

Rational Detachment

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Rational Detachment is the ability to stay calm and in control—to maintain your professionalism—even in a crisis moment. It means not taking things personally, even button-pushing comments that attack your appearance, race, gender, or competence. The ability to rationally detach is a key factor in setting effective limits with those in your care. Without rationally detaching, you are likely to respond to challenging, resistive, or aggressive behavior with your own defensiveness.



CPI is the standard-setting provider of behavior management training that equips employees to have an immediate, tangible, and lasting positive impact on the people and organizations they serve. Over six million professionals from across the globe have participated in CPI's *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*[®] training program, which teaches proven techniques to manage disruptive and assaultive behavior.

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10850 W. Park Place, Suite 600
Milwaukee, WI 53224 USA

t: 800.558.8976 • f: 414.979.7098

tty: 888.758.6048 (*Deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired*)

info@crisisprevention.com

crisisprevention.com

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A Key to Professionalism



How to Rationally Detach

As caregivers, each of us must develop our own strategies for staying in control of our behavior during crisis situations. Here are some specific techniques that you can use every day.



Develop a Plan.

First, have a plan for handling crisis moments, including verbal outbursts from those in your care. Decisions made before a crisis occurs are more likely to be rational than those made when you are on the receiving end of acting-out behavior.

Think about the things that really set you off and practice a calm, professional response ahead of time. This technique is called *strategic visualization*, and it can build your confidence in dealing with difficult moments.

Use a Team Approach Whenever Possible.

If you have to set limits with someone who is likely to respond in a hostile way to your message, try to have another staff member around to offer support and backup. You'll find it easier to maintain your professionalism when you have assistance close by.

Use Positive Self-Talk.

Remind yourself that you are seldom the true target of someone else's verbal outburst—you are only the convenient one. Give yourself positive self-talk.

Tell yourself, *"I know what I'm doing. This isn't really about the two of us; it's about other issues in his life."*

Recognize Your Own Limits.

Some of us have the mistaken idea that being a professional means that we can handle any situation that comes our way. This is an unrealistic expectation.

We are human beings, and, as all human beings, we have good days and bad days. Some days it's harder to let things roll off our backs. Sometimes the most professional decision you can make is to step aside and let someone else take over.

Debrief.

Finally, be sure to debrief with your coworkers, team members, or your supervisor after an incident with a person in your care, even if the situation did not reach the point of physical aggression.

Talk about the emotions you felt. This is also a good time to think about how you could improve your response the next time you face a similar situation.

A Key to Professionalism

Do you ever wonder why some of your staff members seem to get frustrated and burnt out more easily than others? On the other hand, there are some human service providers who are able to stay calm and professional under almost any circumstance. Often, these people will tell you that they are not masking their feelings; they simply don't find themselves becoming impatient or angry in most situations. In all likelihood, it is because they have found ways to rationally detach.

Rational Detachment helps you depersonalize challenging behavior from those in your care. By allowing you to maintain a professional attitude and response during crisis moments, Rational Detachment helps you provide Care, Welfare, Safety, and SecuritySM for those in your care—and for yourself.