self-awareness — Recognizing our own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses, and their impact on the people around us
Self-regulation — Managing emotions and impulses
Motivation — Sustainable, fulfilling goal-oriented movement
Empathy — Identifying and working to understand another’s feelings
Social Skills — Effective management of mutually-beneficial relationships

De-escalation focuses on developing skills to help people achieve calm, rational thought after becoming “out of control.” De-escalation assumes the premise that the emotion itself is valid (client choices and feelings are valid and deserving of respect), behavior and/or where the emotion is displaced is what needs compassionate re-orientation.

It focuses on:
Active and reflective listening, affirming client feelings and empathizing, providing options, and respecting client autonomy

When engaging, consider your body language, approach, tone, words, eye contact, etc. Avoid command language. Offer options.
When necessary, get help.
WHAT HAPPENS IN AN INTERPERSONAL CRISIS?

- Emotional intelligence
- Harm reduction approach
- Cultural humility
- De-escalation techniques
- Motivations, goals, & values
# Key Concepts

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## PRACTICE AREAS & KEY PRINCIPLES

### PRACTICE AREAS

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**The 5 Techniques / Practices** which converge on the client-service provider relationship, as they relate to their shared Key Concepts. This helps to de-center, de-racialize, and de-bias their work. **H. Humble yourself.**
BREAKOUT DISCUSSION
DE-ESCALATION: UPSTREAM PLANNING

- How is crisis handled?
- How are rules & policies shared?
- How is knowledge produced & distributed?
- How is teamwork supported in the workplace?
- How is space shared?
- What language is used?
- How are minor incidents handled?
- What supports exist for staff members?
- Can clients identify with staff?
HOW DO WE MITIGATE HARMs?

PERSON-IN-ENVIRONMENT PERSPECTIVE
Harms associated with
- Homelessness
- Mental & physical health
- Drug use
- DV/IPV

SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE
Harms that originate from
- Care systems
- Carceral system
- Immigration
- Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, sizeism, ableism ...
- Agency-level systems
A SELF-ASSESSING EXERCISE

Comfort Zone
The area in which we are in static state of equilibrium; not much is learned, but we feel safe and comfortable; autopilot is engaged.

Learning Zone
The area beyond our comfort zone where we are experiencing new things and skills. We are challenged and exercising our learning ‘muscles.’ We may be uncomfortable here, but not panicked.

Danger Zone
The area beyond our learning zone, where we might be anxious, reactionary, or in crisis. The challenges here are overtaxing those ‘learning muscles.’ It’s okay to spend some time here, but too much can do some real damage.
Visualizing Your Comfort, Learning, & Danger Zones: an exercise

Mediating Client-Client Conflict

Continuum of Care / Case management / Partner-Client Advocacy

Advocating for Client within your Agency

Mediating Client-Staff Conflict

Mediating Co-Worker Disputes, Staff Discipline, etc

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Use this Visual exercise to identify where your Zones exist and build self-awareness. This can illuminate areas where you wish to seek new trainings or advice from supervisors and peers, or practice specific skills. Building Self-Awareness is important before we attempt to mediate crises.

Policy & Procedure Crafting

Interagency & Partnership Coalition Work

Utilize this diagram to visualize your Zones:

1. Along each axis, mark that point on the spectrum where you feel comfortable with the task described.
2. Connect the dots to create a shape that represents your Comfort Zone.
3. Repeat the same for both your Learning and Danger Zones.
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Physical Altercation

Verbal Altercation /Threat

Argumenyt

“Difficult” client

“Easy” client

Mediation

Redirect

Argument

“Easy” client

Mediate

Reprimand

Requires

Close Support

New / No History

Minor Policy Changes

Policy & Procedure Crafting

Authoring New Policy / Overhaul Existing

Interagency & Partnership Coalition Work

Mediating Co-Worker Disputes, Staff Discipline, etc

Physical Altercation

Verbal Altercation /Threat

Adversarial

Procedural Changes

New / No History

Mediation

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THANK YOU!

Evan Serio
eserio@DESKCT.org