

Encouraging Positive Interactions

This short guide provides information about how to have positive interactions with others.



NEIGHBOURHOOD
Empowerment Team

Encountering people who we are unfamiliar with can cause us to be apprehensive because we may not know what to expect. We can reduce this fear by becoming more familiar with different types of people and learning about people's experiences.

Information on signs of agitation and triggers can help you feel more prepared to engage in a situation as well as to catch a problematic situation early.



You can use the information and strategies in this guide when addressing people you are unfamiliar with and whose actions you believe may be difficult to anticipate.

The best strategy to encourage positive interactions is to use **active listening skills** and **empathy**.

In general, if we treat everyone as a valued individual then we are off to a good start to having a positive interaction.

It is important to recognize that every person we encounter has their own unique history, some of which may be traumatic.

We must also remember that we go into situations with our own biases and stereotypes that may impact our interactions with others.



When encountering people who may become **agitated** or **aggressive**

- **Know the triggers:** there are some things that you may not be able to see that can trigger a person to become agitated or aggressive.
- **Know the signs of agitation:** there may be early warning signs that you can see such as **fidgiting, rambling, restlessness, pacing, nail-biting, outbursts or shouting, picking at skin or clothing.**





Things that can trigger **agitation**.

Knowing these can help you avoid a situation where you may feel threatened or to deal with an escalated situation.

- The person is **releasing anger or frustration**; these could have been building for a long time and prior to your interaction.
- They have **feelings of losing control** and are attempting to regain it.
- **Retaliation**; against real or perceived injustice or mistreatment.



Tips for positive interactions

- **Be mindful of your own emotional state.** Calm yourself before interacting with the individual.
- **Be aware of your surroundings.** Are there other people who can support you? Are there objects around that could be used as a weapon? Do you have an escape? Could your position be making the other person feel trapped?
- **Look and act as non-threatening as possible.**
 - Respect personal space
 - Use a low, consistent tone of voice
 - Keep a neutral facial expression
 - Place your hands in front of your body, open and relaxed. Do not fold your arms in front of you
 - Avoid moving too much, fidgeting or pointing fingers
- **Control your own response.** Behaviours and reactions contribute to calming the situation.



● Use effective communication techniques

- Ask the person's name and use it often, share your name
- Listen to what the person is saying and listen for common interests
- Focus on feelings
- Use active listening skills
- Give the person time and space to express themselves
- Clarify and ask questions
- Show empathy through facial expressions and comments such as "that sounds like a tough situation"
- Summarize the person's comments in your own words to show that you heard and understand what the person was saying
- Ignore or avoid challenging questions, the person could be attempting to create a power struggle

● Come to a conclusion

- Instead of telling the person what to do, offer choices
- Ask for suggestions
- Achieve compliance by nodding "yes" as you make a suggestion
- Find a small thing that they can agree with, this gets them in a 'working together' frame of mind
- Decide what is negotiable and non-negotiable

Remember that addressing people with **genuine care** and **concern** can go a long way to ensuring the situation remains **calm** and is **positive**.

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Non-emergency complaint line 780-423-4567

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For more information: NET@edmonton.ca

NET is a partnership of the Edmonton Police Service, City of Edmonton,
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