



# De-Escalating Aggressive and Combative Behavior

Many employees are tasked with working with or around potentially combative persons, including patients, residents and clients.

Workers have the right to feel safe in the workplace and should have the knowledge and resources to protect themselves if and when aggressive behavior is displayed. Want to know more?

## Types of Aggressive Behavior

- Physical – Biting, kicking, hairpulling, punching, grabbing, groping, spitting
- Verbal – Yelling, cursing, sexual, mental mind games

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## Health-Related Factors That Contribute to Combative Behavior

- Dementia
- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Loss of control over bodily functions
- Alcohol/drug-related conditions
- Changes in medication
- Lack of sleep

## Environmental Factors that Contribute to Combative Behavior

- Very bright or dim lights
- Loud speaker messages
- Cluttered rooms
- Constant traffic of people
- Changes of room/roommates routines
- Blaring radios and TV's
- Change in caregiver

## How to Avoid Triggering Aggressive Behavior

- Never turn your back on a patient, resident or client
- Keep your hands in full view at all times
- Avoid embarrassment
- Ask onlookers to leave
- Avoid distractions – use quiet places
- Listen and allow the person to vent or release verbally
- Offer choices
- Remain calm and do not rush
- Communicate your intentions

## How to Avoid Non-Verbal Triggers

- Limit over-activity
- Avoid exaggerated gestures with hands or arms
- Honor the persons space and don't trap, corner or stand over them
- Avoid showing your own fear

## How to Use Speech to De-Escalate

- Use simple and positive statements
- Tell the person what is going to happen
- Give instructions one at a time
- Maintain normal volume and rhythm
- Be reassuring and don't use threats
- Ask how you can help them
- Maintain eye level while speaking
- Redirect - provide other activity options or places if possible

## Escaping an Attack Situation

- Protecting yourself and the resident/client is priority No. 1
- Know your personal limits and get help before it's too late
- Have an exit plan or way out
- Remove items nearby that can hurt the client or employee
- In extreme situations call 911 - emphasize client's condition and that there is no criminal behavior