

Conflict Management Skills

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1. Emotional grounding means doing something to calm yourself physically and mentally so that you can act from a place of strength. There are many methods:

- Taking a deep breath.
- Counting to ten (or five, or three)
- Self-encouragement: "I can do this," or "I am committed to non-violence."
- Observing/naming your emotions so you can set them aside temporarily: "I feel angry, but for now I am going to project calm."

2. Boundary-setting is anything you say or do to clearly communicate what you want:

- Using the "invisible wall" stance to set a physical boundary and keep someone at a comfortable distance.
- Using boundary-setting phrases like "That's not OK," "Stop bothering her."
- Refusing to engage further in an interaction when it is clear the other party will not respect your boundaries; for example, by using the "broken record" technique (responding only with a repeated word or phrase, such as "No").

3. De-escalation is a way of taking control of a conflict, helping one or both parties regain emotional control and calm down. De-escalation is a short-term solution, not a fix for ongoing violent behavior. There are many ways to de-escalate:

- using non-threatening body language.
- active listening (nod, mirror back what they say: "I can tell you're frustrated.")
- expressing concern, repeatedly in different ways.
- shifting the environment ("Can we sit over here and talk?")

4. Intervention is involving yourself in a conflict you were not initially a party to:

- physically stepping between the parties or creating another barrier.
- directly addressing either party (about the conflict, or about something unrelated to the conflict).
- summoning additional help, like a store manager or other authority figure.
- creating distance between the two parties.

5. Disruption and distraction are ways to re-write the "script" of conflict. This can mean

- singing loudly to drown out violent speech.
- doing something silly or entertaining in front of counter-protesters to divert the attention of a potential audience.
- engaging one of the parties in conversation. ("What are you protesting today? Have you been to a lot of protests? Where can I learn more about your perspective?")
- pointing out (or inventing) some other focus of attention. ("Is that your car they're towing?")

You already have a lot of intuitive control over all these skills, and you can practice them in many low-stakes everyday situations. With practice, you'll get even better at using them.



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