De-escalating people in crisis
Nonviolent verbal intervention

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“De-escalation”

- **To decrease in intensity, magnitude, etc**

Random House Dictionary

- **To decrease the size, scope, or intensity of (a war, for example)**

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (4th Ed.)

Will my actions bring me closer to the person, or further away?

<u>First things first:</u>

1. Think safety
2. What's the problem?
3. What choices and options are there?
4. What's my role?

When do people become violent?

DeBecker's "JACA" formula:

- **J**ustified
- No **A**lternative
- No regard for **C**onsequences
- **A**ble

Adapted from DeBecker, G. (1997). The Gift of Fear

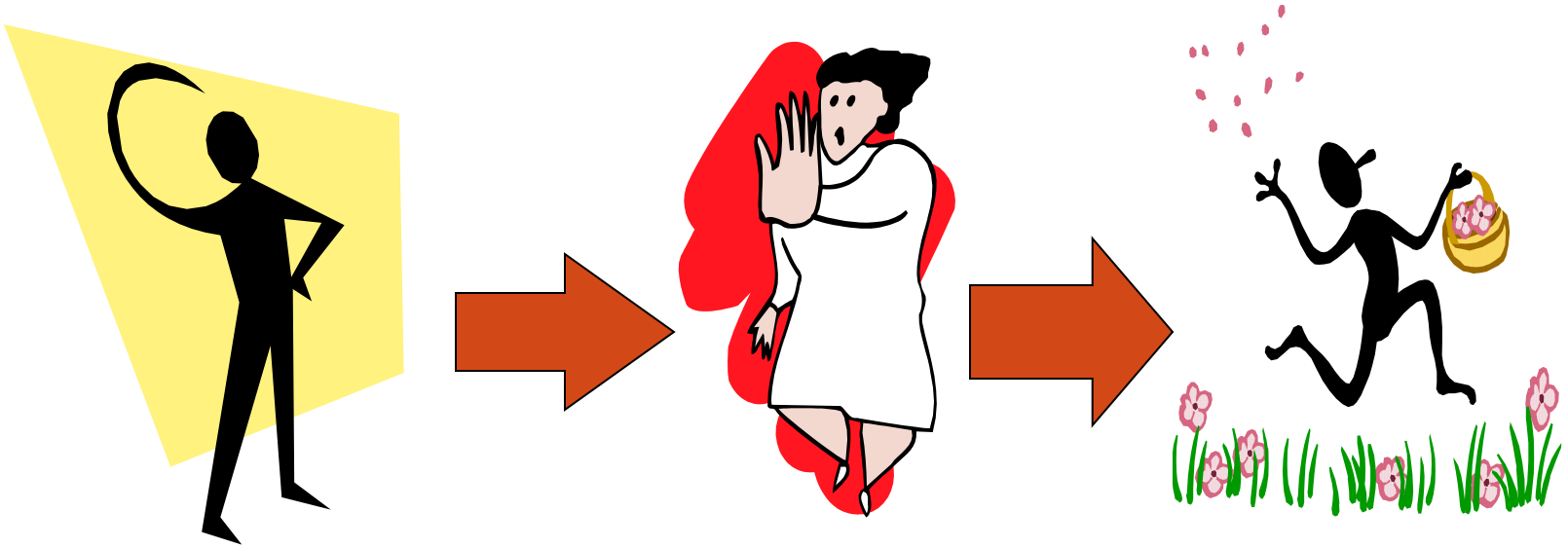
What's going on?

- Sometimes effective
- Likely a learned behavior
- **People are doing the best they can to get their needs met**

1. **Love and Belonging**
2. **Power**
3. **Freedom**
4. **Fun**

Glasser, W. (1998)

Escalating person’s view

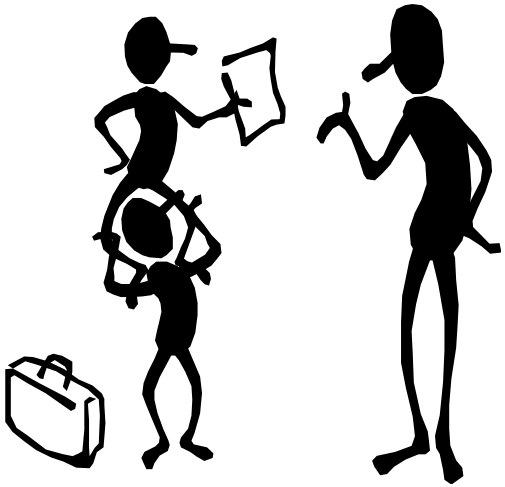


Angry person

You

What they want (unmet need)

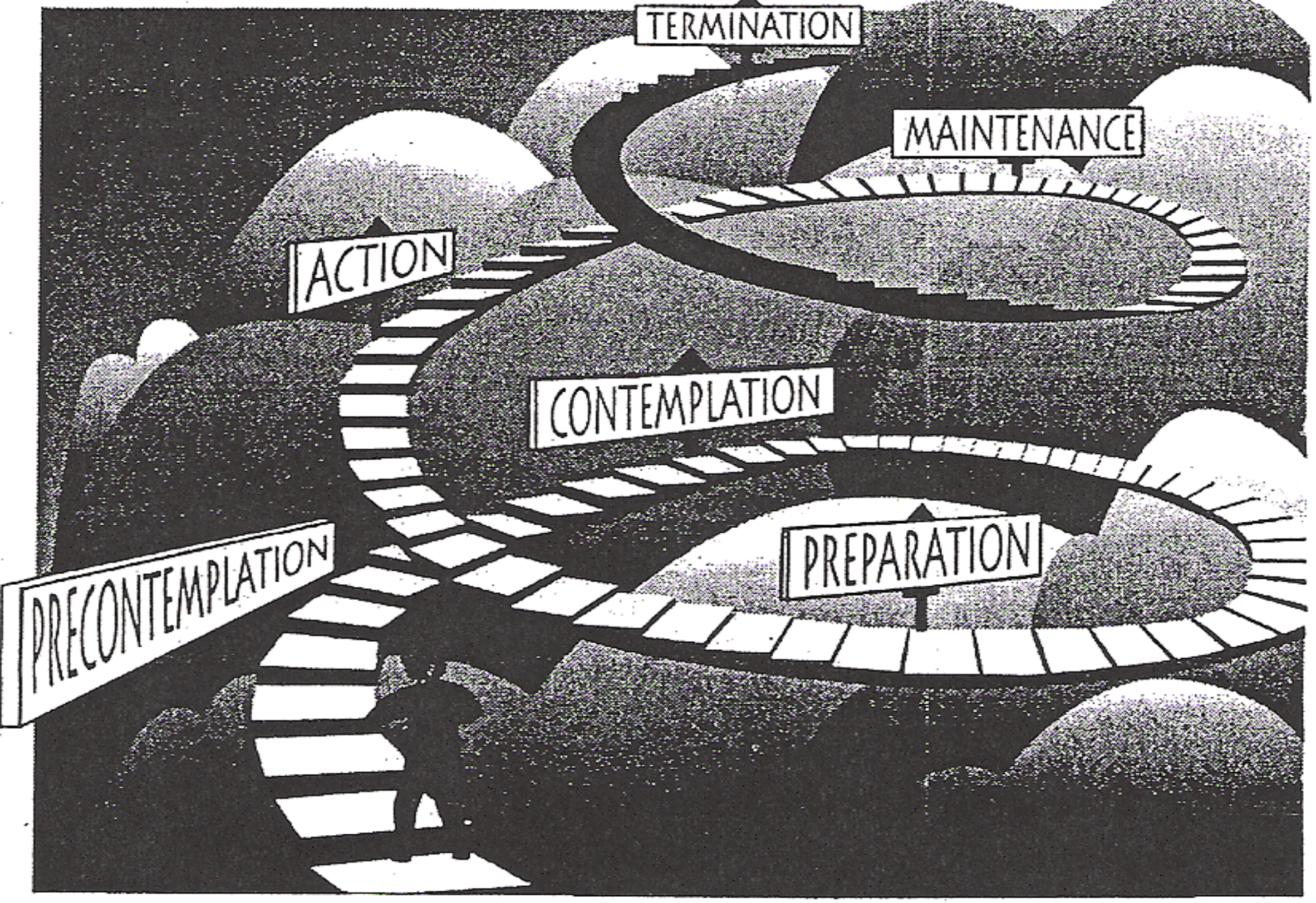
Collaborative view



Working together

To achieve

What they want /need



Prochaska, J.O., Norcross, J.C, DiClemente, C.C. (1994). *Changing for good*. New York: Avon Books

FIGURE 1. The Spiral of Change

First things first…

Escalating person – increase in energy

Am I in physical danger?

Yes

Crisis plan

- Assume the worst
- Isolate
- Call for help
- Call 911(?)
- Crowd control
- Physical environment
- Escape route / exit
- Personal space

No

De-escalation

- Check out yourself
- Check out the environment
- Work on nonverbals
- Verbal de-escalation

Olver’s Self-assessment. Can I:

- avoid criticizing?
- avoid being judgmental?
- keep from trying to control the other person?
- keep myself removed from the conflict?
- believe that people using anger have the right to make decisions about how they meet their needs?
- try to see the situation from the angry person’s point of view and understand what needs s/he is trying to satisfy?
- remember to put my professional role ahead of personal feeling

Environment

- Cramped room?
- Overcrowded
- Other staff visible
- Staff same gender, race?
- Other clients involved
- Person kept waiting / ignored
- Exit?
- Tables / chairs
- Weapons

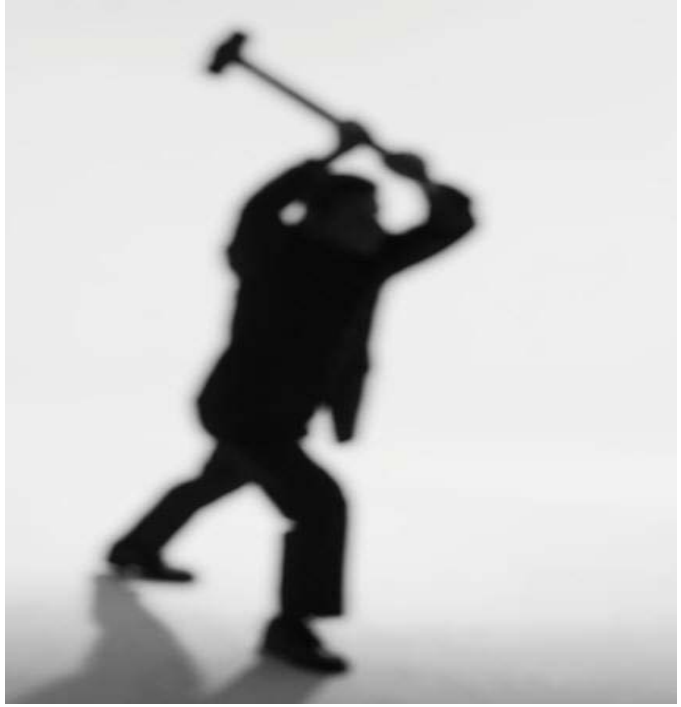
Non-verbal communication

- Project confidence not confrontation. Keep gestures small. Remember that non-verbal communication comes before verbal

- **S**pace
- **A**ssertive posture
- **V**oice steady
- **E**ye contact
- **S**afe stance

Risk factors for violence

- Past history of violence
- Suicidal tendencies
- Med compliance / changes
- Substance abuse
- Patterns
- Triggers, e.g. divorce
- Demographic factors



RED ZONE

911/ Emergency plan

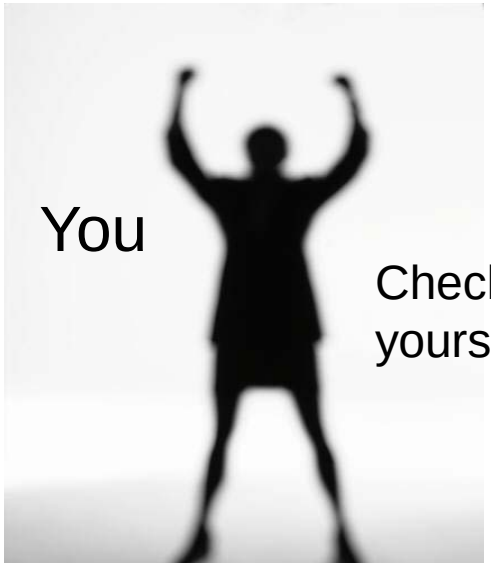
Fear Anger
Frustration
Paranoia
Confusion
Humiliation
etc.

Yes

Unmet needs

Am I in physical danger?

No



Reflective statements
Not defending rules
Accepting criticism
Not arguing
Offering to help
Using kind language
Providing options
Acknowledging
Apologizing

Person's Problem

Person's Problem

Reflective statements

- Mirror back to the speaker what you're hearing is going on
- Allow further explanation of "the issue" by not inserting your "stuff" (rules etc.)
- Avoid: criticizing, questioning, arguing, blaming, shaming, threatening, rationalizing, warning, directing, giving advice, reasoning, withdrawing, lecturing, judging
- Listen for: feelings, themes, motivations

Practice

- You're stupid!
- Why do I have to do this?
- This is dumb!
- Who are you to tell me what to do?
- This is bogus, I don't need to be here!
- You're an idiot!
- What's your problem?
- What are you looking at?
- You're a liar!
- Why do I have to fill out these stupid forms?
- You're not doing your job
- It's your fault

Practice

- You can't keep me here
- You social workers are all the same
- What are you, a psychologist or something?
- What, you've never had a drink or two?
- I don't need you telling me what to do
- I'm ok just the way I am, thank you
- You're so dumb!
- You're ugly
- Get out of my face!
- Watch it big guy!
- So you think you're tough, huh?
- What are you, like, mister perfect or something?

References and recommended reading

- Childre, D. & Rozman, D. (2003). *Transforming Anger*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications
- DeBecker, G. (1997). *The gift of fear*. New York: Dell Publishing
- Glasser, W. (1998). *Choice theory: A new psychology of personal freedom*. New York: Harper Collins
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Signs and signals of a stress reaction

Physical	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
• chills • thirst • fatigue • nausea • fainting • vomiting • dizziness • weakness • chest pain • headaches • elevated BP • rapid heart rate • muscle tremors • shock symptoms • grinding of teeth • visual difficulties • sweating	• confusion • nightmares • uncertainty • hypervigilance • suspiciousness • intrusive images • blaming • poor problem solving • poor attention • poor decision-making • poor concentration • poor memory • disorientation of time and place • difficulty identifying objects or people • heightened alertness	• fear • guilt • grief • panic • denial • anxiety • agitation • irritability • depression • intense anger • apprehension • intense anger • emotional shock • emotional outbursts • feeling overwhelmed • loss of emotional control • inappropriate emotional response	• withdrawal • antisocial acts • inability to rest • pacing • erratic movements • change in social activity • change in speech patterns • loss or increase of appetite • hyperalert to environment • increased alcohol consumption • change in usual communications

Adapted from International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, 2001