

10 Ways to Respond to an Escalated Person...

without saying “Calm down!”

Words, tone of voice, and body language are all forms of communication. When that communication is heightened to an escalated level– loud voice, threatening posture, etc.- it can be challenging for anyone to respond with active listening skills. Here are some things you can say that validate the feelings and needs of an escalated person while reinforcing emotional and physical safety.

It is always key to keep power dynamics in mind, that may be related to perceived position, culture, social identities, etc.

The phrases below are only examples. Use your own experience to develop more of your own “go-to phrases,” to help de-escalate with intention and validation.

1. “You expected to be treated differently in this situation!!”
2. “Can you give me more details about what you’d like to see happen here?”
3. “I want to hear more about...”
4. “___ helps me when I feel like this. What has helped you in the past?”
5. “If I were in your shoes, I would feel the same way.”
6. “What would a resolution look like for you?”
7. “I’m here to help.”
8. “Can I offer you a [beverage, snack, etc.]-- would you prefer ___ or ___?”
9. “This is important. I’ll be able to better focus on your needs if we can move this to a different location.”
10. “Would it be ok if I take a moment to absorb what you’re saying?”