

Skills for De-escalating Anger – the LOWLINE Model

Why do we get angry?

All behaviour is a form of communication and anger often caused by an *unmet need*, such as:

- Need for control (sense of powerlessness)
- Need for safety (triggered by a fear response – fight, flight, freeze)
- Need to feel seen, heard, understood
- Need for protection – anger sometimes ‘shows up’ for us as a defence against a softer and more vulnerable emotion/feeling that we may be experiencing.

Introduction to the LOWLINE Model:

LISTEN

Move to a quiet, private area if you can.

Try to listen without interrupting.

Show genuine interest, concern and gentle curiosity.

Try to keep your vocal tone ‘gentle’ and your body language ‘neutral’ or ‘non-confrontational’.

Use open-ended questions which invite the person to express themselves:

- *“can you tell me more about that?”*
- *“what happened after that?”*
- *“do you have other feelings/thoughts about that?”*

OFFER

Avoid over-reacting.

Offer reflective comments that put the person’s feelings into words:

- *“it sounds as though this has been really frustrating for you.”*
- *“I can see that this has made you angry.”*
- *“it sounds as though you’re extremely disappointment and angry.”*

WAIT

Allow for silence.

Show respect for the person’s personal space.

Try not to fill the space with words – this may make people feel ‘rushed’ or ‘pressured’

If you are uncomfortable with silence, try counting backwards from 10 in your head

LOOK

Be mindful of your own use of eye contact.

- Try to establish some eye contact, but follow the person's lead.
- Eye contact that is too intense may be perceived as threatening, intrusive, intimidating, flirtatious.

Be mindful of the facial expressions you use.

INCLINE

A slight incline/tilt of your head to the side presents a non-threatening position and shows interest in the other person

NOD

Occasional and appropriate nodding can show genuine interest in the person and a willingness to listen

EXPRESS

Express empathy:

- *"I can appreciate that you felt that way."*
- *"It sounds as though this has been a difficult time for you."*
- *"I imagine that made you feel worse."*
- *"that must have been a lonely time for you."*

Whatever words you choose, be genuine and be yourself.

Follow up – what feelings came up for you?

Debrief with a colleague using the following reflective questions:

- What feelings came up for me?
 - Consider triggers, feelings you had before the encounter, element of surprise
- What did I notice in my body?
 - Consider sensations, temperature, overall energy level
- How did I feel afterwards?
 - Consider all of the above
- What learning can I take from this experience?
 - Hindsight is a valuable teacher: what can we keep from this to inform our future self?