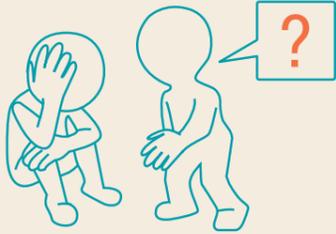


DEFUSING VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR IN HEALTH-CARE SETTINGS



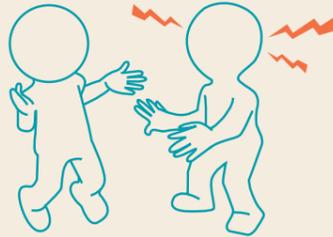
LOOK OUT FOR WARNING SIGNS

Escalating interpersonal tension can lead to distress and changes in behaviour. Watch out for these signals:



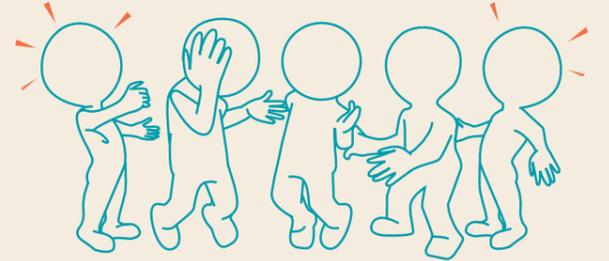
IN ONESELF OR COLLEAGUES

- Excessive fatigue or tiredness
- Daytime sleepiness
- Unexplained sadness
- Anger and frustration
- Low tolerance levels



IN PATIENTS, THEIR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Tense body language (clenched fists, tightened jaw)
- Agitated speech, often with demands and complaints
- Raised voice
- Restlessness
- Excessive hand gestures
- Threatening words or gestures



IN THE WORKPLACE (LIKELY HOTSPOTS AND TRIGGERS)

- Crowded spaces, especially waiting areas
- Prolonged waiting time
- Absence of personnel to offer guidance
- Shift rotation and handovers
- Delivery of “bad news”
- Increased influx of people inside the health facility

STRATEGIES TO DE-ESCALATE TENSION



BE ALERT

Recognize the warning signs of elevated stress for early resolution of the problem.



BE RESPECTFUL

Offer a chair to sit and explain that it's important to calmly discuss the issue.



LISTEN ACTIVELY

Ask the patient/attendant for details and express interest in the reasons for their distress.



PRACTISE MIRRORING

Rephrase the person's sentences and repeat them to show that you are listening and have understood the concerns. Don't exert your opinion as the “final one” or make false promises.



AVOID JARGON

Medical terms and phrases can be overwhelming and confusing to patients, their families and the non-medical community. Use simple language instead.



OFFER CHOICES

This reassures the patient/attendant of their agency over the situation. It can be as simple as offering a glass of water, asking if they would like to sit somewhere quieter or even asking if they would prefer to speak to another colleague (especially in gender-sensitive contexts).



BODY LANGUAGE

Stay as relaxed and calm as possible, even when it's difficult to do so. Speak politely, but firmly. Remember to keep a safe distance from the person while talking to her/him. The face mask might impair body language signaling (smiling, for example), so make sure that you nod and use enough verbal reassurance.



EVALUATE

See if things are normalizing and tension is easing. If you feel you are not able to manage the situation, it's best to excuse yourself and let another colleague handle it.

SEEK HELP

If you realize that the tension is continuing to escalate, especially if there is a threat of bodily harm, signal to a colleague or security officers for support in time.