



REMEMBER

- Choose to “play the role” of being calm and composed - no matter how you feel. Acting in this manner 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.) can happen whether or not you agree with their point of view. Don't be pulled into arguing about the “issue”, because “the issue” is probably not the problem – it's their inability to manage their own emotions and, sometimes, their behaviour.
- Although they may say horrible things about you, know that those words probably have very little to do with you and more to do with the conflict they are seeking to create.
- Approach these situations in the Spirit and not the flesh, asking God to grow the things within you that you'll need most (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control - Gal. 5:22-23).



RECOGNIZE

- High-conflict youth have a pattern of behaviour that seeks or creates 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. Aggressive youth attempt to bring harm into the conflict - physically, verbally or mentally.
- In dealing with aggressive youth, your own safety and the safety of the other youth who may be at risk of being harmed need to be considered. This will generally not be achieved through talking louder or over-powering these youth. Their anger needs a firm yet non-aggressive response to keep situations from escalating.
- Things to watch for include destroying others' belongings, extreme irritability, teasing/bullying/coercing/threatening, need to always come out on top, poor emotional regulation, and all or nothing thinking.



RESPOND

- **Be as physically nonintrusive as possible.** Do not move toward the youth or invade their space. Do not threaten the youth 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
- **Get rid of the audience.** If their peers are onlookers, give them another task to do - perhaps going to find another staff to come and join you. Focus on identifying what they are feeling by 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) calmly and specifically. Set simple and reasonable limits.

A few other practical ideas:

- **Invite them to sit down with you.** Sitting is a resting state, lowering the person's heart rate. If they stand, it's easy for them to get more agitated and pace.
- **Create a break in the intensity.** Make space for the person to catch their breath. You might say “Can you hang on a second while I open a window?” Or “Can I get you something to drink?”. Sometimes, this little break goes a long way toward calming.
- **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 they are 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 from the beginning and speak a little more slowly so I don't miss anything?”. Talking more slowly actually slows the brain down and can calm the chaos within them.



HIGH-CONFLICT

lifeteams
resources



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>

www.teenagewhisperer.co.uk - Lots of articles and wisdom for understanding teens with difficult behaviour.

cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0306-guetzloe.html - A practical guide for managing aggression in a group setting.