

# Positive Behavior Support - Training Topic

## Crisis Prevention Institute Training – Crisis Prevention Techniques

In any crisis development situation, there are four distinct and identifiable behavior levels. The purpose of defining each level is to attempt to meet each level with the appropriate staff response to defuse or de-escalate the crisis development. The four levels model is not meant to oversimplify the complexities of the behavioral process, but rather functions as a workable guideline for the staff. Behavior is anything but neat and packaged. However, the following behavior patterns can be seen in most people who are escalating.

### **Stages of a Crisis**

Anxiety - Defensive - Acting Out - Tension Reduction

*While this is the typical order, the individual may also skip around or skip a stage.*

**Anxiety**: any noticeable change in behavior causing the person to expend built up energy

**Each person's signs** of anxiety will be unique. Some examples may include pacing, talking rapidly, wringing their hands, increased heart rate, excessive worry, etc.

**The best response** to anxiety is to be supportive in a non-judgmental, empathic way. For example, talk to the person, Clarify what they are telling you. Be genuine and validate their feelings. Give undivided attention. Talk slowly and calmly. Be aware of your body language and posture, facial expressions, personal space, and tone of voice

**Defensive**: loss of rational thought; person becomes verbal

**Signs of this stage** may include power struggles, irrational thought and conversation, testing to see what will upset you, abusive language toward you.

**The best response** to defensive stage is to be directive: set limits, establish boundaries. The keys to setting limits are as follows: Be clear and short. Make it enforceable. Give the person time to decide what to do. Be reasonable

**Hints and Tips** - Avoid power struggles – don't take things personally, don't argue; speak softly and calmly; be aware of your body language, facial expressions, posture, gestures, movement, personal space; allow the person to be upset, ie venting; remove the audience; use if/then statements. Give real choices; keep the members away; avoid demands and ultimatums; avoid over re-acting; give undivided attention

**Acting Out Person**: physically acting out person, total loss of control

**The best response** for acting out is to follow the plan that has been developed by the team. If this is a new behavior, contact your supervisor or emergency contact for instruction. Staff must remember that losing control of one's behavior is an unpleasant and frightening experience. It can be difficult to keep this in perspective.

**Tension Reduction**: decrease in energy; regain rational thought back

**Signs of this stage** may include reduction of tension in muscles, emotional withdrawn, remorseful and apologetic. There is both a physical and mental response.

**The best response** for tension reduction is to use therapeutic rapport: re-establish communication. Let them re-gain a total level of calm and rationality. Maybe encourage deep breathing. Examples of therapeutic rapport may include: talk about plan and goals, support each other (everyone does their best in crisis), give person responsibility – but not blame for behavior

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*Taken from the Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training Program, Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc.*