

DEESCALATING INTENSE EMOTION

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<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/04/13/laura-k-rock-dont-answer-feelings-with-facts/>

<https://litfl.com/emotions-and-covid-19-give-to-connect-understand-and-support/>

Don't answer feelings with facts.

PUT EMOTION BEFORE COGNITION

Emotion = Data

GIVE when you notice emotion

Get it's emotion

Drop your agenda, resist urge to “fix.” Just listen.
Don't take it personally. Connection, not information.

Identify

what you hear or see (this may be an internal step)

Can I check in with you? It seems like you were not expecting this news.
I'm noticing you're quieter than usual today.
You seem really frustrated.

Validate

by acknowledging feelings

Anyone would be scared about this. It's a big procedure.
We would all feel frustrated with this kind of uncertainty.
I hear you're scared. I'm worried too.

Explore

to better understand (if they want to share)

Tell me more.
What scares you the most?
I think it can be helpful to talk. Would you mind telling me what's on your mind?

NONVERBAL MESSAGE: I'M HERE TO HELP

- Body stance
- Lean in (but don't touch)
- Allow silence
- Tissues, water
- Patience

VERBAL RESPONSES TO DEESCALATE

- Use calm, gentle, clear voice, low volume
- Say your name, role, connection to team
- GIVE
- Reinforce you are there to help
- Summarize, give clear next steps
- In case of unreasonable behavior, set boundaries

You will have more control if you are calmer and more empathic.

KEY TIPS FOR MANAGING INTENSE EMOTION

- Don't answer feelings with facts. Emotion before cognition.
- You will not be able to deescalate with data.
- Don't take it personally.
- We are at the receiving end of people's coping skills at the most stressful time in their life.

*Emotion is an opportunity
to build trust*

MANAGING YOUR OWN EMOTIONS

- Vent to a friend (or write yourself a note)
- Breathe
- Try a mantra: “this isn’t about me”
- Be calm; react, but don’t let your emotions match theirs
- Consider a break, a stretch, a walk, water
- Get someone to join you or take over
- GIVE to yourself

WHEN WE
ARE
EXPOSED
TO
RUDENESS*
WE ARE:

- Less creative & flexible
- Less helpful
- Worse at problem-solving
- Worse at clinical decision making
- Worse at procedures

GIVE to yourself

Get it's emotion

Get that you have emotions too, and they are important.

Identify

What are you noticing? Name it.
narrate, don't vent

I am feeling frustrated.

I'm having a hard time with this.

I don't think I can have a calm conversation right now.

Validate

by acknowledging feelings

I'm human and I have emotions because I care about what I'm doing. It is not okay to be mistreated.

Explore

What's making me have this reaction?

Of course I'm struggling – I have worked 12 days in a row!

What can I do in this moment to decompress?

KEY TIPS FOR MANAGING INTENSE EMOTION

- Don't answer feelings with facts. Emotion before cognition.
- You will not be able to deescalate with data (alone).
- Don't take it personally.
- We are at the receiving end of people's coping skills at the most stressful time in their life.
- Do not respond to a disrespectful or abusive comment in the moment.
- If you feel unsafe, leave, and get help.
- Imagine if someone you love were this upset and disruptive? How would you want them to be helped?