

RECOGNISING THE SIGNS

Aggression and mental health crises can manifest in different ways. Recognising these signs early can help de-escalate situations and offer the necessary support.

Forms of Aggression:

- Verbal: Insults, raised voices, or threats.
- Behavioural: Pacing, throwing objects, or invading personal space.
- Emotional: Visible anger or agitation, with heightened frustration or fear.

Signs of a Mental Health Crisis:

- Emotional and Behavioural: Intense panic, anxiety, emotional outbursts, irrational behaviour, or reckless actions.
- Physical: Sweating, rapid breathing, or pacing.

These indicators suggest the person is feeling overwhelmed and requires support to regain control. By recognising these signs, you can respond effectively and prevent escalation.



De-escalating High-Stress and Aggressive Situations

GUIDE APPROACH

GREET

Approach them with warmth and calmly let them know you're there to listen. Saying, "I'm here for you" can help them feel understood and safe.

UNDERSTAND

Listen without interrupting or offering solutions too soon. Allow them to share their feelings while you show empathy and care.

INFORM

Reassure them that support is available. Gently say, "We can find someone to help," to remind them they're not alone in this.

DIRECT

If they're open, assist them in contacting a mental health professional or helpline. Stay with them if it helps. If they mention specific plans, take immediate action.

ENCOURAGE

Reinforce that seeking help is a positive step. Remind them, "It's okay to ask for support." Suggest small self-care activities they may enjoy.

DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES

When you notice signs of aggression, these strategies can help calm the situation and prevent escalation:

- **Stay Calm:** Keep your voice soft and steady. Avoid showing signs of nervousness or frustration, as this may escalate the situation.
- **Use Positive Words:** Choose calming phrases like "Stay calm" or "Let's work through this," and avoid negative or commanding language like "Don't fight."
- **Avoid Arguments:** Do not engage in arguments or challenge their aggression, as this can heighten the tension.
- **Don't Physically Restrain:** Avoid trying to physically control their movements. This could provoke a stronger reaction or more aggression.
- **Take Breaks:** If necessary, suggest a short break to give the person time to collect themselves and calm down.
- **Non-Threatening Body Language:** Maintain a respectful distance, avoid sudden movements, and make sure not to block their exit, allowing them space to feel less trapped.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If aggression escalates, seek outside help and take all threats seriously:

- **Call for Help:** If the person becomes dangerous, leave and contact emergency services or a crisis team.
- **Provide Information:** Let responders know if the aggression is linked to mental health or substance use.

**Always prioritise your safety.
Leave immediately if you feel unsafe.**

BEYOND BLUE - CALL 1300 22 4636 - CHAT ONLINE BEYONDBLUE.ORG.AU

LIFELINE - CALL 13 11 14 - CHAT ONLINE AT LIFELINE.ORG.AU

Sharon Neish

0437537484
sharon@sharonneish.com.au