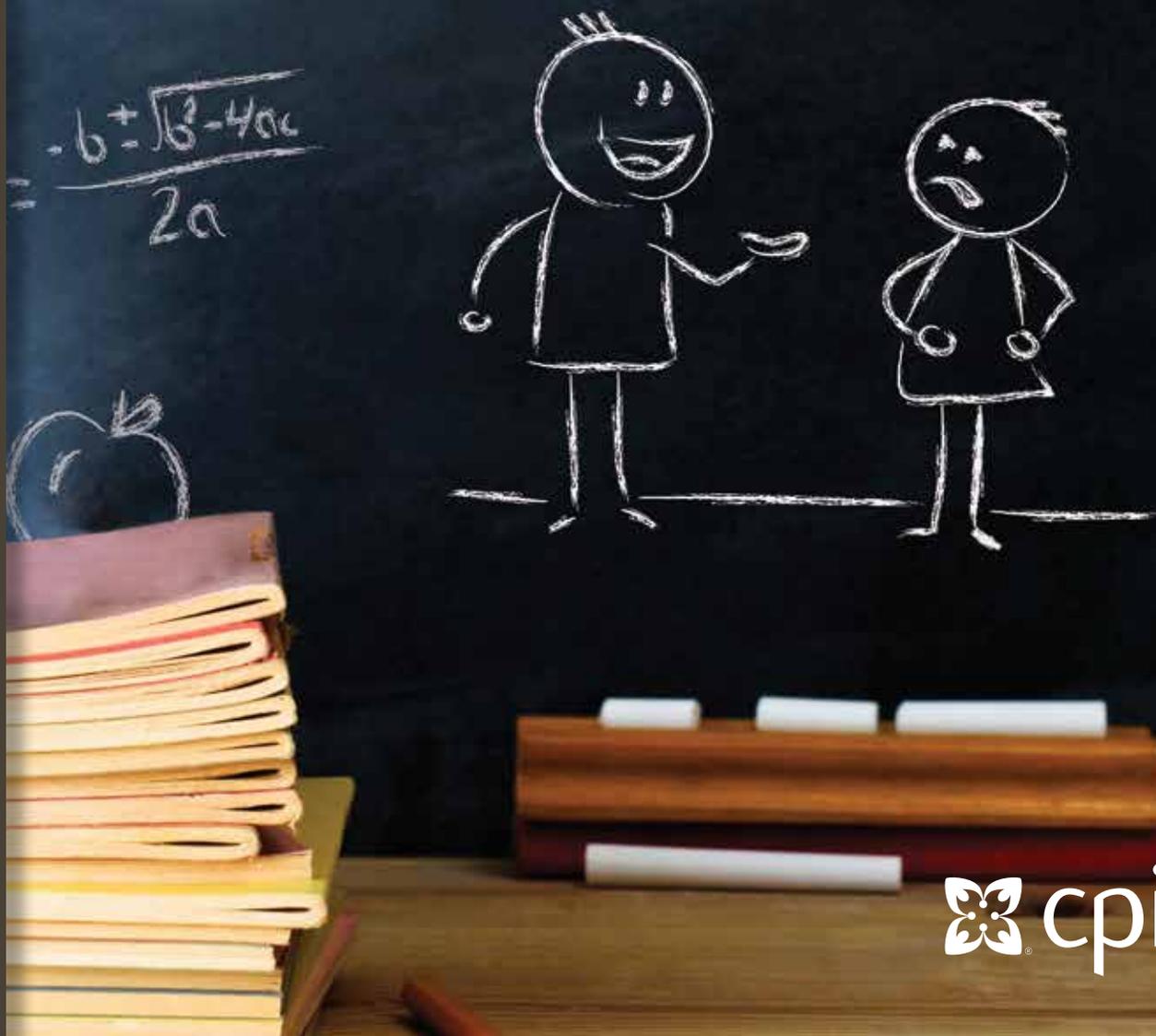




Helping Educators Defuse Difficult Conversations

CPI's Professional Development Series for Educators



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Welcome to CPI's Professional Development Series for Educators

CPI's Professional Development Series for Educators was developed to further enrich staff skills in resolving problematic workplace behaviors before they escalate. The information presented in this and subsequent modules will be relevant and applicable to anyone who has been engaged in a challenging or difficult situation in the workplace.

Who is CPI?

CPI is an international training organization committed to best practices and safe behavior management methods that focus on prevention. Through a variety of specialized offerings and innovative resources, CPI educates and empowers professionals to create safe and respectful work environments. This enables professionals to enrich not only their own lives, but also the lives of the individuals they serve.

Since 1980, over 8 million human service professionals around the world have participated in CPI training programs to learn proven strategies for safely resolving situations when confronted by anxious, hostile, or violent behavior, while protecting the therapeutic relationships with those in their care.

Helping Educators Defuse Difficult Conversations

Use this worksheet as a resource to help you prepare for your presentation. Add other items as needed.

	Persons Responsible	Complete
Invite participants.		
Reserve a private room if possible. Cafeterias and teacher's lounges tend to be high traffic areas, even after school.		
Decide on room setup if applicable. Do you need a podium? Projector and screen? Flip chart or whiteboard?		
Order light refreshments if possible; even cold water is appreciated.		
Order session materials including DVD, workbooks, and job aids.		
Review session materials and practice your presentation.		
Other?		

Session Materials:

Please be sure to bring the following to the session:

- Electronic Presentation, Learner's Guide, and job aid (see page 23 in the Learner's Guide).
- Extra pens or pencils.
- Additional visual support (e.g., whiteboard, flip chart, and markers).
- Laptop, projector, and screen.
- Certificates of completion (optional).

Helping Educators Defuse Difficult Conversations

When difficult conversations are about to occur . . .

"Your son will not be in the Accelerated Biology class."

"Your daughter did not make the Fast pitch Softball club team."

"We just did our Healthy Heads check and unfortunately your son has head lice."

"Due to many homework assignments being late, your daughter will have a detention."

"As the parent of someone in band, I am stunned by your decision to combine band and orchestra into one class. You are principal; you should know better!"

"Unfortunately due to extremely high enrollment next year, our school will not have a spot to offer your daughter."

"One of our volunteers complained that you kept her waiting outside for 15 minutes."

"We will only have three sections of English 1 next year and unfortunately we cannot renew your contract."

"One of the children in sixth grade said that your daughter was bullying her."

. . . **Defuse them**

Many factors need to be considered, all emphasizing the guiding principles of Care, Welfare, Safety, and SecuritySM.

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Overview

The workshop will run approximately 90 minutes and is in four parts:

1. Emotional Triggers
2. Action Steps
3. Skills Practice
4. Action Planning

This highly interactive session, *Helping Educators Defuse Difficult Conversations*, teaches participants how to defuse difficult conversations by outlining a simple yet effective process.

The content requires tailoring to the specific needs of the participants. While the information in this module can be applied to any workplace setting, adjustments can be considered specific to:

- Your workplace setting.
- The role of the person delivering the information.
- The nature of the information to be shared.
- The person/persons to whom you are delivering the information.

Facilitator Role

As the facilitator of this session, you are responsible for:

- Presenting content in a clear, effective manner.
- Minimizing as many distractions as possible.
- Ensuring everyone's ideas are heard.
- Covering all of the session objectives and content.
- Answering questions about the content.
- Customizing the session to reflect your environment and context (i.e., what are the needs/challenges of educators in parochial schools versus public or independent? What are the needs/challenges of coaches of club teams versus other teams?).
- Ensuring Due Care guidelines are followed.



Your Facilitator Guide mirrors the Learner's Guide with the answers included. Additional instructor notes and facilitation directions for all suggested activities are in italicized letters and indicated by this Note icon.

Overview

Participant's Role

Participants are responsible for:

- Participating fully in the session by:
 - Asking clarifying questions.
 - Participating in the activities such as assessments, case studies, and/or skills practices.
 - Sharing experiences.
- Abiding by session Due Care guidelines.

Due Care Guidelines

The philosophy of CPI programs is to provide the best *Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security*SM for all individuals you may encounter on the job. This workshop has been designed to provide the same *Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security*SM for you as you participate and learn the strategies presented.

Please respect the ground rules outlined by your Instructor while participating in this workshop.

I will:

- Treat everyone respectfully.
- Accept differences of opinion and try to learn from the views of others.
- Avoid behavior that is unprofessional or disruptive to learning.
- Participate fully and act on the Instructor's direction during all activities and role-plays.
- Create a safe and respectful environment.
- Cooperate, not compete.
- Respect confidentiality.

Personal or clearly identifiable issues should be avoided. Any details that could be perceived as private in nature should be excluded from examples and experiences that are shared.



Throughout this module, I will often ask you to consider your own experiences as we explore various concepts and skills. CPI has designed a learning tool to help us think about these experiences and begin thinking about the issues we plan to cover.

Objectives



Determine strategies for safely delivering difficult news that maintain dignity and respect for the individual.

Discuss the importance of preparation and maintaining professionalism.

Apply identified strategies through scenario-based practice.

Identify support resources for staff and/or individual(s) receiving difficult news.

Initiate plan of action for development of skills.

Establish or maintain a workplace culture of *Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security*SM.

Session Introduction



CPI's Professional Development Series for Educators can further enrich staff skills in resolving problematic workplace behaviors before they escalate. The information presented in this module will be relevant and applicable to anyone who has been engaged in a challenging or difficult conversation in the workplace.

Educators have a rewarding but sometimes difficult job as they are often pulled between many constituent groups—their peers, administrators, the state, the students, and the parents/guardians. With all of these accountabilities, difficult conversations are bound to occur. It would be unrealistic to expect that everyone leave these conversations feeling 100% satisfied. However, expecting each of the people involved to feel heard and understood without escalating the situation is possible.

This highly interactive session, Helping Educators Defuse Difficult Conversations, teaches participants how to defuse difficult conversations by outlining a simple yet effective process.

Begin the session by introducing yourself and asking participants to introduce themselves, and answer this important question. (Note: If participants already know each other, you can go directly to the question.)

Q: What makes having conversations with students, parents/guardians, administrators, and our peers difficult?

Offer some of your own examples and record these and other sample responses from the participants. You will be able to refer to these throughout the session.

During this module, you'll come to better understand the manner in which your own behavior can constructively or unconstructively influence the success in defusing difficult conversations. We will also review strategies to help maximize safety during a difficult conversation. The principles presented here are helpful with anyone you may encounter at work, as well as with other aspects of your life.

Self-Assessment



The self-assessment asks about participants' experiences and proficiency in each of the skills reviewed later in this session. Remember that throughout this module, you will refer back to the self-assessment responses and comments.

Participants may feel anxious about sharing their self-assessment results with others in the group. Please reassure them that this is for their use only.

Self-Assessment

Please read each statement and rate yourself on your performance of each of the statements. You will not have to share your results with others.

Key: Always 5 4 3 2 1 Never

1. Before having difficult conversations, I gather the facts and anticipate questions and/or issues that will arise.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I am able to explain my position and stick to the facts.	5	4	3	2	1
3. When in a difficult conversation, I am able to use Empathic Listening.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I am able to identify mutual points of agreement in a difficult conversation.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I am able to understand someone else's perspective even though I may not agree.	5	4	3	2	1
6. In a difficult conversation, I am able to say that I understand and respect someone else's point of view.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I am comfortable asking for someone else's help and offering my own.	5	4	3	2	1

Please add up your scores and identify one or two areas you'd like to improve. You will have a chance to plan for this at the end of the module.

.....



Briefly discuss this assessment. You may want to ask participants if anyone scored all 5s, or all 1s, or if most people were in between. These can be rhetorical questions. Reinforce that each of the questions in the assessment will be reviewed during the workshop and that you will be able to revisit them at the conclusion.

Emotional Triggers

Emotional triggers consist of thoughts, feelings, and events that seem to “trigger” an automatic response from us.

“In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers.”

– Fred Rogers, *The World According to Mister Rogers: Important Things To Remember*

Difficult conversations may be necessary. However, understanding why these topics can trigger strong emotional and physical reactions is an important first step toward a positive outcome for all involved.

When a person perceives that someone or something they value is under attack, physical and emotional responses can be triggered.

Research shows that the activation of the limbic system causes the body to undergo several physical changes during emotional experiences.

Examples of physical responses include:

- Change in breathing patterns.
- Elevated blood pressure.
- **Flushing.**
- **Increased** pulse.

Examples of emotional responses include:

- Fear.
- **Anxiety.**
- **Anger.**
- Confusion.



The physical reactions identified are caused by the limbic system sending out stress signals to the body.

Review each of the statements in the Learner’s Guide and ask participants what the triggers might be.

People are triggered when they perceive that they, someone or something they care about deeply such as a loved one, a belief, or value is under attack.

For example:

“If my son doesn’t maintain a 4.0 grade average, he will not be accepted into an Ivy League school.”

“The student’s parents claim that you refused to give her a second homework sheet.”

“This is the third game that my child has been sitting on the bench. Why doesn’t the coach see how unfair that is?”

“I can’t control the traffic. I pick my son up from after school care as soon as I possibly can. Other people are late more often than I am. Why don’t they criticize them?”

Discussion Question

What would you consider to be important staff behaviors if involved in these conversations?

Emotional Triggers

Managing Emotional Triggers

Most people's reactions to conflict range from discomfort to fear, fight to flight. We tend to avoid addressing difficult issues for fear of hurting someone's feelings, making them angry, or losing a relationship with them. As educators, we know that there are situations that must be addressed in order to keep students on track, safe, and successful.

Defusing difficult conversations is easier when you can:

- a) **Control** your own reaction.
- b) Listen and be **sensitive** to what may be triggering the other person.

A parent or guardian being told that their child is failing, a teacher who has received parent complaints, or a student who is being excluded by their friends is likely to be triggered. It then becomes extremely important that you treat this conversation with as much sensitivity as possible so the situation does not escalate. Pay special attention to how you say things.

Control your **body language**, tone of voice, **proximity**, and how you say things.

It's also important that you keep yourself from becoming triggered. People under stress can lash out, blame others, and lose perspective. You may find yourself becoming agitated by this. Losing control will only escalate the situation. Like a flight attendant advises you to "put on your own oxygen mask first," it is important to take special care of yourself so you stay in control of the conversation.

To do this effectively, we need to identify some of our own triggers, what emotions are experienced, and explore strategies for managing our own emotions.

Discussion



Ask the participants to record examples of things that may trigger them. No one is required to share; however, after sharing some of your own examples, the group may find they have many triggers in common. You may want to ask if any of the triggers listed would also apply to parents and students.

Next, share examples of things you do to manage your own emotions. Record these on the flip chart. There are many ways of coping with stress and emotional triggers. Taking deep breaths, leaving the stressful situation to gather thoughts, drinking a glass of water, or looking at a favorite picture or object are all ways of getting some mental "space."

Continue the discussion by asking participants to reflect and record strategies for managing their own emotions. Remember that each person may have their own unique ways of managing emotions or stress. These might include: talking with a trusted peer, documenting what you are thinking and feeling, or preparing for the difficult conversation.

As we complete the first section of our workshop, encourage participants to keep in mind the discussion as we begin to develop a plan to ensure a positive outcome for difficult conversations.

Emotional Triggers

“The single most important thing [you can do] is to shift [your] internal stance from ‘I understand’ to ‘Help me understand.’ Everything else follows from that.”

– Douglas Stone, *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*

Introduce Action Steps



The DEFUSE model presents an easy to follow process for managing difficult conversations.

Provide an overview of the DEFUSE model. Next, describe each component individually, providing examples for each. Include participant examples. You may want to include these on your flip chart.

Stop It Before It Starts

Just like you can't "unring" a bell, ideally your goal is to prevent triggering someone so the conversation does not escalate into an emotionally charged situation. Recognizing that you are oftentimes dealing with issues affecting someone's child, career, or values should help you do everything you can do to keep lines of communication open.

Keeping people informed when issues are starting is critical to preventing escalations. Thoughtfully constructed communication can prevent stress later.

Example: “Mrs. Johnson, I just wanted to make you aware that Mason’s grade has dropped from an A- to a D+ in the past four weeks. Is there anything you can tell me that would help me to understand the cause?”

Activity 1: Scenario A

Directions

This section offers two demonstration options and will include a “wrong” way and a “right” way to defuse a difficult conversation.

- *Option A*

- 1. Choose a volunteer to help you with a demonstration of the “wrong” way to defuse a conversation. The facilitator will play the role of the teacher; the volunteer will play the role of “Chris.”*
- 2. Ask your volunteer to refer to Scenario A and quickly read their part.*
- 3. Demonstrate the conversation with your volunteer. Remember you are trying to demonstrate what the conversation might sound like **before** learning more effective strategies.*
- 4. Participants will record examples of what went well in the scenario and what could be improved.*

Sample discussion questions:

- *How did Sandy’s behavior impact the conversation?*
 - *What do you think will happen in future conversations between Sandy and Chris?*
- 5. Outline and discuss DEFUSE Action Steps. Include participant examples.*

- *Option B*

- 1. Participants will read Scenario A individually or in pairs.*
- 2. Participants will record examples of what went well in the scenario and what could be improved.*

Sample discussion questions:

- *How did Sandy’s behavior impact the conversation?*
 - *What do you think will happen in future conversations between Sandy and Chris?*
- 3. Outline and discuss DEFUSE Action Steps. Include participant examples.*

Activity 1: Scenario A

Sandy is an eighth grade Science teacher. It is halfway through the second semester and Sandy needs to make a recommendation about her student, Jenna, who will be attending the feeder high school in the fall. Jenna got off to a positive start in the first semester with unit and standardized test scores. However, this semester Jenna's performance has declined significantly. Her grades have dropped and she has several missing assignments. In addition, Jenna has a strong need to socialize during class. Sandy has discussed this behavior with her many times, and earlier this month at the Parent-Teacher conference Sandy informed Jenna's parent, Chris, about this. She feels that she cannot responsibly recommend her for the Accelerated Biology class in high school. Chris feels very strongly that she should be in the accelerated class and is coming in today to discuss it with Sandy.

Sandy: *"Well Chris, as I told you at the conferences, Jenna just isn't pulling it together. She is disruptive during class, half of her homework is missing, and there's no way I'm going to be able to recommend her for the Accelerated Bio class. It would not be fair to the other students who actually do their work."*

Chris: *"That's pretty harsh. I think Jenna is trying really hard to make up the work. I hired a tutor to work with her."*

Sandy: *"Chris, it's too late for that now. She should have been trying hard earlier in the semester. Then she wouldn't be in this position."*

Chris: *"Jenna was a great student in the first semester. She got off track because my husband and I separated and that was extremely upsetting for her. Can't you cut her a little slack?"*

Sandy: *"I'm sorry about your situation but I can't."*

Chris: *"I promise you I'll take this issue all the way to the principal if I have to."*

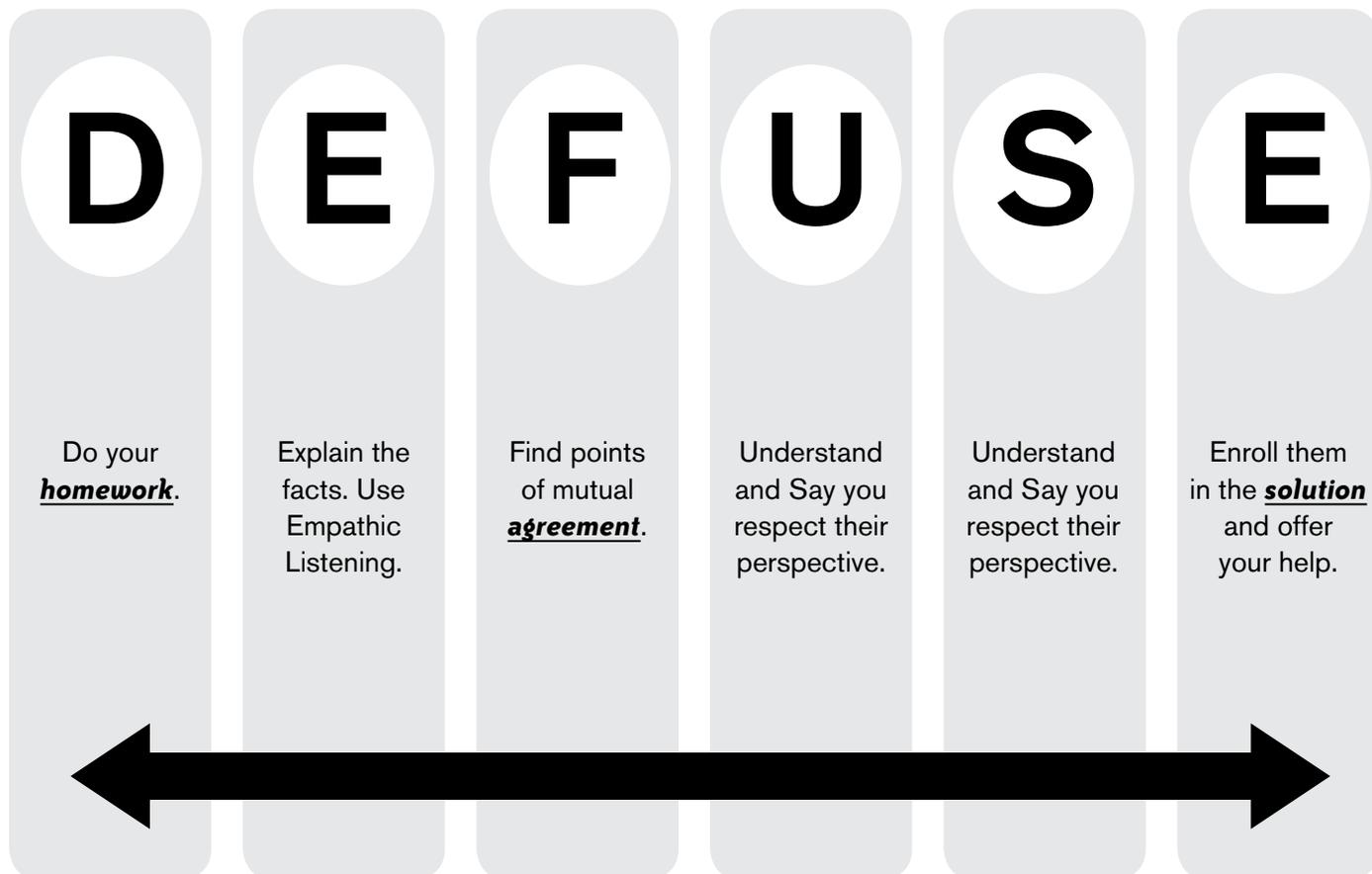
Discussion questions:

- What could Sandy have done better?
- How did Sandy's behavior impact the conversation?
- What do you think will happen in future confersations between Sandy and Chris?

Action Steps Overview

You may find it easier to have a difficult conversation if you have a process to follow. Outlined below are six simple steps that can help you plan for and guide your conversation.

DEFUSE Model



Step 1: DEFUSE Model

D

Do Your Homework.

Good preparation is critical to maximizing your opportunity to keep the conversation on track. Make some notes about:

Plan:

- How you will quickly introduce the topic.
 - Be brief and to the **point**.

- Do you have prior experience with this person or persons?
 - How will you manage the **reaction**?
 - What questions might they ask?

- What materials will you need?
 - Grades, attendance reports, etc.

- Where will you have this conversation?
 - Do not choose an **isolated** location.
 - Consider having a colleague join you.

Other examples?

Step 2: DEFUSE Model



E

**Explain the Facts.
Use Empathic
Listening.**

*“The art of conversation is
the art of hearing as well
as of being heard.”*

–William Hazlitt,
Selected Essays, 1778–1830

Be sure you are able to quickly and clearly explain your position and stick to the facts. Ask questions and listen carefully to the answers.

Effective: “I checked the school’s attendance records and learned that Jason was absent eight times in the last trimester. I also looked at my grade book and noticed that he is missing seven out of nine homework assignments. This has negatively impacted his grade so I felt I should let you know. Can you share what might be causing this?”

- Be direct and **specific**.
- Show or describe the impact of **behavior**.
- Involve the parent/guardian.
- Ask a **question**.

Ineffective: “I’m pretty sure Jason has been gone a lot and I need him to focus on making up his work. You need to make sure it happens.”

- Too general.
- **Mandating**, not asking.
- Not offering to help with the **solution**.

Other examples?

Step 2: DEFUSE Model

E

Empathic Listening

An active process to discern what a person is really saying.

A great tool for defusing difficult conversations is simply listening with empathy. Practicing Empathic Listening has many benefits:

- It takes the burden off of you.
- It helps the person talk through the problem or issue.
- It allows the person to vent.
- It helps the person feel understood.

How to Be a More Empathic Listener

- Give the person your ***undivided*** attention. Go to a safe location where you won't be distracted. Silence your electronics.
- Be ***nonjudgmental***. Keep in mind that even though a person may be emotional when they are talking, they may have a valid point.
- Focus on feelings, not just facts. What is triggering this person's emotions?
- Allow silence for ***reflection***. Make a point of counting to five after the person finishes speaking. Doing this will allow the person to finish their thoughts without feeling interrupted.
- Pay attention to your nonverbal message. Nodding, sitting forward, maintaining good eye contact, and taking notes all indicate you are listening.
- Use restatement to ***clarify*** messages. "So what you are saying is . . .," "As I understand it, you would like . . .," and "Your feeling on this is . . ." are all ways of indicating that you are listening.

Step 3: DEFUSE Model

F

Find Points of Mutual Agreement.

“If you don’t know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.”

–Yogi Berra

Typically there is something people who disagree can agree on. Whether it is:

“We both want what’s best for your son” or

“Can we agree that we need to work together to improve your daughter’s grades?”

Search for something to agree on by:

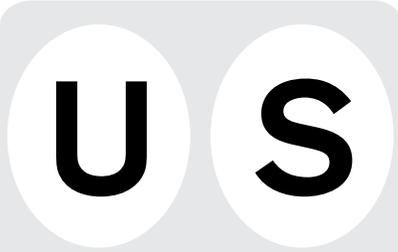
- Asking **questions**.
- Listening carefully.
- Trying to see things from the other person’s **perspective**.



You both want what is best for the student, parent/guardian, or individual. Look for ways to agree with the other person’s perspective whether it is simply saying you both want the best, you are on the same side, or that you realize this is a difficult situation. These are examples of demonstrating mutual agreement. Avoid saying that you know how they feel. This often makes people angry as it can be misinterpreted.

Other examples:

Steps 4 and 5: DEFUSE Model



U S

**Understand and
Say You Respect
Their Perspective.**

It's human to want to be understood and respected. When the heat is on remember to tell the person that you understand their position—this does not mean you have to agree.

Example: "You are worried about your daughter feeling left out because she isn't getting much playing time. I understand that. I don't want her to feel that way either. But she has to get her grades up before I can allow her to participate. How can we all work together on this?"

These skills are done together. It's important to try and understand someone else's perspective. Remain nonjudgmental. Express respect for their situation.

Other examples:

Step 6: DEFUSE Model



Enroll Them in the Solution and Offer Your Help.

“A habit cannot be tossed out the window; it must be coaxed down the stairs a step at a time.”

—Mark Twain

As educators, we are responsible for helping students learn and develop, but it is a mutual responsibility we share with the parent/guardian and the student. Find out what each party is willing to do to help and offer to be of support. Do not overpromise. If necessary, refer to your organization’s policies to find other people/resources that can help. Always document the conversation.

Remember:

- The solution is a mutual responsibility.
- Do not overpromise.
- What internal/external resources do you have who can provide support and coaching?

Internal/External Resources

It is important to consider your organization’s policies and procedures when planning for a potentially difficult conversation.

Please share examples of internal or external resources that can provide support.

Internal	External

Activity 2: Scenario B

Directions

- *Option A*

Explain that the participants will see another demonstration, this time demonstrating the use of the DEFUSE Action Steps. Ask them to write down how each of the steps is used to defuse the conversation.

- 1. Choose a volunteer to help you with a demonstration of the “right” way to defuse a conversation. The facilitator will play the role of the teacher; the volunteer will play the role of “Chris.”*
- 2. Ask your volunteer to turn to the Scenario B and quickly read their part.*
- 3. Ask all participants to refer to Scenario B in the Learner’s Guide. Read the description prior to the conversation.*
- 4. Demonstrate the conversation with your volunteer. Remember you are trying to demonstrate what the conversation might sound like after learning more effective strategies.*
- 5. Participants will record examples of what went well in the scenario and what, if anything, could be improved.*

Sample discussion questions:

- *What was improved?*
 - *How did Sandy use the DEFUSE model?*
 - *What do you think will happen in future conversations between Sandy and Chris?*
- 6. Outline and discuss DEFUSE Action Steps. Use participant examples.*

- *Option B*

Explain that the participants will see another demonstration, this time demonstrating the use of the Action Steps. Ask them to write down how each of the steps is used to defuse the conversation.

- 1. Participants will read Scenario B individually or in pairs.*
- 2. Participants will record examples of what went well in the scenario and what could be improved.*

Sample discussion questions:

- *What was improved?*
- *How did Sandy use the DEFUSE model?*
- *What do you think will happen in future conversations between Sandy and Chris?*

Activity 2: Scenario B

Sandy is an eighth grade Science teacher. It is halfway through the second semester and Sandy needs to make a recommendation about a student, Jenna, who will be attending the feeder high school in the fall. Jenna got off to a positive start in the first semester with unit and standardized test scores. However, this semester Jenna's performance has declined significantly. Her grades have dropped and she has several missing assignments. In addition, Jenna has a strong need to socialize during class. Sandy has reprimanded her many times, and earlier this month at the Parent-Teacher conference Sandy forewarned Jenna's parent, Chris, about this. Sandy cannot responsibly recommend Jenna for the Accelerated Biology class in high school. Chris feels very strongly that she should be in the accelerated class and is coming in today to discuss it with Sandy. To prepare for the meeting, Sandy has looked through the grade book, reviewed the standardized testing, read through Jenna's homework, and talked with two of Jenna's other teachers. Sandy has met with Chris before and anticipates that Chris may be upset.

Sandy: *"Chris, thank you for coming in. How are you doing?"*

Chris: *"I think we are through the worst part of it now. Our home situation has definitely taken a toll on Jenna's grades."*

Sandy: *"I'm glad to hear things are going better now. But you are correct, Jenna's grades and some of her behaviors are concerning to me. Her grade has gone from an A- to a C-, she has several missing labs, and she got a D on her last unit test. She has been disruptive in class almost every day. I moved her seat so she couldn't talk with Greg and Laura but now she talks with some other kids."*

Chris: *"Well, from our conference and from looking at the portal I know Jenna's grades have dropped. I don't see her much at home. When I do she seems to be focused on either music or texting. I'm really worried about whether she will be recommended for Accelerated Biology in high school."*

Sandy: *"I know that your preference is Accelerated Biology. Can you tell me why this is so important to you?"*

Chris: *"Getting into college seems really competitive and I've been told that colleges look for the students who demonstrate they can handle the more challenging classes. I'm hoping Jenna will get into a great college but frankly she will have to get some type of scholarship in order for me to be able to send her. The higher level the classes, the better the chances of some financial help."*

Sandy: *"So your feeling is that if she doesn't take the more rigorous classes she will have a harder time getting into a great college. Chris, I see that this is important to you and please know that I want this for Jenna as well. It's very late in the game, but if we all work together, it may be possible for her to finish the semester with a better grade. I know she is working with a tutor. What else are you willing to do to help her finish up the year with a good grade? More importantly, what can we expect Jenna to do to help herself? I can't promise that she will get the recommendation, but let's see what we can all do to help her."*

Chris: *"I really appreciate your willingness to work with us on this. I understand there are no guarantees but I feel optimistic."*

Discussion questions:

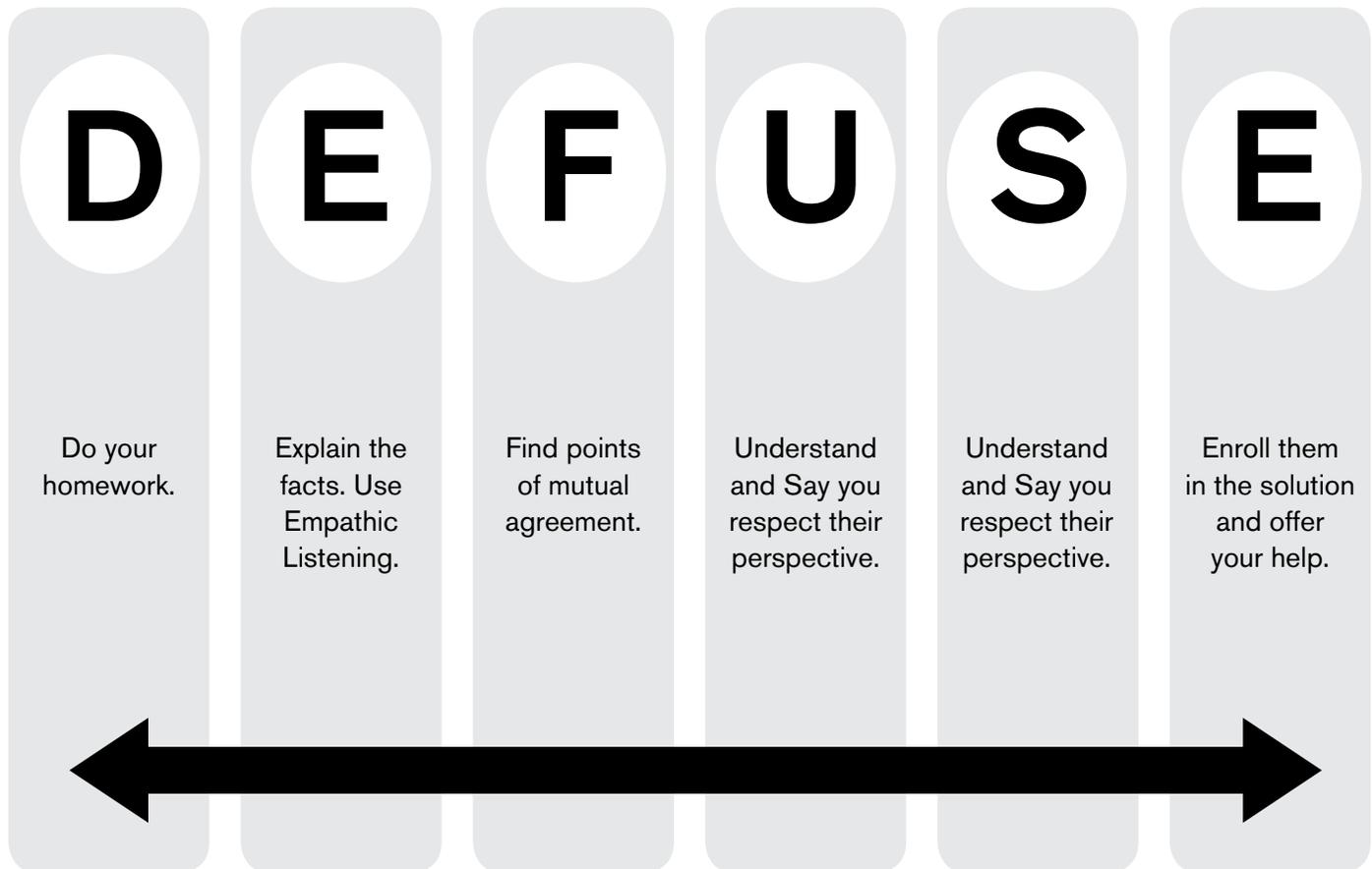
- What was improved?
- How did Sandy use the DEFUSE model?
- What do you think will happen in future conversations between Sandy and Chris?

Activity 3: Skills Practice

How Well Do You Defuse?

Think about a challenging conversation you had or know you will have in the future. Attempt to incorporate each of the DEFUSE elements as outlined below.

Skills to watch for:



Activity 3: Skills Practice

Directions

You have two options for this section depending on the remaining time.

Skills Practice Option A is a pairs activity and Skills Practice Option B is a triad. Pairs practice (Option A) is shorter as there are two rounds but the practice partner has to practice as well as give feedback.

Triads (Option B) may take longer; there are three rounds instead of two. There is also an observer who can take notes and give feedback on the use of the learned skills.

Role Descriptions:

- Triad – A skills practice with three people: the learner, the practice partner, and the observer.
- Learner – Person practicing the Action Steps.
- Practice Partner – Person acting out the role of the person receiving bad news.
- Observer – In a triad, the person who watches the skills practice and takes notes on what went well in using the new skills and what could have been done better.
- Pairs – A skills practice with two people.

Instructions for Skills Practice

Participants will practice what they just learned. Refer back to the recorded answers to the introductory question: *What makes having conversations with students, parents/guardians, administrators, and our peers difficult?*

Ask participants to choose a situation that may have been based on their answer to that question or a conversation they had that they wish they could “do over.” **Important:** *You want them to practice something that has relevance to them so they should use something from their own experience.* This should not be a conversation that is highly confidential. Please remind participants to respect confidentiality.

- After organizing pairs or triads, and assigning roles, allow approximately five minutes to plan the conversation using the DEFUSE model and worksheet in the Learner’s Guide.
- Give the learner one minute to brief the practice partner/observer on their situation.
- Begin the skills practice but limit this part to five minutes maximum.
- Stop the practice and ask the practice partner/observer to give the learner feedback on their use of the model.

Rotate roles and repeat. Debrief the activity by asking them what went well and what they would like to do differently next time.

Action Plan

The purpose of the Action Plan is to provide participants with the opportunity to record the most relevant information learned from this Professional Development module and begin planning how they will use it when returning to work.

Allow for a few minutes at the end of your session for participants to begin completing the Action Plan. You may choose to have a discussion by asking participants for sample answers for questions one and two.

1. List at least three things that you heard, saw, or did that you would like to remember or begin implementing immediately.
2. Refer to the self-assessment. What are one or two skills/behaviors you would like to strengthen?
3. How do you plan to strengthen this area?
4. Who can help you with your plan?



Conclusion

Remind participants how to reach you for future questions or resources.

Recommend other CPI classes to attend if they would like a more in-depth training.

Thank them for their time and close the session.



FACILITATOR GUIDE



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