

STRATEGOS INTERNATIONAL'S

TOP 10 PRACTICAL DE-ESCALATION TIPS

Most de-escalation training stops at communication technique only. **Ours does not.**

These ten tips combine the verbal and behavioral skills every staff member needs with the situational awareness that turns a good conversationalist into a genuinely safe first responder.

1

Scan the room before you engage.

Before you ever say a word, know where the exits are, what is within reach of the person who is upset, and whether you or they are blocked in. De-escalation starts with awareness, not conversation.

2

Lead with empathy, not authority.

People who feel heard de-escalate faster than people who feel managed. Acknowledge what the person is feeling before you try to correct or redirect their behavior.

3

Position yourself with a way out, for both of you.

Keep an open path to an exit for yourself, and avoid blocking the other person's path as well. Cornering someone, even unintentionally, tends to raise the stakes rather than lower them.

4

Match a calm tone, not their emotion.

Your voice and body language carry more weight than your words once a person is upset. A steady, level tone signals safety even when the situation feels anything but.

5

Name the feeling, not just the behavior.

Saying something like "It sounds like you're really frustrated right now" validates the person without agreeing to unacceptable behavior. People calm down faster when they feel understood.

6

Offer real choices, not ultimatums.

Give the person a clear, simple decision to make. Choices restore a sense of control, which is often what de-escalates a situation faster than any single phrase.

7

Use silence on purpose.

Do not rush to fill every pause. Silence gives a person room to think, breathe, and reset, and it often does more to lower tension than another sentence would.

8

Know your disengagement point, and have one.

Every staff member should know, in advance, what specific behavior means it is time to stop talking and start executing your lockdown or response plan. De-escalation only works until it doesn't, and your team needs to know the line before they're standing on it.

9

Communicate as a team, not a solo act.

Have a simple, practiced way to alert a coworker, supervisor, or security team that a situation is developing, without escalating it further in the process. Isolated staff members carry more risk than teams who know how to loop each other in quietly and quickly.

10

Debrief every incident, even the small ones.

What happened, what worked, and what you would do differently next time should be reviewed after every tense encounter. Organizations that treat de-escalation as a skill to be sharpened, not a box to be checked, are the ones whose teams keep improving year over year.

contactus@strategosintl.com
www.strategosintl.com

300 N. OSAGE STREET,
INDEPENDENCE, MO 64050
816-795-3768

WWW.STRATEGOSINTL.COM
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SINTL 000316-557 REV. AUG 2026