



## / RECOGNIZE

High-conflict youth have a pattern of behaviour that seems to seek or create conflict in all sorts of situations with all types of people. They get angry over small issues which are almost always seen as someone else's fault.

In dealing with high conflict youth, your own safety and the safety of the other youth who may be at risk of being harmed (particularly with violent behaviour) needs to be one of your top considerations. This will generally not be achieved through out talking or over powering these youth. Their anger needs a firm yet non-aggressive response to keep situations from escalating.

## /// RESPOND

- Be as physically nonintrusive and non-invasive as possible. Do not move toward the student or invade his or her space. Do not threaten the student verbally or physically whether in words or posture. Use physical intervention only as a last resort, and then only if policies permit and you are well trained in its use.
- Send for help (if available), get rid of the audience (the rest of the students), focus on giving the student your E.A.R. (Empathy, Attention, Respect).
- Be directive but not aggressive. State the required or desired behaviour (not what they shouldn't do) clearly and specifically.
  - Offer limited choices among acceptable alternatives.

### A few other ideas:

- 1. Invite them to sit down** - Sitting is a resting state and the person's heart rate will lower. If they stand, it's easy for them to get more agitated and pace. If they sit, they'll begin the physical process of calming down.
- 2. Create a break** - Offer the person time to catch her breath. Don't always make the offer directly. You might say, "Can you hang on a second while I open a window?" Sometimes, this little break goes a long way toward calming her down.
- 3. Slow down the pace** - Make sure the pace of your words is measured and unhurried. Sometimes, the person is speaking so fast you may not understand what their talking about. In such cases, you may say something like, "I can see that you're upset and I really want to understand the problem. Can you start over and speak a little more slowly?" Talking more slowly actually slows the brain down a little and can calm the chaos in them.
- 4. Have a drink** - Sometimes, just offering the person a drink, like coffee, soda, or even some ice water, lets her know you're concerned. It also helps her begin to calm down physically, which is the first step toward mental calmness

## // REMEMBER

- Choose to "play the role" of being calm and composed no matter how you feel. Acting in this manner actually helps the person de-escalate, and calms you as well. Do not argue and do not respond to verbal abuse. Dispel any sense of competition and do everything you can to stand with them, not against them.

- Giving your empathy, attention and respect (E.A.R.) helps you connect with an upset youth as a human being. You can do this whether or not you agree with their point of view. Too often, people get pulled into arguing about an "issue", but with high conflict people "the issue's not the issue" - it's their inability to manage their own emotions and, sometimes, their behaviour.

- Remember what is yours and what is theirs. Young people who are causing conflict have often been living with this pattern for awhile. Although they may say horrible things about you and your ability as a youth worker or your heart for them, know that those words probably have very little to do with you.

- You are a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led child of God. Remember to approach these situations in the Spirit and not the flesh-continually asking God to fill you with His Spirit. (Gal. 5:22-23)

## //// RESOURCES

- With a focus on prevention, this training program gives proven strategies for safely defusing anxious, hostile, or violent behaviour at the earliest possible stage. <https://www.crisisprevention.com/Specialties/Nonviolent-Crisis-Intervention>
- A help list of ideas the youth can use to manage and de-escalate their own anger/conflict outbursts. <http://www.angerresources.com/de-escalate.html>

Find this and more at [www.lifeteams.ca](http://www.lifeteams.ca)

