

Effective Strategies for Defusing Aggressive Behaviour

When faced with an aggressive person, your instinct may be to turn and run, but unfortunately that's not always the right thing to do. By familiarizing yourself with some simple techniques for defusing aggressive behaviour, you can help yourself and others avoid conflict and violence. These techniques are useful whether you are dealing with aggression at home, in the workplace, or in a public place.



Act in Control

Even if you feel anxious or scared when faced with the aggressive person, give the impression that you are confident and in control of your emotions and the situation itself. If they pick up on your anxiety, they may feel more anxious themselves, which can heighten the aggressive response.

Adopt a Calm Approach

Approaching the aggressive person in a calm manner and speaking to them respectfully, keeping the tone of your voice low. If you don't know them, introduce yourself. Ask him what you can do to help. Maintain a non-judgmental attitude at all times and focus 100 percent of your attention on them. Let them talk without interrupting, and only speak when they have finished. Acknowledge how they are feeling. Remember your aim is to calm them down, not necessarily to make sense of the way they are acting.

Use Body Language

Maintain neutral eye contact with the aggressive person, but don't make it seem as if you are staring. Let your gaze drop every now and then. Keep your face relaxed, but don't smile; if they think you are laughing at them or making light of the situation, they may become even more aggressive. Use open body language: don't cross your arms or gesture toward them with anything that could be perceived as a weapon. Stand a safe distance away from them and be aware of the nearest possible exit, should you need to get away.

Work Towards a Solution

Wait for the aggressive person to calm down. Explain the consequences of the aggressive behaviour respectfully but firmly. Suggest ways in which the situation could be resolved without conflict. Give the person more than one option, so that they have some control over the situation. For example, you might say, "Let's go for a walk for some fresh air," or, "Would you like me to contact a friend to give you a ride?"