

# Deescalating Emotions in Conflict



## Slow Yourself Down



Take a slow deep breath, drop your shoulders, unclench your jaw. Calm body → calmer words.



## Lower your volume

People instinctively match tone and volume. Speaking more at a lower volume often calms all parties, especially with patience.

## Name the emotion (without blaming)

Try: "It sounds like you are very frustrated with..." "frustrated" could be "angry", "sad about", "concerned", etc. Feeling seen, heard and understood reduces intensity fast.



## Pause before responding



Even a 2-second pause can stop a reactive spiral. A short controlled silence is stabilizing.

## Validate without agreeing



"I get why you may feel that way" Versus "You're right."

Validation lowers defenses and opens dialogue.

## Ask one curious question



Use how or what, not why. As the conversation moves along, ask more questions to clarify the conflict and uncover potential resolutions.

## Reflect back what you heard

"So you're saying the deadline felt unrealistic and that stressed you out?"

Reflecting back shows you are listening and that you are trying to solve the correct challenge.



## Shift from "you" to "I"

"I felt overwhelmed when..." lands softer than "You always..." In other words, refrain from language that could be interpreted as an attack.



## Focus on the present issue only



Don't stack grievances. One problem at a time keeps emotions manageable.



## Know when to pause the conversation

"I want this to go well, and I'm too heated right now. Can we revisit in 20 minutes?" Pausing is de-escalation, not avoidance. Make sure you follow up as promised.