



## De-escalation: Prepare in Advance

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, essential workers were called heroes. Healthcare professionals toiled as front-line soldiers fighting the virus. School teachers scrambled to revamp curriculum for online access. Public safety officers risked their own lives to save others. Now, two years later, the ordeal of reorganizing our lives has taken a huge toll, and unfortunately, the stress, fatigue and burnout has grown to epidemic levels. From nurses to grocery clerks to cops, our onetime heroes have become verbal punching bags for exasperated co-workers and the people they serve.

In the search for tools and methods to de-escalate conflict, employers are offering more specialized trainings to build a workforce skilled in dispute resolution and conflict de-escalation practices. The capacity to navigate and deflate high tension situations is not only a valuable asset for protecting those involved in a conflict, but can also reduce the expense of employee turnover, HR complaints and litigation.

In an agitated situation, other than the ever-present need to be patient, consider these five key de-escalation elements:

**Space:** Evaluate your surroundings. Are you in the best place to address the issue?

**Tone:** Maintain a calm, attentive demeanor. Are you reserving judgment?

**Empathy:** Acknowledge feelings and emotions. Are you open to understanding other viewpoints?

**Boundaries:** Set some rules. Are you clear about some guidelines for further discussion?

**Time:** Avoid knee-jerk reactions. Are you allowing adequate time to work through the issue?

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916.447.5264 • 800.499.8411

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### Ready De-escalation Responses

- I'd like to hear more about why you're upset.
- Can we agree if I listen to you, you will listen to me?
- Tell me what's most important to you.
- Let's find a better place and time to discuss this.
- Can you give me some time to think about this?

To learn more about **Lang & Associates'** Dispute Resolution and Conflict De-escalation services and trainings, contact:  
Lora Barrett at [lbarrett@langandassociates.net](mailto:lbarrett@langandassociates.net) or  
Marsha Lang at [lang@langandassociates.net](mailto:lang@langandassociates.net).

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