



Hints for De-Escalating a Conflict

Pathways Home

DeJong (1994) offers the following hints to de-escalate a conflict:

1. "Take a deep breath to stay relaxed.
2. Look the other person in the eye, with both of you sitting or standing.
3. Speak softly and slowly.
4. Keep your legs and arms uncrossed. Do not clench your fists or purse your lips.
5. Keep reminding yourself: 'We *can* find a win-win resolution to this,' and remind the other person of this too.
6. If necessary, ask for a break to collect your thoughts or release pent-up tension.
7. Give 'I messages.'
8. Paraphrase what the other person has said, asking for clarification as necessary.
9. Watch your language. Words that escalate a conflict are *never, always, unless, can't, won't, don't, should* and *shouldn't*. Words that de-escalate a conflict are *maybe, perhaps, sometimes, what if, it seems like, I feel, I think, and I wonder*.
10. Really listen to what the other person is saying, with the goal of truly understanding that person's point of view.
11. Affirm and acknowledge the other person's position.
12. Ask questions that encourage the other person to look for a solution. Ask open-ended questions rather than ones that will evoke a yes or no response.
13. Keep looking for alternative ideas to resolve your dispute so that both of you have your needs met."

DeJong, W. (1994). *Building the peace: The resolving conflict creatively program*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

