

# Workplace Violence: Confrontation Tips



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**Remember to:** Document observable behaviors. Proper and careful documentation is essential to monitoring troubled and potentially violent employees. Without records that substantiate problem behaviors, effective confrontation may be difficult.

## What To Do In A Confrontation

- **DO call a manager, security or 911 if the person becomes more hostile and threatening.**
- **DO follow policies and procedures and document the incident.**

### Verbal

1. **DO ask open-ended questions. Use “I” instead of “You” to reduce defensiveness.**
2. **DO encourage the person to talk. Listen patiently to tone as well as words.**
3. **DO accept criticism in a positive way and try not to take comments personally.**
4. **DO speak quietly and confidently.**
5. **DO treat the person respectfully.**

### Non-Verbal

6. **DO maintain eye contact and move slowly.**
7. **DO stay calm; control your emotions.**
8. **Breathe deeply and slowly.**

### Tactical

9. **DO keep a distance of 3-7 feet. Stand at a slight angle, a little to one side.**
10. **DO arrange yourself so you have easy access to an exit. Create and maintain barriers between you and the hostile person.**
11. **DO acknowledge feelings. You don't have to agree with the person to validate he or she is emotionally impacted.**
12. **DO use delaying tactics such as offering a glass of water to help the person calm down.**

## What Not To Do In A Confrontation

### Verbal

1. **Do Not reject all of the person's demands from the start.**
2. **Do Not lie, make promises you cannot keep or bargain with the upset person.**
3. **Do Not take sides or agree with distorted statements.**
4. **Do Not try to give technical or complicated information when emotions are high.**
5. **Do Not criticize, act impatiently, challenge, or threaten the person.**
6. **Do Not belittle the person or make him or her feel foolish.**

### Non-Verbal

7. **Do Not finger point or stare at the person.**
8. **Avoid physical contact.**
9. **Do Not stand directly opposite someone, hands on hips, or crossed arms. This can be viewed as challenging.**

### Tactical

10. **Do Not make sudden movements which may be seen as a threat.**
11. **Do Not try to make the situation seem less serious than it is.**
12. **Do Not panic, beg or plead.**

## **Documentation of Incidents:**

What happened?	When did it happen?
Who was involved?	Who were the witnesses?
What was said?	Why did it happen?

This handout provides general information and may not apply to each specific situation. It is not meant to:

- Set your organization's standard.
- Replace legal, mental health and/or medical advice or counsel.
- Replace existing laws, rules, regulations, and directives.
- Guarantee an incident of violence will not occur.
- Protect from harm.

**Remember:** Intervening in threatening situations requires advice, support and help from not only your EAP, but HR professionals, your assistant attorney general, security experts, and possibly law enforcement.

Source: WSD Employee Assistance Program

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