

De-escalation Techniques

Confronting an angry, potentially aggressive child can increase or decrease the potential for problems. It is important to realise that this child may have been dealing with stressful situations earlier in the day or even the night before. Sometimes an incident may just be the tipping point for a child, rather than the main cause. Listen to what the child is saying. Allow the child to use support strategies if they say they need them. For example, needing a few minutes to calm down or think.

1. Remove peer spectators or take the child to one side.
2. Provide adequate personal space for the child.
3. If you don't know the child, introduce yourself and say your position at the school.
4. Take a nonthreatening stance with your body at an angle to the child and your empty hands at your sides in plain sight.
5. Maintain a calm demeanour and steady, level voice, even in the face of intense verbal disrespect or threats from the child.
6. Speak softly and slowly; step back and try to see the situation from the child's perspective.
7. Speak respectfully to the child: strive to appear calm even if you are upset or anxious and avoid use of sarcasm, teasing or other negative comments.
8. Make sure the child feels heard.
9. Repeat statements the child says and ask for clarification.
10. Identify points of agreement for example "I know x happened, and I would feel that way too."
11. Ask open-ended questions about the incident.
12. Acknowledge the child's emotional condition empathetically e.g. "I can see you're really angry, and I want to understand why."
13. Keep vocabulary simple and sentences brief to allow the child to process what you are saying.
14. Allow the child time to process information.
15. Set limits e.g. "I want you to sit down before we continue."
16. Reassure the child. e.g. "This is your chance to give me your side of the story"
17. Create a plan of action with the child. What will they do now? Are they ready to go back to playing? Or do they need time out?
18. Share the incident with members of staff who be working with them.