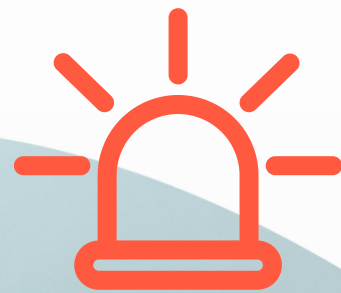


Safety on the Spectrum™

First Responders

At-a-glance tips



Our Mission

To create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully.

Our Vision

Creating a world where everyone in the Autism community is connected to the support they need, when they need it.



Sensory Strategies

Reduce sensory input and allow for safe stimming.



Sight

- Reduce bright light
- Turn off flashing lights & signs
- Reduce clutter in immediate area



Sound

- Reduce volume
- Limit noise, music, background conversation
- Offer noise cancelling headphones



Balance

- Allow movement (rocking, spinning, jumping, etc.)
- Honor need to stay still or allow sitting



Patience

- Provide calm, specific communication.
- Wait 7 to 10 seconds for a response



Touch

- Provide sensory hand fidgets (squishy, soft, textured, etc.)
- Ask before making physical contact
- Avoid unnecessary touch



Smell

- Limit fragrance and perfume
- Make sure room is well ventilated



Taste

- Allow for safe mouthing/chewing
- Connect the relationship between smell and taste



Body-Awareness

- Provide wide berth of space (proximity)
- Model deep pressure arm squeezes/self-hugs

Together, we can ensure safety for all members of our community.



Flight Paramedic

- Due to receptive and expressive language delays, this may require more time than is typical.
- If there is a need to move or transport persons with Autism, explain what will be happening and use gestures so individuals can follow where they will need to go.
- Within the assessment process, obtain as much information from a care provider as possible that will make the individual feel more secure or calm.



Fire Fighter

- Establish what is typical behavior and communication for the individual.
- Talk to friends, family members or caregivers to obtain an accurate medical history.
- Move slowly, performing exams distal to proximal.
- Allow patients time to process what you are explaining to them and ensure they understand before proceeding.



Police

- Non-speaking does not mean non-thinking: Use alternative methods to communicate.
- Approach using calm and non-threatening non-verbals concrete/direct verbals. Give time (7-10 seconds) to process.
- Reduce sensory overload, allow for safe self-stimulation (stimming) to calm.
- Avoid touch. Physical restraint should always be used as a last resort.
- If transporting or relocation is needed, allow a care provider to come along.

Together, we can ensure safety for all members of our community.



Emergency Workers

- **Speak in simple phrases**, not in medical terminology. However, do use age-appropriate phrases during the initial assessment process.
- **Whenever possible, avoid physical contact.** If it is necessary, explain what you will be doing prior to doing so.
- **If a person becomes fixated on an object or has the need to perform self-stimulating activities or body movements, do not interrupt unless necessary.** This may be a way for the person to calm down and self-regulate sensory needs.



Search & Rescue

- Many individuals with Autism **may be self-injurious**, especially if anxious.
- Individuals **may have pica** and may ingest anything from metal to wood products.
- Be aware that there **may be a fight or flight response** to the emergency situation and the person could bolt.
- If transporting for care, notify the awaiting staff of the situation and request a private, quiet area for the patient if at all possible. **Waiting in a busy hall or admitting room could increase levels of stress or anxiety.**

4 Ways to Create a Sensory-Friendly Ambulance



Provide calm, direct communication with visual support



Communicate with dispatcher about sirens and lights



Manage crowd control



Sensory kits for ambulances

List of 10 De-Escalation Techniques

Tip 1: Empathy

Their feelings and perspectives are real to them in the moment.

Pay attention and try not to judge or discount their feelings.

Supportive words like “that must be scary” can help them feel understood.



Tip 2: Personal Space

If you must enter someone’s personal space to provide care, **explain your actions** so the person feels less confused and frightened.



Tip 3: Non-Threatening Verbals

The more a person loses control, the less they hear your words, and the more they react to your nonverbal communication.

Keeping your tone and body language neutral will go a long way toward defusing a situation.



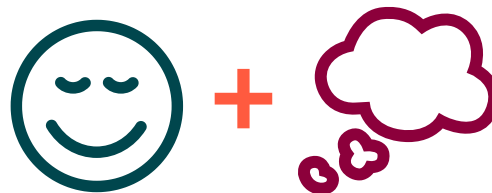
List of 10 De-Escalation Techniques

Tip 4: Avoid Overreacting

Remain calm and rational.

How we respond will have a direct impact on whether the situation escalates or defuses.

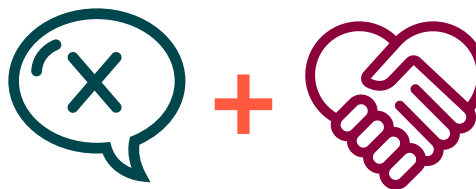
Positive thoughts like “I can handle this” and “I know what to do” will help you maintain your own rationality and calm the person down.



Tip 5: Ignore Challenging Questions

Answering often results in a power struggle. Ignore the challenge, but not the person.

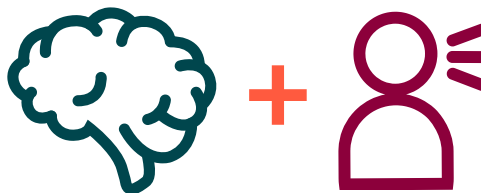
Redirect their attention to the issue at hand, and focus on how you can work together to solve the problem.



Tip 6: Focus on Feelings

When a crisis happens, a person’s reactions aren’t always logical, and their perspectives may not be rational.

Brains are flooded with adrenaline or cortisol, redirecting our rational thoughts into responses that can feel out of control or appear strange.



Logical or not, the feelings are REAL, and we must allow them to work through them.

List of 10 De-Escalation Techniques

Tip 7: Choose Wisely What to Insist Upon

Decide which rules are negotiable and which are not.

If you can offer a person options and flexibility, you may be able to avoid unnecessary altercations.



Tip 8: Allow Silence for Reflection

Moments of silence can give a person a chance to reflect on what's happening, and how he or she needs to proceed.

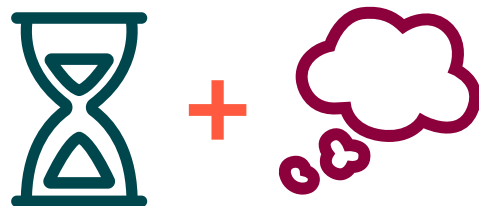
Silence can be a powerful communication tool.



Tip 9: Allow Time for Decisions

When a person is upset, they may not be able to think clearly. Give them a few moments to think.

A person's stress rises when they feel rushed. Allowing time brings calm.



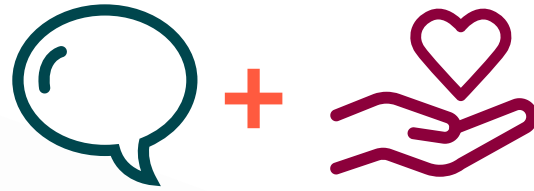
List of 10 De-Escalation Techniques

Tip 10: Set Limits

As a person progresses through a crisis, give them respectful, simple, and reasonable limits.

Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences.

A person who's upset may not be able to focus on everything you say.

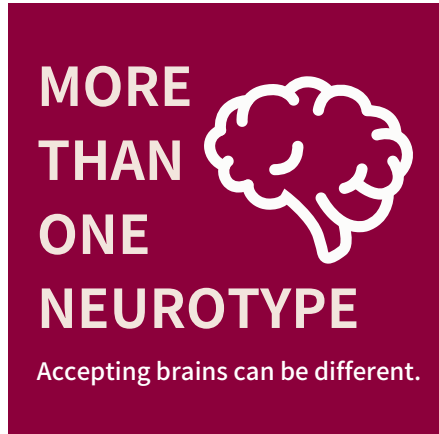


Be clear, speak simply, and offer the positive choice first.



At-A-Glance Tips for First Responders

Learning from the Autistic Community



Supporting Neurodiversity

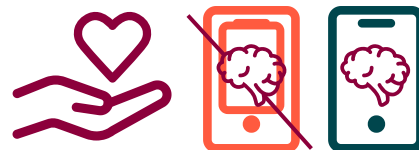
We can think of them as different types of phones. There is iPhone, Samsung, Huawei (and more). All these phones have their own way of doing things. One isn't better than the other, they are different.



If you try to get an Autistic or ADHD brain to be Neurotypical, it won't work properly. Not because the brain is broken, but because you're trying to get it to be something it isn't.

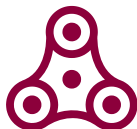


You wouldn't tell of or punish the Autistic or ADHD brain for not being Neurotypical... You'd change your approach and make accommodations.



At-A-Glance Tips for First Responders

Autistic Experiences



When I talk to you...
I might move, fidget, or stim.
**Moving helps me to listen,
focus and regulate myself.**

Autistic individuals may engage in repetitive motions such as chewing, rocking, tapping, humming, rubbing, hair twirling, swaying, flapping, etc.

This isn't an attempt at being gross, weird, annoying, or inappropriate, **this is moving their bodies to regulate their nervous system and is called 'stimming'.**



People with Autism often repeat sounds, words or phrases, even in situations where it may not 'make sense'. This isn't being strange, **this is using sound as a way to soothe themselves or communicate.**



It is common to make blunt comments and say things your 'not supposed to say' to or about others. This isn't someone with Autism trying to be hurtful, **this is lacking an understanding of social nuances.**



It can be immensely difficult for an Autistic individual to stop and think before reacting. This isn't being unruly, **this is having a brain that can't slow down impulses.**



Someone may refuse to apologize... and don't seem sorry for something they have said or done. This isn't lacking manners or empathy, **this is genuinely having no idea what they have done wrong.**



Autistic individuals often say no to doing certain activities... This isn't being uninterested, **this is having to avoid unsafe environments that don't accept their neurology.**



An Autistic person can find emotions really hard to regulate and may... hit, scream, yell or swear. This isn't being defiant, **this is being overwhelmed.**

At-A-Glance Tips for First Responders

When I talk to you...



It can sometimes take me a while to answer back.

My brain often needs time to think about my response.



The tone of my voice might make you think I'm angry, rude or bored.

The emotion you hear in my voice doesn't always match what I'm feeling.



I may look away a lot.

Your eyes are so intense and I hear better when I don't make eye contact.



At-A-Glance Tips for First Responders

When in doubt..write it out!

1 

2 

3 

I need to...

~~talk more~~

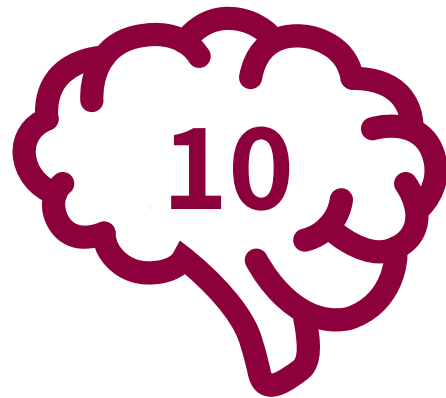
~~talk louder~~

~~talk closer~~

~~talk slower~~

...use visuals

2 & 10 'Til You Talk Again 2 & 10 to Comprehend



After you say two words (or show a visual), stop talking and **provide at least 10 seconds of processing time.**

This can seem like a long time to wait...try counting in your head.

Breathe



→
Inhale



←
Exhale



Resources

- [AWAARE Collaboration: awaare.org](http://awaare.org)
- [Crisis Prevention Institute's Top 10 De-Escalation Tips](https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/CPI-s-Top-10-De-Escalation-Tips-Revisited)
<https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/CPI-s-Top-10-De-Escalation-Tips-Revisited>
- Communication Visuals:
 - [Communication Passport:](https://widgit-health.com/download-files/aande/2013/AE_Communication_Passport_2013.pdf)
https://widgit-health.com/download-files/aande/2013/AE_Communication_Passport_2013.pdf
 - [Going To Hospital Symbols:](https://widgit-health.com/easy-read-sheets/pdfs/Going%20to%20Hospital%20-%20full%20symbols.pdf)
<https://widgit-health.com/easy-read-sheets/pdfs/Going%20to%20Hospital%20-%20full%20symbols.pdf>
- [EMA Emergency Alert Guidelines: ncjrs.gov](http://ncjrs.gov)
- [First Responders Toolkit:](https://nationalautismassociation.org/docs/BigRedSafetyToolkit-FR.pdf)
<https://nationalautismassociation.org/docs/BigRedSafetyToolkit-FR.pdf>
- [Frontline Public Safety Solutions: At Risk Residents Module:](https://www.frontlinepss.com/at-risk-residents-software)
<https://www.frontlinepss.com/at-risk-residents-software>
- [NAA's Big Red Safety Box: bigredsafetybox.com](http://bigredsafetybox.com)
- [National Autism Association: nationalautismassociation.org](http://nationalautismassociation.org)
- [National Center For Missing & Exploited Children: missingkids.com](http://missingkids.com)
1-800-THE-LOST
- [Northstar Paths: cainclusion.org/camap/north-star-paths-free-downloadable-visuals-and-graphics/](http://cainclusion.org/camap/north-star-paths-free-downloadable-visuals-and-graphics/)
- [Prevention Resources for Families: https://nationalautismassociation.org/wandering-quick-tips/](https://nationalautismassociation.org/wandering-quick-tips/)
- [Project Lifesaver Tracking: projectlifesaver.org](http://projectlifesaver.org)
- [SafetyNet Tracking: safetynettracking.com](http://safetynettracking.com)



Together, we can ensure safety for all members of our community.

For more information

AutismSociety.org | 800.328.8476
info@autismsociety.org