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# **DE-ESCALATING VIOLENCE: 8 BASIC RESPONSES**

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## **1. Don't act frightened**

- ▶ Don't behave like a victim; demonstrate respect for yourself.
- ▶ Be gentle, but firm. Pleading induces more cruelty.

## **2. Don't act frightening**

- ▶ Speak to assailant as person of dignity.
- ▶ Become a person to the assailant. Humanize self and them (say "I"). Ask questions.
- ▶ If the victim is violent in return, the attacker feels justified.

## **3. Remain calm**

- ▶ Breathe deeply. Keep your voice low.
- ▶ Silence disarms.

## **4. Watch body language - yours and assailant's**

- ▶ Avoid sudden moves. Use slow and gentle hand movements
- ▶ Use non-threatening eye contact

## **5. Use the unexpected to create wonder**

- ▶ Use humor, distraction, introduce yourself to the person, shake hands
- ▶ Interrupt the process somehow - i.e. by trying to sit down, offering coffee, etc.

## **6. Empathize**

- ▶ Remember that the assailant has all the fear that you have

## **7. Know that the assailant is loved by God**

- ▶ Violence is frustrated love; pay attention to the need for love.
- ▶ Trust that the person wants to act positively.

## **8. Allow a way out**

- ▶ both physically, as in a door, and "saving face".

**“Calming a potentially violent person is:  
56% facial expression & body language  
37% tone of voice  
07% what we say.”**

**- J. Reuwer, MD**