


Crisis Prevention and De-escalation Strategies

Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG)
West CMS QIN-QIO (Region 7)

Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG) is the West Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) Region 7 for your state/territory.

Learning Objectives

- Develop crisis prevention techniques to reduce the likelihood of a crisis.
- Identify early escalating behaviors and skills to de-escalate a crisis.
- Recognize that one's response influences the outcome of a crisis.
- Apply prevention and de-escalation techniques to challenging behaviors in a nursing home scenario.

The Levels of Crisis

What Is a Crisis?

- The state of feeling a situation is more difficult than one can manage
  - Being able to identify levels of behavior during a crisis and the appropriate responses in each level is essential

Discussion Question

What are some common life situations that you personally have experienced that felt more difficult than you could manage?

Practice Rational Detachment

- Our attitudes and behaviors affect the attitudes and behaviors of the residents.
- Take note of the stressors that you brought to work with you (personal inventory).
- Set emotional boundaries.
- Keep your responses calm so they can remain therapeutic.

Scenario—Jane and Mr. Smith

Refer to Scenario Handout

The Levels of Crisis Cycle

Warning Level:
Spark

Relaxation Level:
Smoldering Embers

Irrational Level:
Campfire

Acting Out Level:
Raging Inferno

Warning Level: It Only Takes a Spark!

Common Behaviors

- Early signs in body language and nonverbals
- Pacing
- Crying
- Finger tapping
- Rocking
- Wringing hands
- Talking less or more than usual
- Tone, volume, and/or speed of speech may change

Therapeutic Responses

- Be calm, supportive, and nonjudgmental
- Validate the resident's feelings (even if you do not agree with him or her)
- Be aware of *your* facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice
- Use active listening skills: nod, maintain eye contact, and sit at his or her level
- Offer choices
- Know your resident's likes, dislikes, triggers, and history
- Build a good rapport before a crisis occurs

Irrational Level: The Campfire Starts to Burn

Common Behaviors

- Argumentative
- Loud or disruptive
- Challenging statements—"What's your problem?!"
- Resistant

Therapeutic Responses

- Validate his or her feelings
- Do not take the escalation personally
- Do not get into a power struggle
- Reduce unnecessary stimulation
- Have only one person do the talking
- Stay calm, respectful, and empathetic; not authoritarian

The Acting Out Level: The Raging Inferno

Common Behaviors

- May be physically threatening
- May verbally threaten or yell insults
- May be a danger to self or others
- May be intense and unpredictable
- May scream, throw objects, swear
- May attempt to hit, kick, or bite

Therapeutic Responses

- Safety is top priority
- Stand at an angle, an arm's or leg's length in distance; maintain personal space
- Call for assistance
- **Only one person should talk to the resident**
- Remove the audience—guide others away or guide the escalating resident away
- Reduce stimulation
- Do not block an exit or place yourself in a room with no exit path
- Do not take the escalating behavior personally
- Actively listen: Listen to understand, not to respond
- Monitor your nonverbal communication
- Maintain a calm presence and focus on safety

Relaxation Level: Smoldering Embers After the Blaze

Common Behaviors	Therapeutic Responses
• Physical tension relaxes • Emotional intensity drops • Deep, audible exhales • Yawning • Slower movements • Return to clearer thinking • May cry or express remorse	• Give resident time to rest • Make yourself available to re-establish therapeutic communication • If able, ask if the resident would like to talk about what triggered the crisis and what helped him or her calm down • Take care of yourself and continue to rationally detach

Note: *If not given time to rest, the fire can easily ignite again*

Conduct Staff and Resident Debriefing

- Make sure to debrief to check-in and assess.
- Is everyone OK? Who needs a break?
- Establish the basic facts of what happened.
- Look for patterns.
- Explore what went well and what could go better.
- Explore alternatives.
- Agree to changes that will improve future interventions.
- Give each other support and encouragement.
- Express trust and gratitude with each other.

Discussion Question

Refer to the scenario and identify Mr. Smith's crisis level and more therapeutic responses for Jane to use.

Identify the Crisis Level and Therapeutic Response

- Jane is observing residents in the dayroom during activities and notices Mr. Smith looks angry and preoccupied.
- Mr. Smith glares at others with clenched fists.
- Jane rolls her eyes, ignores Mr. Smith, and says to her coworker, "Mr. Smith is in one of his moods today."
- Mr. Smith starts yelling at the other residents at the table, "Shut up! You talk too much, and you're loud! Just shut up!"
- He then holds his head in his hands.
- Mr. Smith then lifts his cane and shakes it in the direction of one of the other residents attempting to hit her with the cane.
- Jane rushes over to Mr. Smith, takes his cane away from him and tells him, "Calm down! What's your problem? You must not want to have fun out here today!"
- Mr. Smith throws his painting at Jane and wet paint spills on Jane's scrubs.
- Jane raises her voice in frustration and yells, "Now look what you did! I'm not going to tell you again; you'd better listen! You need to calm down!"
- **What Crisis Level is missing?**

Identify the Crisis Level and Therapeutic Response

- Jane is observing residents in the dayroom during activities and notices Mr. Smith looks angry and preoccupied. *Warning Level: Spark*
- Mr. Smith glares at others with clenched fists. *Warning Level: Spark*
- Jane rolls her eyes, ignores Mr. Smith, and says to her coworker, "Mr. Smith is in one of his moods today." *What is a better therapeutic response?*
- Mr. Smith starts yelling at the other residents at the table, "Shut up! You talk too much, and you're loud! Just shut up!" *Irrational Level: Campfire*
- He then holds his head in his hands. *Nonverbal cue: Does his head hurt, or is he hearing voices?*
- Mr. Smith then lifts his cane and shakes it in the direction of one of the other residents attempting to hit her with the cane. *Acting Out Level: Raging Inferno*
- Jane rushes over to Mr. Smith, takes his cane away from him and tells him, "Calm down! What's your problem? You must not want to have fun out here today!"
- Mr. Smith throws his painting at Jane and wet paint spills on Jane's scrubs. *Acting Out Level: Raging Inferno*
- Jane raises her voice in frustration and yells, "Now look what you did! I'm not going to tell you again; you'd better listen! You need to calm down!"
- The *Relaxation Level* is missing.

Post Test

Questions

Thank you!




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