



# First Purpose De-Escalation Guide



## INTRO

**In** a perfect world you wouldn't need this document – but unfortunately conflict can arise – that's just part of life. It may happen between you and your co-worker, but honestly given the nature of fundraising, it's more likely to happen between you and a disgruntled shopper. This is a brief guide that can take you back to those elementary days and remind you of what's important – feelings – people have them, and when they get hurt it can really hurt, and it's a good strength to be able to prevent this or heal those feelings if needed.

So, sit back and get ready to learn how to de-escalate a tense situation.

## TYPES OF ESCALATIONS

**To** start, what types of scenarios might come up that require you to reference this guide? We can think of a few, but of course, like most things, there may be others. As a rule of thumb, an escalation (mainly conflict escalations) are when the severity or seriousness of a dispute, argument, disagreement, altercation starts to rise and get worse. Picture these scenarios:

- A colleague wanted to stop a customer and you make eye-contact first and get the stop. Then the customer signs up, you get the recognition and the points. You suddenly realize that your colleague is furious. They wanted that signup and they're not listening to your reasoning. – Here's a type of escalation that may happen on the field!

- A shopper walks by, makes eye-contact, and when you approach them they stop, become aggressive and start arguing with you. – Here’s a type of escalation that may happen on the field!
- A shopper has stopped and listened to your pitch, then objects by saying they cannot afford it. Using your proper training you try to rebuttal this objection by breaking down the monthly donation amount into a manageable “cup of coffee” once a week. The shopper takes offence and says something like “how dare you”. – Here’s a type of escalation that may happen on the field!

So we can see here that with just 3 examples the idea of what we’re talking about. These are unfavourable and tense situations. It’s intense and it may feel frightening. In these moments things can go either way. (1) Things can be resolved and everyone’s happy doing a group hug together, or (2) things can go sour, and people can walk away from the situation angry, upset, and sometimes wanting to *escalate things even further!*

So... how do we **DE-ESCALATE?** Before we get there, let’s cover **PREVENTION.**

## PREVENTION

**A lot** of the time serious situations can be prevented altogether. We will give you tips of how to stop them, but the best advice would be to not allow them to happen at all. Firstly, you’re likely going to experience members of the public that are less than pleasant. Their first reaction or first response or even an unprovoked response might be extremely aggressive, provocative or downright offensive. One thing you **MUST** remember is that you’re wearing a charity uniform. So, regardless of the situation around you, the words that come out of your mouth, or the actions that you show the public automatically acts like a message *on behalf of whatever charity shirt you’re wearing.*

We prevent for protection. Protection of you the fundraiser and also protection of the brands we represent.

So, to prevent there are a lot of techniques you can use.

### **Don't take it personally**

This is a big one. People say nasty things all the time. Try to not take it personally, and if you do – best next step is to remove yourself from the situation. You cannot effectively fundraise if you're in that state of mind.

### **Ignore Comments from those passing-by**

People may make nasty comments as they walk by. A terrible technique is to address these comments with sass or attitude in defence of yourself, your colleagues or your campaign. It may feel noble, but unfortunately, you're likely provoking a negative situation out of nothing. Best step is to just "keep it moving".

### **Ask yourself is it really worth it**

Sometimes when things happen either between us and co-workers or us and members of the public it can feel like we need to react negatively ... always ask yourself "is it really worth it?". Most of the time, it's not. When we think about all the things on the line like, (1) our shift, (2) the charity brand, (3) the relationship with the other person, (4) the relationship with our boss, (5) the perspective people may have of you after a conflict – that's a lot of reasons to avoid an escalated situation!

### **Would the charity approve**

Here's a really good tip and question to ask when fundraising and something comes up. Imagine an argument in charity uniform in front of someone that works for the charity you're campaigning for. It could be someone in a refugee camp, it could be someone working with disadvantaged kids, it could be someone in a hospital setting. Now, is that conflict such a good idea? No.

### **Patience**

If you have the patience to take a step back from a lot of these issues it usually can be your saving grace. Taking the time to properly think things through, or see the response from others it can really help you avoid conflict.

## DE-ESCALATION TIPS

### Communication

Communication is key! You might not even know why someone is upset without communicating. Take the example we used for the co-worker upset with you for stopping a customer. Maybe that co-worker spoke to that customer earlier in the day, maybe they had been waiting for that stop all morning. Maybe, they're just frustrated with themselves due to low performance... maybe they just want your help and don't know how to ask ... Which answer is correct? We cannot know if we aren't talking about it. So, first step to de-escalation is communication. Making sure that you fully understand the situation from the perspective of the other person is the only way to find resolve. Ask things like "Sorry, was it something I did?". Here's a polite way to determine if someone is upset with you – maybe there is grounds somewhere to re-explain yourself and the problem can be resolved.



### Undivided Attention

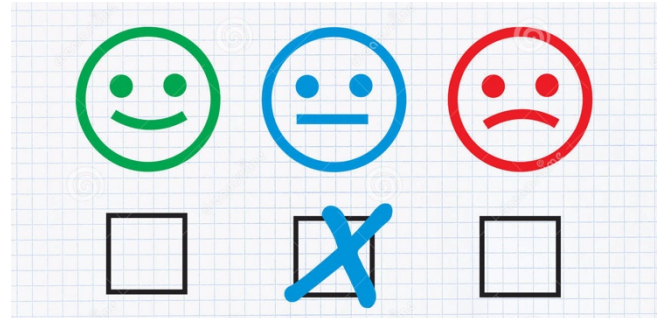
When people are paid attention to they feel validated; they feel important. The converse is also true: people feel less important and sometimes feel they need to up the ante if they feel like they need attention. Paying attention doesn't just mean saying, "I'm



listening." It means looking at the person, making eye contact if it's culturally appropriate, and virtually listening with the entire body. By really listening, and conveying that through body language as well as words, an officer can take away the person's reason for escalating the situation.

### Be Nonjudgmental

If a shopper says, "I don't want to give to an organization that supports terror!" a fundraiser's immediate reaction might be to think that the person is crazy. Why would the charity support that ...? But that type of reaction, especially if verbalized, will probably upset the individual even more. Even if not said aloud, that attitude may be conveyed through a fundraiser's body language. If someone is upset or unstable, they may tune into your nonverbal communication much more than words. So besides paying attention to what is said, ensure that body language and tone are nonjudgmental as well. This will go a lot further in calming the individual.



## Focus on Feelings

Going back to the previous example, if an individual says, "I don't want to support terror," a feeling response might be, "Oh course me neither, I wouldn't want that either" or even "I get why you'd be bothered if someone did that". This doesn't mean you're a therapist now, but it does mean you're using a handy therapeutic tool to show the person you understand and **don't** want conflict. Most likely it will elicit a response that is positive, since the individual will know that you the fundraiser understands what's happening.

## Use a Team Approach

It's easier to maintain professionalism when assistance is nearby. If you co-worker is close by, bring them in if you can. When an outsider perspective is applied it can help if they're not emotionally invested.

## Debrief

Be sure to debrief with co-workers, team members, or a supervisor after a major incident. Talking about it can relieve some of the stress and is also a good time to start planning for next time: what was done correctly, what could have been handled better, how could the response be improved the next time a similar situation occurs.