



# De-Escalation Training

- June 7, 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election

# Crossing the Line into Crisis Situations

*It is important to develop strategies for ensuring personal safety in potentially problem situations.*



In any conflict, you have a choice.

- ✓ Escalate the incident further
- ✓ De-escalate the situation.

# 7 stages of behavior escalation

1. **Calm** - Person relatively calm / cooperative.
2. **Trigger** - Person experiences unresolved conflicts . This triggers the person's behavior to escalate.
3. **Agitation** - Person increasingly unfocused/upset.
4. **Acceleration** - Conflict remains unresolved.  
Person FOCUSES on the conflict.
5. **Peak** - Person out of control / exhibits severe behavior.
6. **De-escalation** - Vents in the peak stage, person displays confusion. Severity of peak behavior subsides.
7. **Recovery** - Person displays willingness to participate in activities.

Colvin, G., & Sugai, G. (1989). *Understanding and Managing Escalating Behavior* (ppt). Retrieved 22 January 2012 from <http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources>.

# Traits and factors that may Trigger aggression

- Psychiatric illness
- Substance abuse
- Prior history of violence
- Highly stressful situations
  - Removal of children
  - Court proceedings
  - Divorce
- Certain feelings
  - *powerlessness*
  - *Fear*
  - *Grief*
  - *feeling of injustice*
  - *Boredom*
  - *humiliation*
- ***Physical disability or chronic pain***

# Common signs of Agitation

- Raised voice
- High-pitched voice
- Rapid speech
- Pacing
- Excessive sweating
- Excessive hand gestures
- Fidgeting
- Shaking



- Balled fists
- Erratic movements
- Aggressive posture
- Verbally abusive

# What is Verbal De-escalation?

**Verbal De-Escalation** is an intervention for use with people who are at risk for aggression.

It is basically using calm language, along with other communication techniques, to diffuse, re-direct, or de-escalate a conflict situation.

Mary M. Kerr & C.M. Nelson: *Strategies for Addressing Behavior Problems in*





# Physical Force in de-escalation

*Never* consider the use of physical force as your first response.



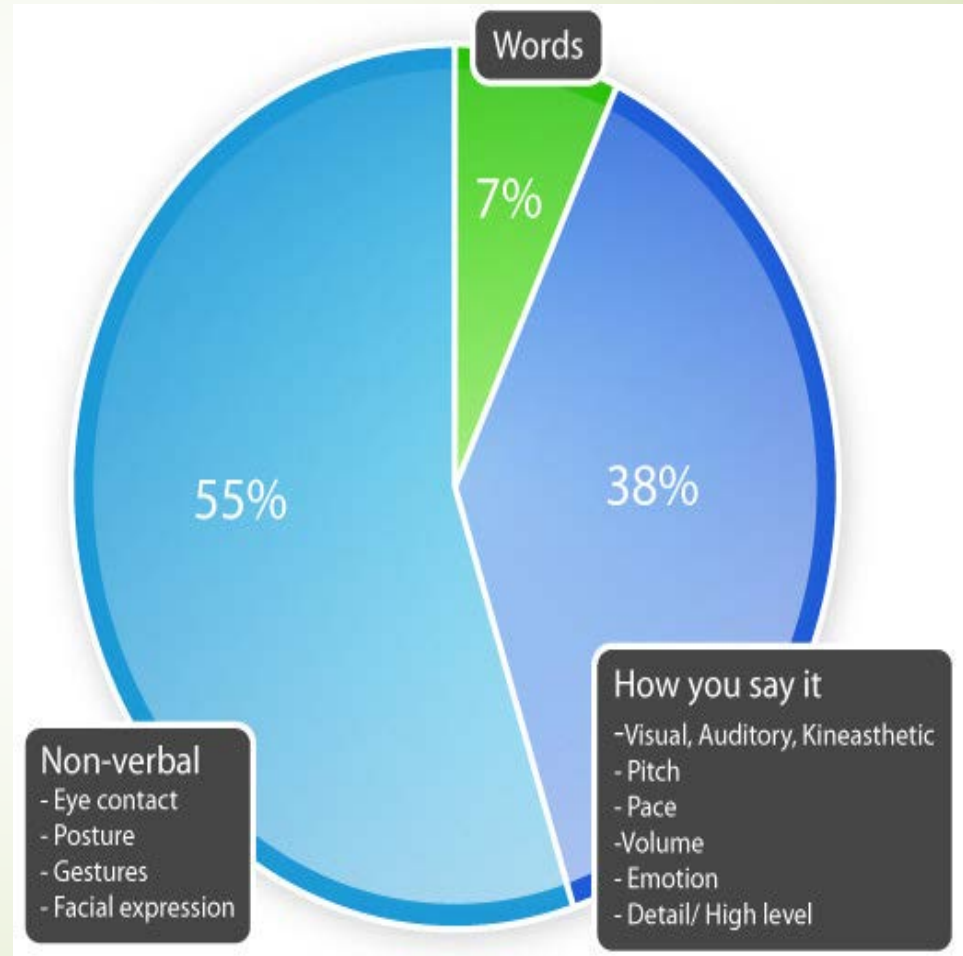
Physical force is a last resort to prevent injury to yourself or to another person.

Use of physical force usually results in someone (you?) getting hurt.

# 3 aspects of communication

- Body language
- Tone
- Word choice

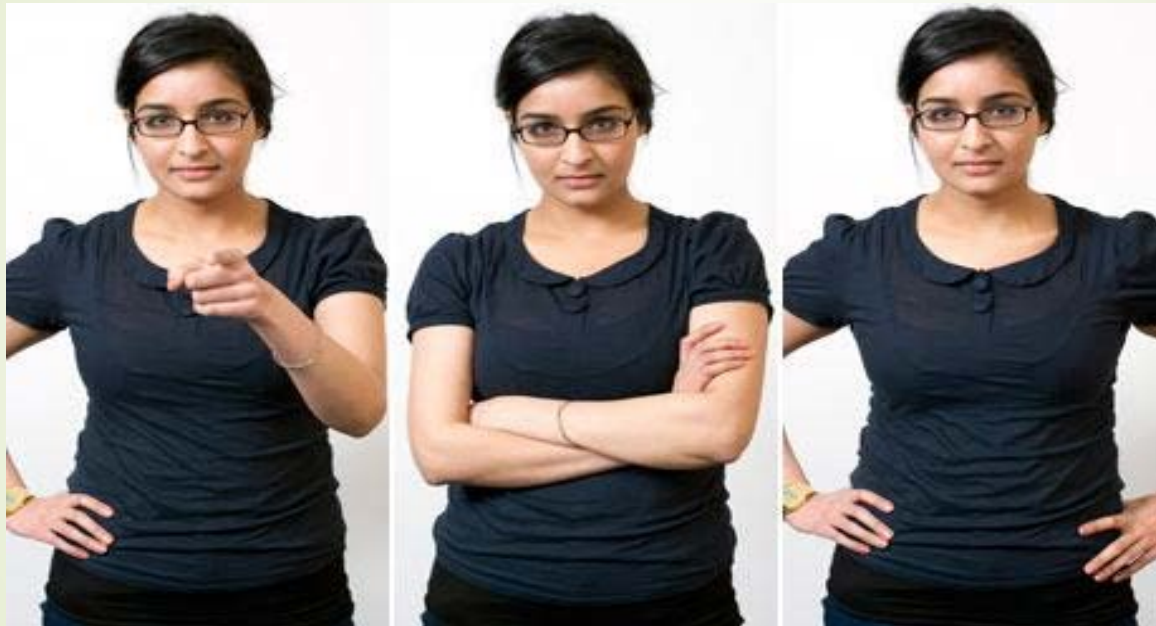
Which has the most influence?





# BODY LANGUAGE

## 55% OF COMMUNICATION IS NON-VERBAL



**What is her body language saying?**

# Try to look as non-threatening as possible.

- ▶ Appear calm and self-assured even if you don't feel it.
- ▶ Maintain limited eye contact.
- ▶ Maintain a neutral facial expression.
- ▶ Place your hands in front of your body in an open and relaxed position.
- ▶ Be at the same eye level. Encourage the client to be seated, but if he/she needs to stand, stand up also.



***“Handle them carefully, for words have more power than atom bombs.”*** Pearl Strachan,  
British politician, 1930.

- ▶ Do not get loud or yell over a screaming person. Wait until he/she takes a breath, speaking calmly at normal volume.
- ▶ Respond simply. Repeat if necessary. Answer informational questions, no matter how rudely asked.

*“Why do I fill out these <expletive> forms?”*

This is a real information-seeking question.

- ▶ Do not answer abusive questions.

*“Why are all Election employees such <expletives>?”*

- ▶ Help client talk out angry feelings rather than act on them.



# Verbal de-escalation tips

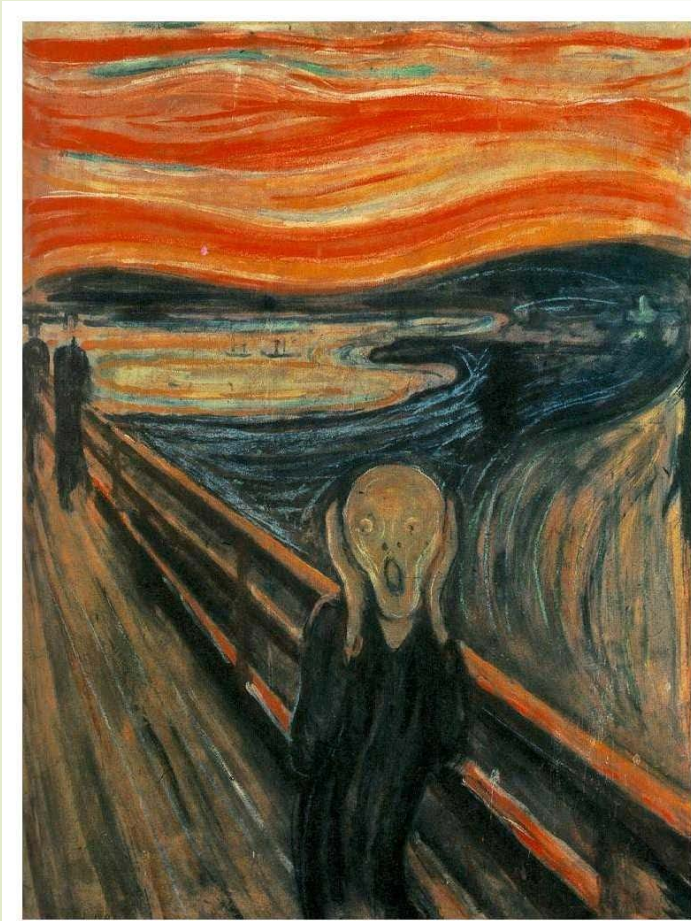
- ▶ Do not be defensive even if comments, curses, or insults are directed at you. They are **not** about you.
- ▶ Be honest. Lying to calm someone down may lead to future escalation if the dishonesty is discovered. If possible, wait to convey further upsetting news.
- ▶ Explain limits and rules in an authoritative, firm, but respectful tone. Give choices, where possible, in which both alternatives are safe ones.  
*“Would you like to continue our meeting calmly, or would you prefer to stop now and continue tomorrow?”*

# Verbal de-escalation tips

- ▶ Be respectful when firmly setting limits or calling for help. The agitated individual is very sensitive to feeling shamed and disrespected.
- ▶ Empathize with feelings but not with behavior.  
*"I understand that you have every right to feel angry, but it is not okay for you to threaten me."*
- ▶ Suggest alternative behaviors *where appropriate*.  
*"Would you like to take a break and have a cup of coffee or some water?"*



# The first and only De-escalation objective



Reduce the level of anxiety to encourage the possibility for discussion.

Reasoning with an enraged person is not possible.





QUESTIONS

# Merced County Elections

