

Inpatient De-Escalation Skills and Self-Awareness Guide



This guide offers useful tips for inpatient staff. It helps increase your own self-awareness before you engage with someone in a crisis.



Active listening

- Is listening to understand, not listening to craft a response.
- Uses non-verbal techniques, questioning techniques, and/or responsive techniques.
- Demonstrates that you are in tune with what they are saying. This encounter builds trust and is naturally calming.
- Is an attempt to facilitate engagement and discovery.
- Is listening to the deeper meaning of what is being communicated.



Non-verbal active listening techniques

Silence

- Is not passive. It is something active that is done to facilitate conversation.
- Be comfortable with it. Don't be awkward, but don't rush to fill gaps in conversation.

Facial expressions

- Demonstrate actual interest, be attuned and responsive.
- Avoid appearing judgmental and being distant and too "clinical."

Eye contact

- Soft eye contact. Connect at the beginning. But don't stare.

Body language

- Be open, don't cross arms. Relaxed. Lean in, if sitting.

Voice tone

- Be calm and respectful. Keep it low and slow but also responsive.



Questioning techniques

Closed questions

- Questions that typically elicit one word response.
- Avoid yes or no answers. Yet they are sometimes necessary to solicit and clarify specific pieces of information.

Open questions

- These questions promote the individual telling a story about themselves in an undirected way.

Example

The closed question *“Did you have a good relationship with your parents?”* could be reframed into an open question like *“What was the relationship with your parents like?”*



Pro tip

Try to avoid asking *“why”* questions. These questions establish causality or the *“reason”* for something. Instead, encourage open-ended, non-judgmental exploration.



Supportive strategies

Assistance

- Help the individual with whatever task is stressful in order to try to reduce some of that stress.

Sympathetic signal

- Express care or concern for the individual.
- Give them descriptive praise can help reduce stress. This can be as simple as a smile or a high five.

Distraction

- Encourage the individual to engage in a substitute activity to distract them from the stress.

Steam off

- Use active listening skills and validating (and more validating) to help individuals drain off feelings by talking it out.



Pro tip

Remind individuals of their goals in situations. This makes you an ally to them and encourages engagement of their thinking brain.

Self-Awareness Exercise

I feel angry when...
I feel joyful when...
I feel unhappy when...
I feel hope when...
I wish I didn't have to...
I enjoy...
I feel afraid when...
Something I'd like to change is...
If I were (name a person), I would...
I feel like no one loves me when...
I know I am loved when...
Something I find boring is...
I know I can trust...
I admire (name the person) because...
I feel serene when...
I am most interested in...
I am annoyed when...
I disapprove of...
I am optimistic when...

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Q-TIPPS

An exercise to use with patients after a crisis occurs

Q-TIPPS is a step-by-step exercise that staff can use in DSH settings and across the mental health continuum. It helps patients learn and practice new skills after a crisis has ended.

Q

Find a **Quiet** place to talk

What you can say: *"Thank you for being willing to talk with me."*

T

Talk about the event in detail (get the full picture)

What you can say: *"Can you tell me what happened?"*

Once the person shares the full story, summarize it back to them: *"I want to ensure I get the whole story correct. What I heard you say is...[recap the details]. Does that sound correct?"*

I

Integrate their feelings with the behaviors they displayed.

What you can say: *"Is it fair to say that when you feel hopeless you curse at people?"*

P

Provide alternative coping strategies.

What you can say: *"Do you have other ways to deal with your stressors?"*

Then discuss at least 3 new strategies.

P

Practice those new strategies.

What you can say: *"Out of all those strategies you identified, which one would you like to practice now?"*

S

Support the reintegration into areas of their lives.

What you can say: *"Do you feel ready to go back (i.e., to the ward, program, clinic, etc.)?"*