HOUSING FIRST University

A program of Pathways to Housing PA

HousingFirstUniversity.org
5201 Old York Rd. Fourth Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19141
215-390-1500 x1708
Training@PathwaystoHousingPA.org

Tension Cycles

Low	Medium	High
• Relationship skills • Active listening • Acknowledge feelings • Speak calmly	• Limit setting • Respond selectively • Offer safe choices • List potential consequences	• Engage other staff or supports • End the interaction • In extreme cases: 911

Early Cycle (low tension)
- Use your relationship, past positive experiences, etc. to appeal to the participant.
- Do not get loud or try to yell over a screaming person. Wait until he/she takes a breath, then talk.
- If they're seated, sit. If they're standing, stand.

Mid Cycle (medium tension)
- Limit setting must be clear, consistent, & enforceable. Be respectful even when firmly setting limits or calling for help.
- Be honest. Lying to a client to calm them down may lead to future escalation if they become aware of the dishonesty. However, do not volunteer information which may further upset the client.
- Give choices, where possible, in which both alternatives are safe ones (e.g. "Would you like to continue our meeting calmly or would you prefer to stop now and come back tomorrow when things can be more relaxed?").
- Answer only informational questions no matter how rudely asked, (e.g. "Why do I have to fill out these g-d forms"?) This is a real information-seeking question. Do not answer abusive questions (e.g. "Why are all counselors' assholes"?). This sort of question should get no response whatsoever.
- Do not be defensive even if comments or insults are directed at you. They are not about you.

Late Cycle (high tension)
- Can turn into an emergency quickly. Know who to contact, how, and when.
- Be mindful of your exit– don't get cornered.
- Pay attention to objects that may be thrown or used as weapons.
- Be sure others clients and staff are safe. Back each other up.
- End the session if needed, but be sure to follow-up for resolution.