

DE-ESCALATION GUIDE: How to Support an Angry or Emotional Parent or Caregiver



STAY CALM AND GROUND YOURSELF

Keep your tone low and steady. Pause before responding.

"I'm here to help. Let's take this one step at a time."



ACKNOWLEDGE THE EMOTION

Recognize their frustration, fear, or anger. Show empathy before problem-solving.

"I can hear how upsetting this has been." "Thank you for telling me."



LET THEM SHARE

Don't interrupt. Use nods, eye contact, and brief prompts.

"Okay... I understand... go on."



VALIDATE THE EXPERIENCE

Show that their feelings make sense. Validation does not equal agreement.

"I understand why you'd feel that way."



SET RESPECTFUL BOUNDARIES (IF NEEDED)

Remain calm. Redirect if they raise their voice or become aggressive.

"I want to help, and I can best do that if we speak calmly."



CLARIFY THE ISSUE

Restate what you heard to ensure accuracy. Ask 1-2 clarifying questions.

"Let me make sure I'm understanding..."



SHIFT TO PROBLEM-SOLVING

Focus on actionable steps. Offer guidance or solutions.

"Here's what we can do next."



OFFER CHOICES

Give options to restore their sense of control.

"I can check on that now or call you this afternoon. What works better?"



BE HONEST ABOUT LIMITS

Don't make promises you can't keep. Commit to a follow-up.

"I don't have that information right now, but I will get it and follow up."



CLOSE WITH CLARITY

Summarize next steps so they leave feeling supported.

"Here's what will happen next..." "Thank you for working through this with me."