

Best Practices

The table below provides guidance for working with individuals with escalated behaviors. The left column outlines recommended strategies that promote safety and positive outcomes, while the right column identifies responses that may unintentionally escalate the situation further.

Recommended:

- ☐ Develop a trusting relationship
- ☐ Speak in a calm, quiet manner
- ☐ Use “I” statements
- ☐ Learn their routines/habits/preferences
- ☐ Keep instructions/explanations simple
- ☐ If physical touch is necessary, ask permission
- ☐ Remove environmental stressors if possible
- ☐ Check physical comfort (hunger, temp, pain)
- ☐ Slow down
- ☐ Be reassuring
- ☐ Offer guided choices you are okay with
- ☐ Relocate if necessary and possible
- ☐ Listen to their fears and frustrations
- ☐ Validate their feelings
- ☐ Communicate openly, honestly, and often
- ☐ Involve them in decisions
- ☐ Be patient
- ☐ Use “person-first” language
- ☐ Be respectful
- ☐ Keep hands open and visible

Not Recommended:

- ☐ Direct eye contact
- ☐ Physical touch
- ☐ Speaking over them
- ☐ Arguing
- ☐ Cornering
- ☐ Criticizing
- ☐ Ignoring
- ☐ Crowding
- ☐ Restraining
- ☐ Raising your voice
- ☐ Showing panic/alarm
- ☐ Sudden movements
- ☐ Rushing them
- ☐ Talking down to them
- ☐ Talking about the behavior while escalated
- ☐ Toxic positivity