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elearning for healthcare

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

VOLUNTEER INDUCTION

COMMON CAUSES OF CONFLICT

It is essential that all volunteers feel safe in their role. Aggressive behaviour can have a negative effect on volunteers and it can impact the standards of service.

Conflict is described as:

A disagreement, struggle or fight that sometimes involves communication issues.

COMMON CAUSES OF CONFLICT

- Poor communication
- Poor information sharing
- People's attitude
- Physical health
- Unmet needs
- Lack of resources
- Religious and cultural differences
- Environmental factors

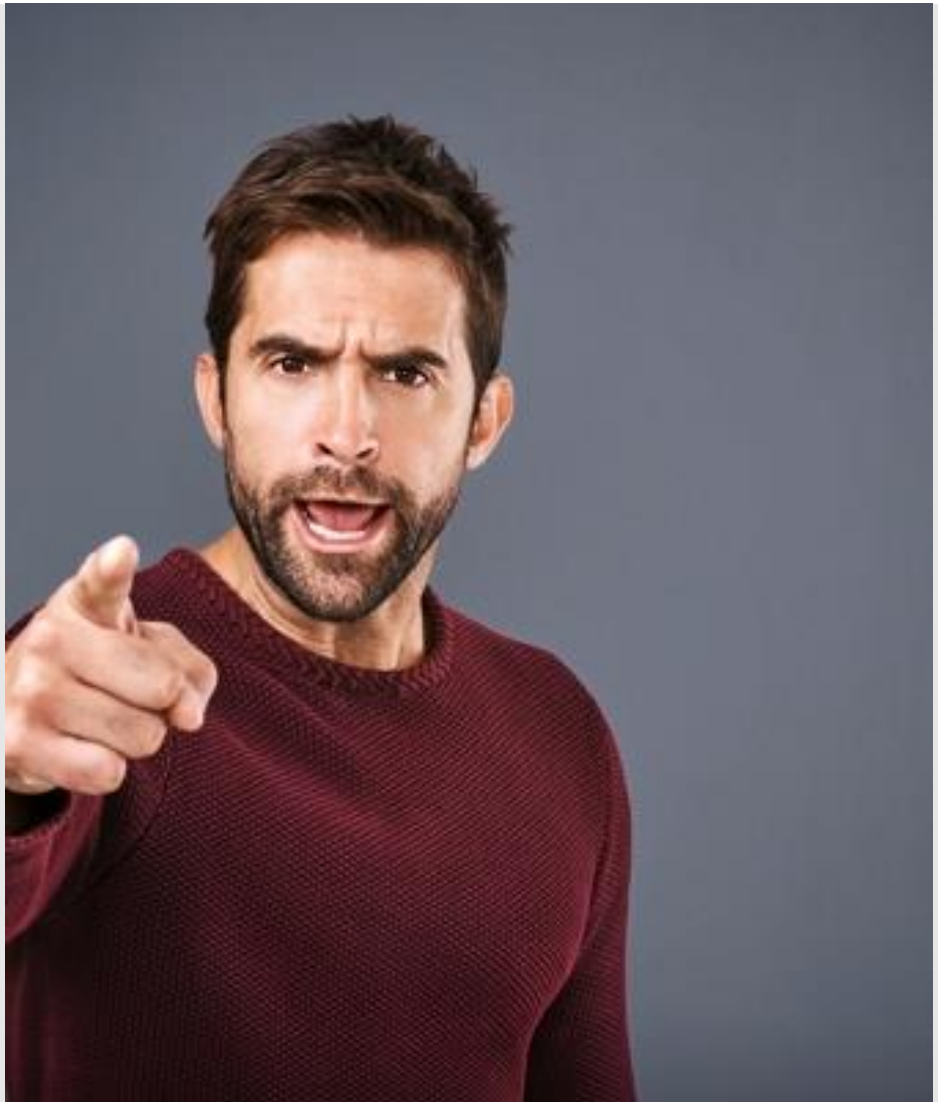
ASSAULT

Assault is an extreme form of conflict. There are two types of assault:

Non-physical Assault

(also known as Verbal Assault)

- The use of inappropriate words or behaviour causing distress or harassing someone. Examples include:
- Threatening behaviour (for example, threatening to hit someone but there is no actual physical contact)
- Abusive behaviour (verbal or by any other means of communication – email, texting, graffiti, via social media, includes swearing or other offensive language)
- Anything racial or sexual in nature (a potential hate crime)
- Stalking



Physical Assault

(also known as Assault and Battery)

- The deliberate use of force on someone else, causing injury or pain.
- **Deliberate** means someone knows what they are doing and they mean to do it.

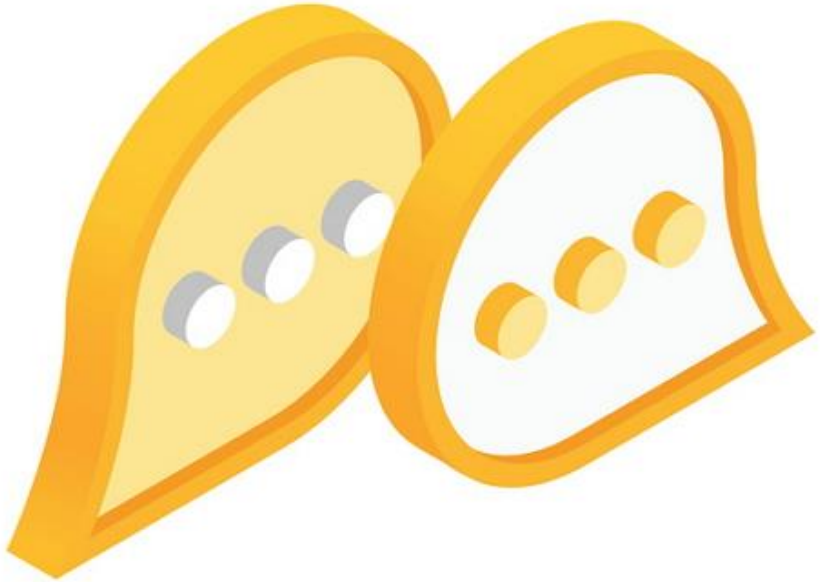
AVOIDING CONFLICT

AVOIDING CONFLICT – VERBAL COMMUNICATION

WHAT YOU SAY

For example, you could try the following:

- Say something positive
- Change the subject
- Motivate the other person
- Empathise with the other person
- Give choices
- Set limits



HOW YOU SAY IT

For example, consider the following:

- Tone of voice, speak calmly or slower
- Pitch- try not to sound too high pitched or too deep, for example a high-pitched voice may make you sound anxious
- Volume- don't speak too quietly but ensure you can be heard.

NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal communication includes facial expression, eye contact, how close you are and body language such as gestures and posture.

Ways to improve your body language include:

- Keep your body relaxed and open
- Use open hand language- eg don't fold your arms or clench your fists
- Breathe deeply and calmly
- Respect personal space
- Be aware of your facial expressions
- Avoid making sudden movements
- Don’t stare

Non-matching behaviour is when your body language contradicts what you say. People pick up on this, even if we think we are not being obvious. You will find being genuine, open and honest reduces the probability of conflict.

RECOGNISING NON-VERBAL SIGNS

As an observant volunteer you will be able to notice when an individual is becoming confused, angry, upset, stressed or anxious without them telling you. You can then take action to help stop this from happening or help them express their feelings in the best way for them.

Recognising the unspoken messages can help you to ask good questions and develop supportive relationships. It improves trust as the individual can see that you are interested in them and that you are trying to understand and meet their needs.

Notice

You should watch for clues from any individual that come from unspoken messages.

These non-verbal ways of communicating come from body language, position, facial expressions or gestures. For example, when asking someone if they are in pain, they may say 'no' but a wrinkled brow, uncomfortable facial expression or body movement may say otherwise.

TAKE ACTION

Take Action

By noticing an individual's reactions you can ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I need to change the type of communication I am using to help the individual understand?
- Do I need to be aware of how the conversation is affecting them?
- Is there something that the individual is not communicating to me that may help?

Communication breakdown can occur for various reasons.

Some factors that may lead to a breakdown in communication include:

- The **language** used (English not a first language, dialect/accent, jargon used)
- The **environment** - noise levels (too loud or too quiet), temperature (too hot and people may feel sleepy)
- **Personal emotions** - fear, anxiety, stress, anger, confusion
- **Alcohol or drugs** - both prescriptive medication or illicit substances that affect your behaviour
- **Disabilities** - hard of hearing, speech impediment

Other factors that may contribute include:

- **Cultural differences** - not understanding another culture can lead to conflict, even if you both want the same thing. Be aware that what you say and how you say it can be misunderstood as can your body language
- **Stereotyping** or preconceived ideas - making judgements or guesses about people based on appearance, information or personal opinion
- **Non-matching behaviour** - a difference between what you say and how you say it
- **Educational background differences** - different types of education may limit the understanding of the listener and cause confusion or anger
- **Difficulties understanding** – dementia, learning disabilities

THE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOURAL CYCLE

THE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOURAL CYCLE ESTABLISHES A LINK BETWEEN ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR.
A POSITIVE ATTITUDE CAN LEAD TO POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR, BUT A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE WILL LEAD TO NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR.

DE-ESCALATION

De-escalation is described as:

The use of techniques (including verbal and non-verbal communication skills) aimed at reducing anger and aggression.

The Basics:

Calm yourself first – remember to breathe

Look calm - neutral facial expression, relaxed body, limit movements (including arm movements)

Reassure yourself - positive self-talk

Ask for help if possible

Then:

- **Assess the individual's emotional state**
- **Identify trigger factors, is it too hot, too cold or noisy?**
- **Try to reassure them**
- **Talk/listen**
- **Be aware of your environment or those who might present a threat**
- **Keep a relaxed posture but remain alert**

DE-ESCALATION - LANGUAGE

The language you use can have a big impact on how the other person reacts.

Avoid the following:

- Ordering, e.g. you **must**...; you **have to**...
- Threatening, e.g. if you don't, then
- Preaching, e.g. you **should**...
- Lecturing, e.g. here's why you are wrong...
- Judging, e.g. you'll never change
- Excusing, e.g. it's not so bad
- Labelling, e.g. you're being unrealistic

LONE VOLUNTEERING

People who volunteer alone are at an increased risk of physical/verbal abuse and harassment.

Organisations have a duty to protect you from risk of physical and verbal abuse by carrying out risk assessments and providing suitable training.

Volunteers should take practical steps to improve their personal safety by:

- **Attending training**
- **Reporting concerns and incidents**

ASSESSING RISKS

When in a conflict situation, use the SAFER approach to assessing risk.

S - Step back - physically and mentally.

A - Assess the threat (people, objects, places).

F - Find help.

E - Evaluate your options. Can you calm the situation or do you need to leave for your safety and the safety of others, including the aggressor?

R - Respond in an appropriate manner.

PERSONAL SPACE

Personal space is not the same in all cultures, but in a volunteering environment it is usually:

Intimate	Personal	Social	Public
Up to 0.5m	About 1.2m	About 2.4m	Over 2.4m
People we feel close to	Friends and associates	New acquaintances	Larger audiences

DEALING WITH A CONFLICTING SITUATION

- Have an awareness of your environment and surroundings. Keeping a physical distance allows time to think, react and get out of the way.
- Ensure you have an appropriate and comfortable space between you and an aggressive person.
- Have an escape route/plan ready to be put into use
- Keep yourself between the other person and an open door so you have a quick and accessible escape route
- Use de-escalation techniques, for example calm yourself first, try to reassure them
- Use your escape route if communication has not resolved the situation

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is a structured way of listening and responding as it focuses on the person you are talking to. It requires you to suspend your own judgements. All volunteers should actively listen and respect other people's views and sensitivities.

Flexibility, empathy and a sensitive appreciation of other peoples' points of view, facilitates good team working.

Here are some suggestions of how you can show you are actively listening to someone:

- Give the person your full attention
- Avoid distractions
- Observe the person's body language, whilst being aware of your own
- Nod, smile and use other facial expressions
- Encourage the person to continue, using 'yes', 'uh huh'
- Paraphrase, ask questions and summarise
- Do not interrupt
- Check the person understands what you are saying by asking questions

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK

As part of your volunteer role, you may be required to take notes, send e-mails, write letters, etc. Important points to consider when writing include:

- Be as clear as possible
- Address the person you are communicating with
- Sign off with your name
- Be polite
- Get the message across
- Use short sentences
- Write in the order you wish them to read
- Re-read and check before sending
- Where possible, ask someone to check the writing before sending

SUPPORT FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

As a volunteer, you may be witness to an incident and asked to provide details. It is useful to write down as much information about the incident that you remember as soon as possible.

Information you may be asked about:

The following questions provide a useful guide:

- Was anyone injured?
- Did they need medical attention or any other assistance?
- Were the individuals affected moved to a place of safety?
- Was there a risk of further incidents?
- Was the incident reported or the alarm raised?
- Were the police called?
- Was an incident report form completed?

SUPPORT FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

Reporting:
If the incident is not reported, it is as if it did not happen. Without reporting it, steps cannot be taken to prevent it happening again. If in doubt, always report something to your volunteer coordinator.

Support:
Following an incident, longer-term support may be required. People requiring support may include those directly affected, anyone who witnessed the incident and those who are based or volunteer in the area.

SUPPORT:

Post Incident support may come from:

- Colleagues
- An individual's line manager
- Occupational health services
- Human resources
- Counselling services
- Victim support
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority

Support following an incident

An organisation:

- Has a legal duty for their volunteers' safety
- Should not place anyone needlessly at risk
- Needs to reduce the potential impact of an incident
- Must fully investigate all incidents
- Needs to provide appropriate training

What are the benefits of an organisation fully supporting its volunteers?

- Volunteers feel valued and respected
- Preventative measures provide assurance and security
- Volunteer welfare is supported
- Lessons learnt can prevent future incidents from occurring
- Volunteers feel empowered

YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY

As a volunteer, you also have a responsibility to ensure your own personal safety.

DO

Be prepared for problems

Avoid behaviour that is likely to provoke people

Keep calm

Be respectful and tolerant

Remember that silence can be helpful

Listen and try to understand

If in doubt, get help

DO NOT

Show hostility

Use provocative language

Raise your voice

Show signs of irritation

Behave in an overly authoritative manner

SESSION SUMMARY

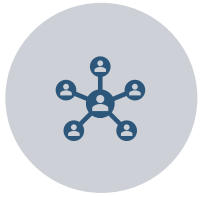
Aggression can have a negative personal effect on volunteers and it can impact negatively on the standards of service

Common causes of conflict include poor communication, poor physical health, religion and cultural differences and environmental factors

You can use verbal communication and body language to minimise the likelihood of conflict

Picking up on body language can give you a better indication of someone's state of anxiety or level of agitation

The attitude and behavioural cycle establishes a link between attitude and behaviour. A positive attitude can lead to positive behaviour, but a negative attitude will lead to negative behaviour



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You should always have an awareness of your environment and surroundings. Keeping a physical distance allows time to think, react and get out of the way

Following an incident, longer-term support may be required

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THANK YOU!

The content of this training was developed by NHS England, E-Learning for Healthcare and has been adapted by **Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**, to provide an accessible format, ensuring that all volunteers have the same basic learning when they start in their role.