

## De-escalation strategies information sheet

### De-escalation strategies:

Your ability to de-escalate a potentially violent situation depends on what you do and don't do. The following strategies can help lower risk in the potentially violent situations that victims of human trafficking often find themselves.

- 1. Do not challenge or threaten the person.** Responding to a threat with a threat or with aggression may escalate the situation. The person may feel pressured to respond with even more aggression. For example, saying "Is this a threat?" may be met with "Yes, it is a threat and what are you going to do about it?" This is a verbal escalation that brings you one step closer to a violent encounter.
- 2. Remain calm.** Try to listen and try not to overreact. Try to respond in a way that does not escalate the situation, but helps the person think about the potential consequences of their behaviour and actions.
- 3. Validate feelings.** Validating is not the same as agreeing. You might say "I understand that you're angry, but is there another way we can work this out? Think about what might happen if you did that."
- 4. Be respectful.** Use respectful language and gestures. Being disrespectful will only escalate the situation.
- 5. Watch out for non-verbal clues.** Be alert to non-verbal clues. They may signal intention better than words.
- 6. Control your voice.** The tone of your voice can impact the situation. For example, lowering your voice may signal aggression, while raising your voice may give a false sense of excitement or uneasiness. Try speaking in a slow, calm, soothing but firm manner. This will help you achieve a more controlled voice quality that indicates confidence.

**7. Adopt an open posture.** Your posture is how you position your body and it can signal your emotions and intentions. An open but confident posture is one that may be perceived as assertive, but not overly aggressive. A closed posture may seem threatening.

Closed posture:

- Crouching
- Standing too close to the person
- Standing face-to-face with the person
- Standing nose-to-nose with the person
- Pointing a finger at the person
- Touching the person
- Placing your hands on your hips
- Crossing your arms

Open posture:

- Standing straight
- Standing face-to-face with the person
- Maintaining a personal distance of 45cm to 1.2m
- Arms down to the side of your body

**8. Maintain a self-protecting stance.** Move your body at least an arm's length away from the agitated person. This moves you out of the range of being easily touched, grabbed, hit, kicked or overpowered.

**9. Pay attention to your surroundings.** While attempting to de-escalate the situation and trying to calm down the person, look for an escape route. Is there a nearby establishment or place of business that might offer cover or shelter until help arrives?

**10. Safety in numbers.** If you cannot escape, try moving closer to where people congregate and calling for help on your mobile phone. If someone is nearby, try calling out to them. If no one is around, try to stay in your present location, rather than being transported to another location with the person.