



De-escalation Strategies



The earlier you are able to spot signs of emotional dysregulation the better. If you have tracked behaviour and are aware of any triggers, strategies can be used as **PREVENTITIVE** to help avoid escalation in behaviour in the first place. Intervene as early as possible. Use the 'Anger Mountain' model to consider where the child is and adjust strategies and responses accordingly.

Not all strategies will be appropriate for all children. Professional judgement and regard for safeguarding must be used.

- **Appear calm and self-assured**
Make sure you are not displaying the same signs of agitation that can be seen in the child: unclench your fists, do not hold eye contact and avoid standing square to the child.
- **Give the child space**
Moving into someone's personal space can sometimes escalate the situation. Avoid body language that might be perceived as threatening.
- **Control your breathing**
If you are in close proximity to the child, they may begin to mirror your breathing.
- **Keep your tone of voice low and calm.**
- **Avoid using demands, threats or long instructions or ultimatums.**
- **Distract and divert**
When a child is aggressive, they are responding with their own fight-or-flight instincts and not thinking about their actions. Distract them and engage their thinking brain, perhaps by changing the subject or commenting on something that is happening outside the window.
- **Give choices, repeat these using the broken-record technique if necessary. Ensure choices are positive, for example, "we can go outside and play with the football or you can sit with me and do play doh. Football or play doh?"**
- **Remind the child of something positive that happened earlier that day or week. Describe the behaviours you want to see again – "I loved watching you use those monkey bars yesterday. Let's go!"**
- **Acknowledge the child's feelings**
For example, "I can see you're feeling angry. Let's go together and stomp outside."



- Reduce language to a minimum if child shows signs of becoming very angry or distressed. They will find it hard to process language when in a heightened emotional state (crisis stage).
- Use humour to lighten the mood.
- Ask “what can I do to help you?”
- Remove the audience.
- Talk about something they like.
- Remind the child of something amazing they did.
- Call for some help – say “Let’s call.....I think they can help us”
- Be willing to find a solution.
- Offer to change the way you are doing something.
- Avoid over-reacting.
- Enquire about their feelings – “I am thinking you are upset thatisn’t sharing the cars. Am I right?”
- Don’t tell the child to calm down!
- Show empathy
- Keep ‘escape routes’ open (as long as it’s safe to do so)
- Reassure the child that you are there to help and keep them safe.
- Distract with a favourite activity or by asking them to help with a special task.
- Allow them time to calm down and regulate before putting demands on them or attempting to ‘put things right’.

