



CRISIS INTERVENTION & DE-ESCALATION

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?

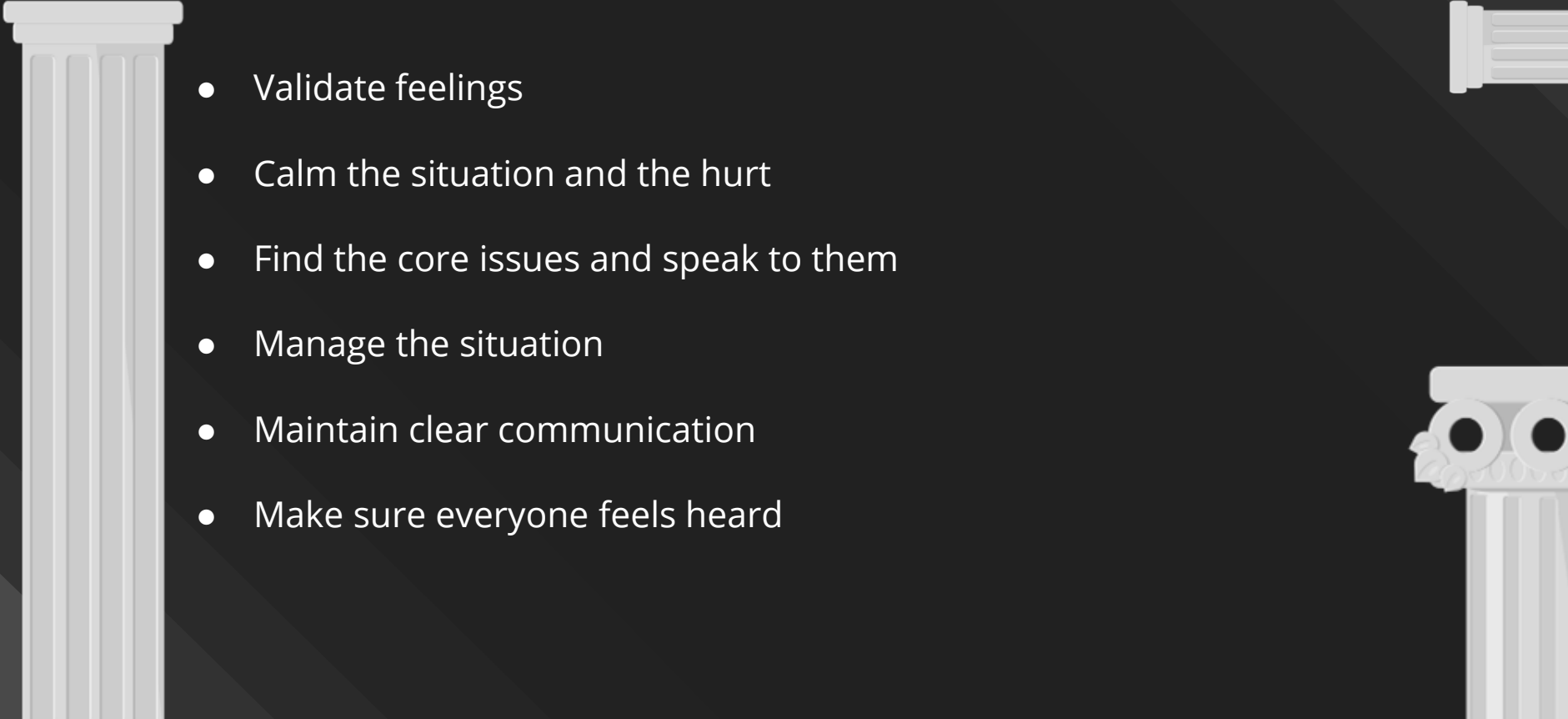
Assertive Communication Skills used to:

- 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



Thousand Waves
Martial Arts & Self-Defense Center

GOALS OF DE-ESCALATION

- 
- The slide features a dark background with diagonal stripes. On the left, a tall, light-colored classical column is partially visible. On the right, two smaller, similar columns are positioned, one near the top and one near the bottom.
- 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

A stylized, low-poly landscape background. On the left, there are several jagged, light blue and white mountains. In front of them is a small cluster of green trees. The ground is composed of rolling green hills. In the middle ground, there is a small blue lake with a yellow sandy shore. A large, grey, cylindrical comet or meteor is streaking diagonally across the sky from the top right towards the center. The sky is a mix of light and dark blue.

Fight

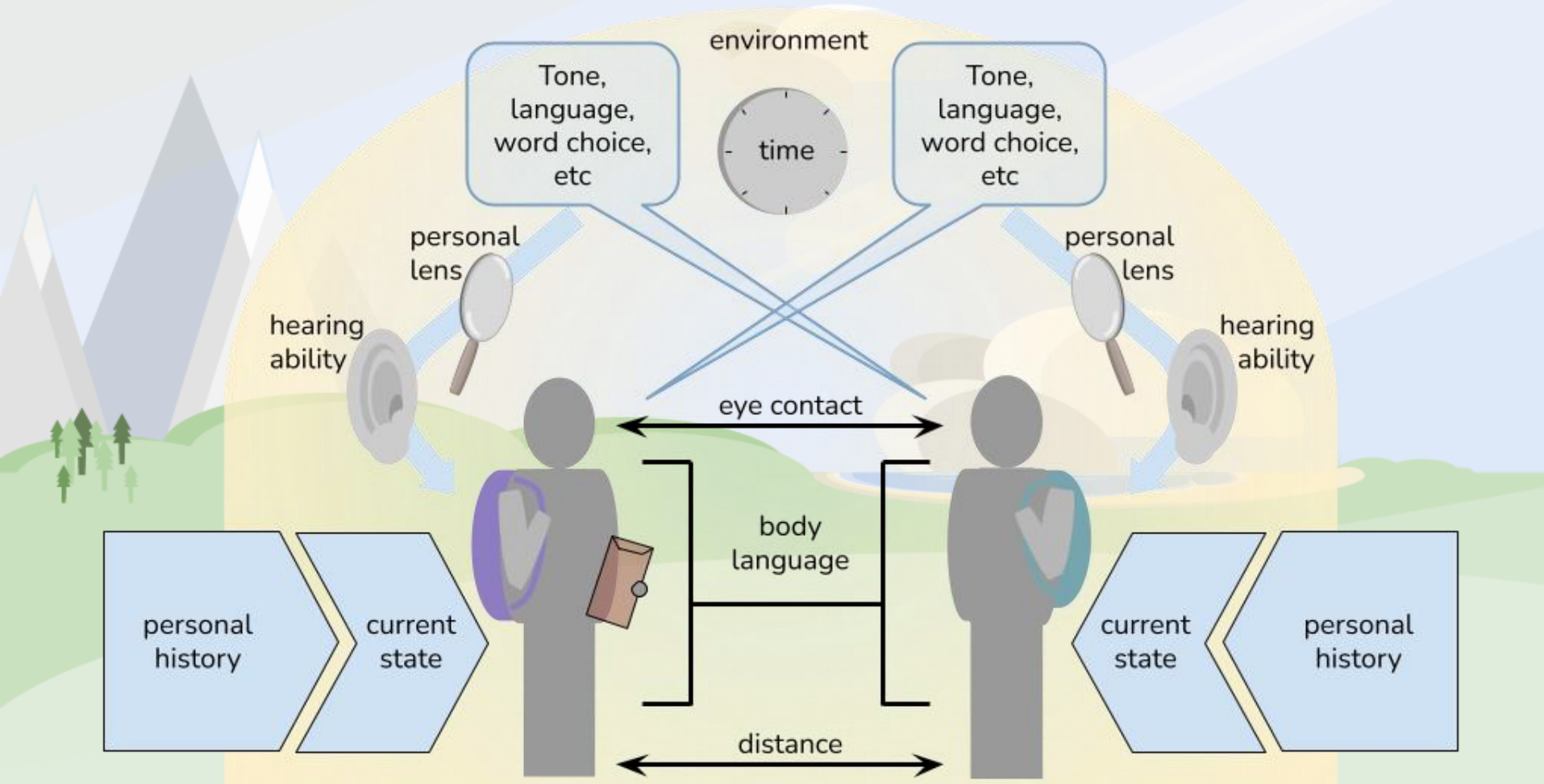
Flight

Freeze

Fawn

Flop

WHAT HAPPENS IN AN INTERPERSONAL CRISIS?



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

TRANSFERENCE AND COUNTERTRANSFERENCE

Transference

Earlier client experiences
& attitudes *transferred*
onto current situation
“False Connections”

Objective Countertransference

Everything you know - Expertise

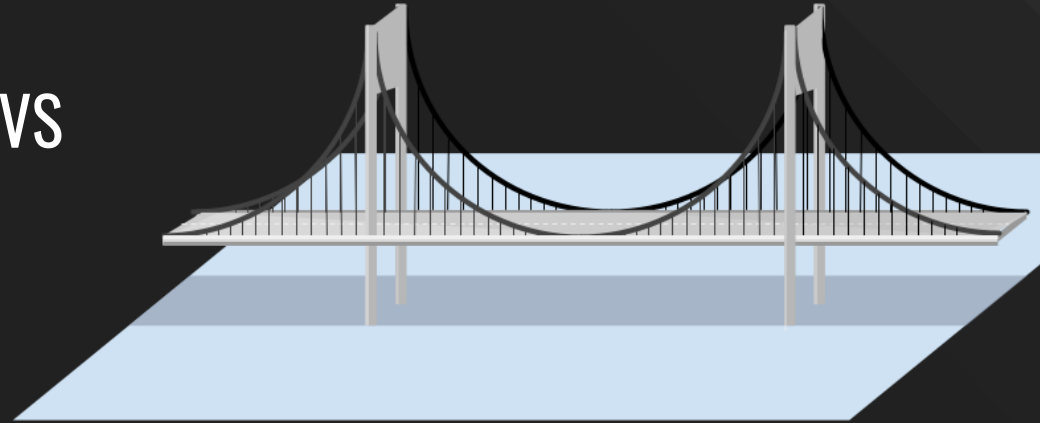
Subjective Countertransference

“... 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

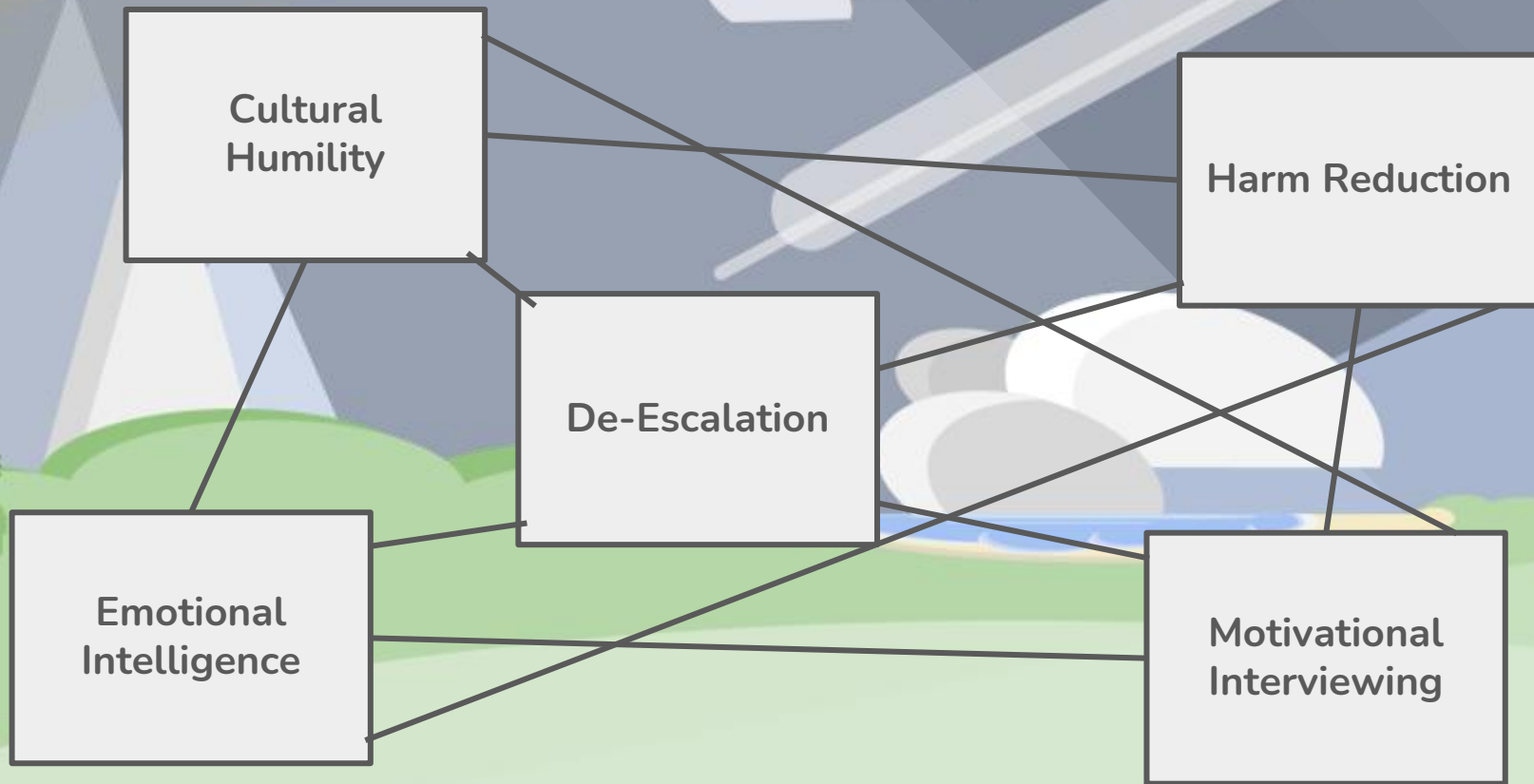


VS



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

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

Adapted from: Danielson, Ben. (2015). *Using Cultural Humility to Navigate Challenging Encounters*. University of Washington.

3 Ways to Challenge Your Biases

1. We must be willing to accept that we do, in fact, have biases, 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 biases for different, more inclusive, notions. Know 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

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-orientated movement

Empathy—Identifying and working to understand another's feelings

Social Skills—Effective management of mutually-beneficial relationships



Motivational Interviewing

- Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a **guiding** style of communication, that sits 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 Rollnick (2013) *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People to Change* (3rd 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

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

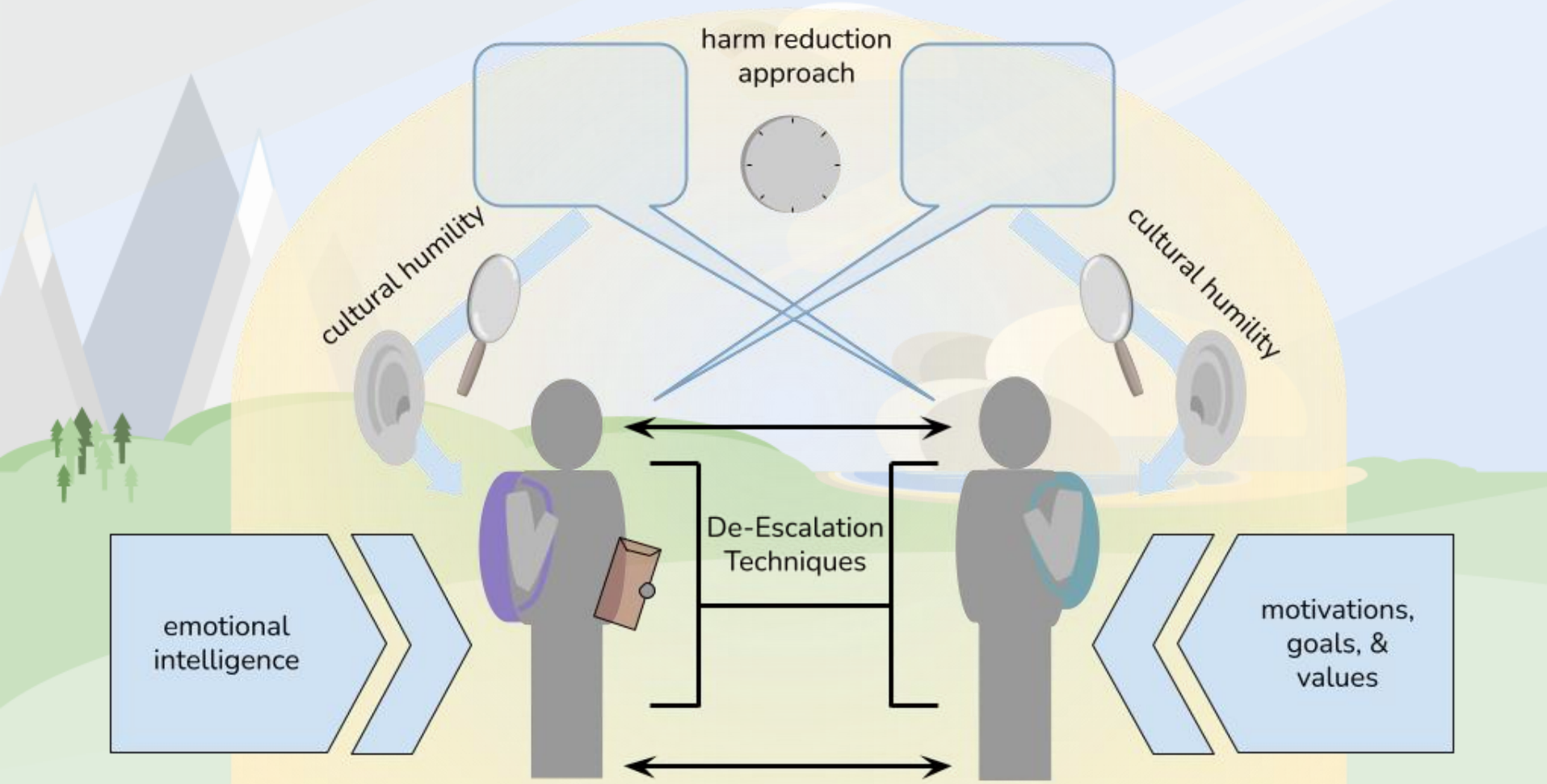
When engaging, consider your body language, approach, tone, words, eye contact, etc. Avoid command language. Offer options.

Ignore insults. Remain respectful. Distract & Refocus.

When necessary - get help.

De-escalation

WHAT HAPPENS IN AN INTERPERSONAL CRISIS?



PRACTICE AREAS & KEY PRINCIPLES

Techniques / Practices	Key Concepts							
	Client Centered, Trauma-Informed Care	Stay calm & try not to take it personally	Feelings are valid - where they are placed can be re-oriented	Respect Free Will - Allow for choice - even if you don't agree	Provide safe space for clients to self-express	Help client recognize & explore their options & consequences	Recognize and name the power structures at play	Know yourself & your limits
	Focus is on client and their experience. Be in the moment, while balancing situational awareness. Understand that the trauma which can lead to or be experienced due to homelessness mean that emotions run high	Model appropriate behavior. Check your assumptions at the door. Be transparent and genuine	Conflict can be an opportunity for learning. It is the role of the service provider to stay grounded and be an anchor	"Deal with past hurt, take action in the present, and move toward future solutions." Hold space for discomfort, pain, frustration	Client feelings are valid. De-escalation helps to calm and re-orient energy toward solutions. Hold space for discomfort, pain, frustration	When we are de-escalated, we can retain the energy without the frustration, putting that towards weighing options and planning, change talk	Don't minimize client feelings of helplessness or powerlessness. Build trust by addressing them, even if only in small ways	Sometimes, walking away is the safest option for you and the client. Make sure that resources are still open for communication when better suited. These decisions should be reserved for safety. Discomfort is something to learn into
	Find the core issues and root causes - better solutions to client motivations and needs	Find the core issues and root causes - Be the anchor	A - Affirming client experience and feelings builds trust: "Even though this is frustrating, I see you working hard..."	G - Summarizing and next steps might not be the same choices we would make but are not ours to judge. Lay out the pros and cons, be transparent, maybe together write a plan B and C	O - Open questioning allows for client to self-identify their issues and experiences in their own words	R - Reflecting on barriers, gaps, biases, and options with client: "So here's what I've heard you identify so far..."	A - Affirming client experience and feelings builds trust: "Thank you for bearing with me, I know this process isn't easy..."	Use personal experience only when appropriate. Relate but do not equate
	Recognizing, understanding, and managing your own emotions keeps you focused on the needs, experiences, and wishes of our clients	Self-awareness and regulation	Empathy with client's needs, experiences, and feelings	Self-regulation practice means that client choices should not be valued for our feelings, only the facts	Encourage clients to use "I" statements: "I think... I feel... I don't understand... I hope... I will..."	Motivation - establish fulfilling, goal-oriented movement	Social Skills - effectively manage relationships to keep them sustainable and mutually beneficial	Self-regulation - Managing your own emotions, opinions, and impulses means knowing yourself ahead of time
	Trauma informed harm reduction means accepting that use is a part of the world, working to minimize harmful effects and deliver respect, dignity, and care rather than ignoring or condemning	Accepts (for better or worse) that drug use is a part of the world, working to minimize harmful effects and deliver respect, dignity, and care rather than ignoring or condemning	Client feelings and choices are valued. Appropriate and accessible options are provided.	Affirms the client as the primary agents of their own choices and change	Establish quality of life and well-being as the measure for intervention success, not the cessation of harmful client choices	Evaluates the consequences and risks of the measure for intervention success, while presenting options and solutions that are client-centered	Call to action as to recognize power structures & the way that discrimination (like class, race, gender, social connections, social trauma, etc.) combine to harm people who use drugs, particularly those experiencing homelessness	Non-judgmental, non-coercive care
	The acronym HUMBLE calls upon us as service providers to engage in consistent self-reflection and constant learning to identify, challenge and overcome our biases. This helps to de-center ourselves and center the client	Stay calm. Stay HUMBLE. Find the common ground	Practice empathy and self-reflection. How would you feel in the client's shoes? Do: "I know how you feel..." Do: "I can see how this is frustrating..."	Uncomfortable conversations can spark change. This goes both ways - we have as much to learn from our clients as they do from us	E - Emphasize respect, client feelings, and experiences	E - Emphasize respect and negotiate service plans	Cultural humility is a lifelong process with four focus areas: self-reflection, addressing inequities, power dynamics, & institutional accountability	H - Humble yourself regarding assumptions you make about clients. U - Understand your own background, experience, and culture. M - Make sure yourself to learn more about clients' backgrounds. L - This is life long work



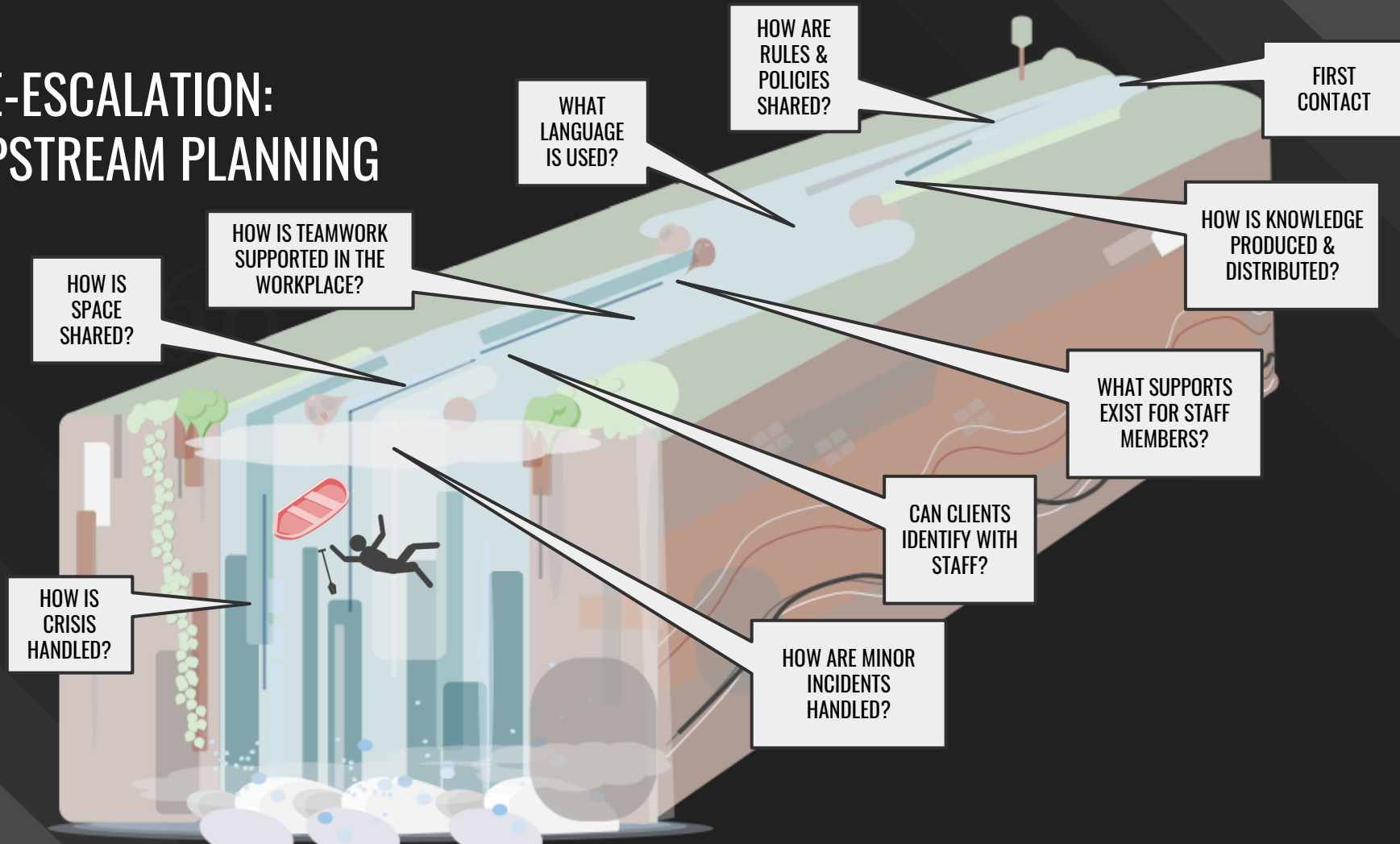
The 5 Techniques / Practices which converge on the client-service provider relationship, as they relate to their shared Key Concepts



BREAKOUT DISCUSSION



DE-ESCALATION: UPSTREAM PLANNING



HOW DO WE MITIGATE HARMS?

PERSON-IN-ENVIRONMENT PERSPECTIVE

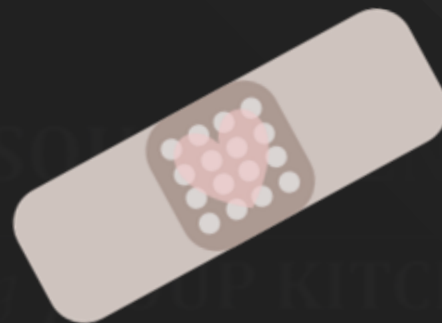
Harms associated with

- 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

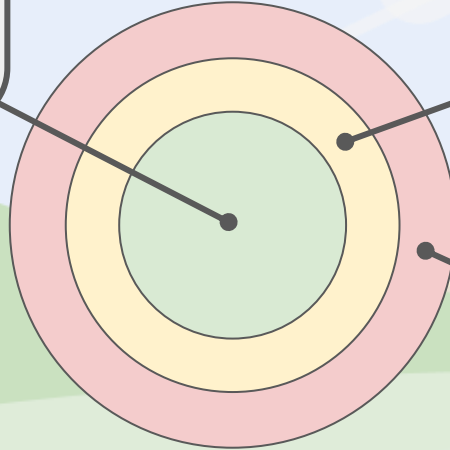
The area in which we are in static state of equilibrium; not much is learned, but we feel safe and comfortable; autopilot is engaged.

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 Mental Health / Behavioral Issues / Substance Use / SI Crises etc

Mediating Client-Staff Conflict

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.

Mediating Client-Client Conflict

Continuum of Care / Case management / Partner-Client Advocacy

Advocating for Client within your Agency

Mediating Co-Worker Disputes, Staff Discipline, etc

Interagency & Partnership Coalition Work

Policy & Procedure Crafting



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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

Argument

Requires Close Support

Redirect

Argument

Verbal Altercation /Threat

Physical Altercation

Minor Policy Changes

Authoring New Policy / Overhaul Existing

Procedural Changes

Partner Agency / Ally

Mediate

Reprimand

Fire

New / No History

Adversarial

"Easy" Client

"Difficult" client

"Difficult" client

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THANK YOU!

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