



**SLIDE 16.1**  
**TITLE SLIDE**

## **SCENARIO-BASED SKILLS TRAINING – DE-ESCALATION COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

**Time:** 120 minutes

**Slides:** 39

**Purpose:** This module introduces concepts and skills relevant to effective communication and de-escalation. It introduces scenario-based training.

**Instructor:**

This module should be co-taught by an officer with experience in crisis response and a mental health professional from your community who is familiar with the content from the prior modules.

**Learning Objectives:**

Upon completing this module, participants should be able to:

1. Explain why communication skills are important for everyone's safety;
2. Identify guidelines to defuse a potential crisis;
3. Explain how to use active listening skills;
4. Describe what empathy is and why it is important;
5. Describe how tone and body posturing can shape outcomes; and
6. Integrate crisis management skills with officer safety procedures.

**Activities:**

- Video Activity: Brené Brown on Empathy (2:53)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewvgu369Jw&ab\\_channel=RSA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewvgu369Jw&ab_channel=RSA)
- Quick Roleplay: Tone of Voice

**Additional Materials:** (Available at the back of this guide and in the additional Trainer's Materials for this module)

- Scenario Practice: Restatement, Reflection, Summary
- Empathy Roleplay #1 & #2



**Module Overview**



**De-escalation Communication Skills**

- Importance of Managing Crises
- Guidelines for Defusing Crises
- Effective Communication Skills
- Dos and Don'ts of Verbal Interaction

2

## SLIDE 16.2

### MODULE OVERVIEW



**Trainer Note:** Use this slide to introduce the topics that will be covered in this module. Inform participants that scenario roleplays will be forthcoming and that the skills they learn in this module will be used as part of de-escalation when practicing those scenarios.

Remind the participants that they will communicate with individuals they respond to in ways that promote a person's preference for communication and understanding of what is being said. The participants will use what they have learned from prior modules on how best to communicate with people with various conditions and disabilities.



### What is Required in Effective Responses to Behavioral Health or IDD Crises?



- Person-centered approaches
- Non-judgmental approaches
- Here-and-now approaches

**Objective:** To reduce anxiety and encourage meaningful communication

## SLIDE 16.3

# WHAT IS REQUIRED IN EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH OR IDD CRISES?



**Trainer Note:** Briefly cover each point on the slide, emphasizing the objective of the officers' interactions with individuals experiencing behavioral health or IDD-related crises in their community. Using the notes below for reference, provide examples for these points to ensure the class participants understand the information.



**Content Note:** Once safety is established, a **person-centered approach** may lead to a satisfactory resolution for those involved. Person-centered means that the responding officer is keeping their attention and focus on the person experiencing a crisis with a demonstration of interest and genuineness.



**Trainer Note:** Give an example of what a person-centered approach might look like. For example, have a participant tell the instructor what their favorite fun activity is and why. While the participant is telling the instructor, the instructor should look at their cell phone and even type a text message to someone. At times, the instructor should look at the participant but then back at their phone. At the end, ask the participant what that felt like. Then repeat the exercise without the cell phone. The instructor should focus and listen to the participant while they talk about their favorite activity. Again, ask the participant what that felt like.



**Content Note:** Although one may have some preconceived notions about behavioral health conditions or IDD, it is critical for officers to be aware of these biases and approach incidents without judgment (**i.e., non-judgmental approaches**). It is also possible that a person experiencing a crisis may make assumptions about an officer based on the officer's demeanor. Consider how tone, body language, and word choices can be perceived by someone who may have a behavioral health condition or IDD.



The **here-and-now approach** means to engage with the person about what is happening in the present moment and less about the past or future. People with behavioral health conditions or IDD may be easily distracted, have more worry or anxiety, or ruminate on the past. It is important to keep the person focused on the present. When we stay in the here and now, we usually have more control of a situation which is what the person wants to feel.



## Why is Managing the Crisis Important?



- Safety for all
- Fewer tragedies
- Better decisions
- Better outcomes
- Reduction of criminal justice involvement

## SLIDE 16.4

## WHY IS MANAGING THE CRISIS IMPORTANT?



**Trainer Note:** Cover each point on the slide briefly. Emphasize that when a crisis situation is managed well, the outcome can result in the things listed on the slide. This training provides the knowledge, skills, and strategies for managing these crises.

Source: Police Executive Research Forum, 2012, *Critical Issues in Policing Series: An Integrated Approach to Defuse Crises and Minimizing Use of Force*, Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, retrieved from [https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Critical\\_Issues\\_Series/an%20integrated%20approach%20to%20de-escalation%20and%20minimizing%20use%20of%20force%202012.pdf](https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Critical_Issues_Series/an%20integrated%20approach%20to%20de-escalation%20and%20minimizing%20use%20of%20force%202012.pdf).

**Encouraging a Different Mindset**



- **Control vs. Influence:**  
Using a *less* authoritarian, *less* commanding and *less* confrontational approach, can give you *more* control.
- Try to give the person a sense that they have some control, because they are in a crisis. They are feeling out of control and normal coping mechanisms are not currently working.

## SLIDE 16.5 ENCOURAGING A DIFFERENT MINDSET

**T N** **Trainer Note:** This slide should be covered by the law enforcement co-instructor. Explain how crisis response requires a different mindset than traditional police responses. Demonstrate this by highlighting each point on the slide. A key learning point for this slide has to do with the basic premise of effective communication and de-escalation skills. Participants will be learning to be less authoritarian and confrontational through tone, body language, and words that they use when responding to crisis situations.

**C N** **Content Note:** In the police academy, officers may have spent hours learning how to control situations such as felony stops, arrests, traffic, and crowds. How many times have you used the words, “do it now?” Controlling things and behavior have a place in law enforcement just as influencing behavior does in behavioral health- or IDD-related situations. As you continue to develop your tools for crisis response you can become proficient in influencing behavior in a manner to keep all parties safe.

A person experiencing a crisis often feels out of control. If an officer can help the person feel like they have some control over the situation, it can increase the chances of the person being responsive to the officer. Always keep in mind that the officer will not relinquish control of the situation for purposes of safety; however, they can provide a sense of control to the individual experiencing a crisis by listening to them, being respectful, and providing choices, when able.



### Key Concepts for Effective Verbal De-escalation



- Safety needs always come first
- Decrease the intensity of a situation to return to a pre-crisis state
- Use active listening to gain rapport and build trust
- Set clear limits; communicate directly; create options
- Promote appropriate resolutions based on an assessment of the facts

## SLIDE 16.6 KEY CONCEPTS FOR EFFECTIVE VERBAL DE-ESCALATION



**Trainer Note:** Briefly review each key concept on the slide. It is not necessary to go through each of these. It is important to emphasize the first bullet as this pertains to officer safety. Responding officers need to feel that the situation is safe, or they may not feel comfortable using verbal de-escalation skills.

The instructor may summarize the remaining bullets as follows: Effective verbal de-escalation may decrease the intensity of the situation helping the person return to a pre-crisis state. It also allows the responding officer to gather information related to the crisis; assess the person's mental, physical, and emotional state; and determine the best outcome. Effective verbal de-escalation uses active listening skills that help officers demonstrate empathy, which in turn, can build rapport and trust.



### De-escalation: How Do You Do It?

Maintain a safe distance	Be active in helping
Use a clear tone and voice	Build hope
Use a voice volume lower than that of the individual	Focus on strengths
Use a non-threatening posture (but maintain tactical awareness)	Present as a calming influence
Set limits	Demonstrate confidence and compassion

## SLIDE 16.7 DE-ESCALATION: HOW DO YOU DO IT?



**Trainer Note:** Inform participants that the guidelines for defusing a crisis will be covered in more detail over the course of the next two days through instruction and scenarios. Highlight a couple of these. Instruct participants that de-escalation involves how an officer approaches a situation; how they use their communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal; and how they maintain safety.



**De-escalation: How Do You Do It?**

Remove distractions, disruptive or upsetting influences	Be aware that your uniform and tools on your belt may be intimidating
Provide careful, clear expectations, and instructions	Be consistent
Be aware of body language, be congruent	Use "I" statements
Validate and accept	Do not make promises you cannot keep

## SLIDE 16.8 DE-ESCALATION: HOW DO YOU DO IT?



**Trainer Note:** This list is a continuation of the previous slide. It highlights effective verbal and non-verbal communication, safety measures, and triggers that can escalate a situation. Highlight a few of the items on this list before moving on to the next slide.

Source: Michele Saunders, n.d., "Crisis Intervention and De-escalation Techniques" (PowerPoint), retrieved from <http://www.cit.memphis.edu/modules/De-Escalation/presentations/FL%20-%20De%20Escalation%20Techniques.pdf>.

**De-escalation: How Do You Do It?**

- Determine the person's need for basic needs, including food and water
- Be patient
- Be non-judgmental
- Use **active listening** skills

**LISTEN**

**SLIDE 16.9**  
**DE-ESCALATION: HOW DO YOU DO IT?**

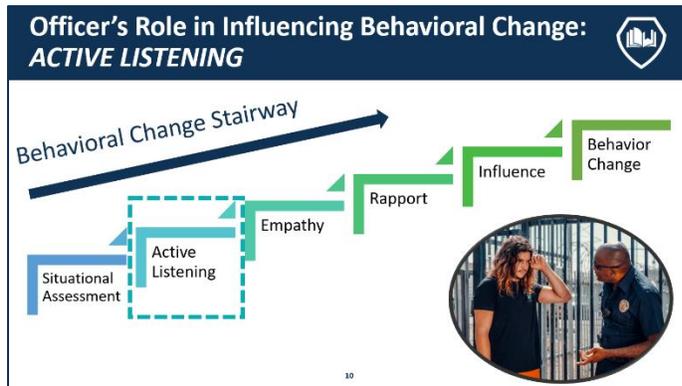


**Trainer Note:** This list is a continuation of the previous slide. Use the content note below to emphasize active listening. This is a segue into the next slide that discusses this skill set.



Active Listening skills are the key ingredient for effective verbal de-escalation. Using these skills can increase safety for the officer and the individual and increase chances for a positive outcome to the response. Active listening should continue as long as it is safe for the officer and individual in crisis.

Source: Michele Saunders, n.d., "Crisis Intervention and De-escalation Techniques" (PowerPoint), retrieved from <http://www.cit.memphis.edu/modules/De-Escalation/presentations/FL%20-%20De%20Escalation%20Techniques.pdf>.



**SLIDE 16.10**  
**OFFICER'S ROLE IN**  
**INFLUENCING BEHAVIOR**  
**CHANGE: ACTIVE**  
**LISTENING**



**Trainer Note:** Inform participants that the “Behavioral Change Stairway” illustrates how to influence and change behaviors, which is what the officer wants to do during a crisis. Use the information below to discuss the content on this slide.

**Remind officers that, regardless of the outcome of any specific situation, using de-escalation techniques can increase officer and community safety.**



**Content Note:** The FBI Hostage Negotiation Team developed the “Behavioral Change Stairway” to aid in communication to manage an incident efficiently and effectively. This method can assist with crisis communications and scene management for people experiencing behavioral health- or IDD-related crises.

When using this method, each step must be followed carefully, and in order, as each step builds upon the previous to help de-escalate crisis situations, or to prevent an escalation of a situation, and to encourage the other person to cooperate with your proposed solutions. Below are brief descriptions of the steps that follow an officer’s assessment of the situation. It is not required that you cover the content in a lot of detail at this point in teaching, as each step will be covered in detail as the module moves forward.

**Active Listening:** Active listening establishes the foundation for the later steps in the Behavioral Change Stairway. It involves a collection of techniques aimed to establish a relationship between the officer and the person experiencing a crisis. Active listening encourages conversation using open-ended questions, suggests officers paraphrase their understanding of the person’s story, attempts to identify, and confirm emotions expressed by the person experiencing a crisis, and uses intentional pauses in the conversation for effect.



**Empathy:** Empathy demonstrates that the officer understands the perceptions and feelings of the person experiencing a crisis. This is important to further the relationship between the officer and the person experiencing a crisis and is accomplished through a tone of voice and body language that is genuine and conveys an interest in and concern for the person experiencing a crisis.

**Rapport:** An officer's use of active listening and expression of empathy should lead to increased trust between that officer and the person experiencing a crisis. The officer should continue to build rapport through conversation that focuses on face-saving for the person experiencing a crisis, positive reframing of the situation, and exploring areas of common ground.

**Influence:** Once initial rapport has been established, the officer should begin to make suggestions to the person experiencing a crisis for potential outcomes for the situation. The officer should learn what the person in crisis may want as the outcome, explore potential and realistic solutions to the crisis, and consider the likely alternatives available to the person experiencing a crisis.

**Behavioral Change:** If the person experiencing a crisis is responding well to the previous steps in the Behavioral Change Stairway, the officer can propose solutions to the crisis that may encourage the desired behavioral change.

Sources:

Gregory M. Vecchi, Vincent B. Van Hasselt, and Stephen J. Romano, 2005, "Crisis (Hostage) Negotiation: Current Strategies and Issues in High-Risk Conflict Resolution," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10(5): 533–551.

M. Ryan O'Connell, October 26, 2014, "The Behavioral Change Stairway Model," *VIACONFLICT: Collaborative Problem Solving*, retrieved from <https://viaconflict.wordpress.com/2014/10/26/the-behavioral-change-stairway-model/>.

Rom Duckworth, May 14, 2018, "How to Use the FBI's Behavioral Change Stairway Model to Influence Like a Pro," *EMS1* by LEXIPOL, retrieved from <https://www.ems1.com/ems-training/articles/how-to-use-the-fbis-behavioral-change-stairway-model-to-influence-like-a-pro-c5W8CNGj5tuZZ0Av/>.



## Active Listening



- A skill that can be developed
- Takes time and practice
- Requires a focus on verbal and nonverbal messages
- Is non-judgmental

11

## SLIDE 16.11 ACTIVE LISTENING



**Trainer Note:** Highlight each point of active listening on the slide. Use the content information to assist with this slide.



**Content Note:** Listening is a fundamental component of interpersonal communication skills. Listening is not something that just happens (that is hearing), listening is an active process, in which a conscious decision is made to listen to and understand the messages of the speaker. Active listening is a skill that can be acquired and developed with practice. However, active listening can be difficult to master and will take time and patience to develop.

As its name suggests, “active listening” means actively listening—that is, fully concentrating on what is being said rather than just passively “hearing” the words or messages of the speaker. Active listening is also about patience—pauses and short periods of silence should be accepted.

A clear sign that we are not actively listening to others is when we have to ask someone to repeat what was said or ask questions because we missed what was said. Listeners should not be tempted to jump in with questions or comments every time there is a few seconds of silence. Active listening involves giving the other person time to explore their thoughts and feelings. They should, therefore, be given adequate time for that. A good guide for this is to listen 80% of the time and talk 20% of the time.

Read more at: <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/active-listening.html>

**Active Listening**

**The biggest communication problem:**  
**We do not listen to understand.**  
**We listen to reply.**

Q&A

12

**SLIDE 16.12**  
**ACTIVE LISTENING**



**Trainer Note:** State that active listening is more difficult than it sounds. Here is one reason: (Read the slide statement and ask the following question).



**Ask participants: What do you think this means?**



People are generally uncomfortable with talking about emotional topics, especially if it pertains to difficult emotions. A good illustration of this is when our spouse or partner expresses being upset and wants to talk. There is a tendency to begin to think about, “what I might have done wrong,” to start thinking of solutions, or formulating a reply. When this happens, we miss much of what is being said.

Another example may be if our supervisor calls us into their office due to a problem. In many instances, the one being called in will become anxious and start thinking about ways to defend themselves. When this happens, we may not fully hear what the other person is saying.

As law enforcement officers, much of your role is to solve problems so, it is easy to move into a problem-solving role before really listening to the person and establishing the needed rapport to resolve the crisis.

**Effective Communication Rule**

Three important elements in any face-to-face encounter:

1. **Words** Used (7%)
2. **Tone** of Voice (38%)
3. **Body** language (55%)

There must be consistency across all three elements for effective communication

13

## SLIDE 16.13 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION RULE



**Trainer Note:** Highlight the information on the slide using the content below as needed. Emphasize that for communication to be effective, words used, tone of voice, and body language all must be consistent.



**Content Note:** Albert Mehrabian, currently Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles, is known for his publications on the relative importance of verbal and nonverbal messages. His findings on inconsistent messages of feelings and attitudes have become known as the 7%-38%-55% Rule, for the relative impact of words, tone of voice, and body language when speaking.

Source: *Albert Mehrabian*, n.d., The British Library, retrieved from <https://www.bl.uk/people/albert-mehrabian>.

**Quick Class Roleplay**

“You made it here on time.”

Sometimes it’s not *what* you say, but *how* you say it.

Say the following sentence with different tones:

1. In a **suspicious** tone
2. In a **happy** tone
3. In a **patronizing** tone
4. In an **irritable** tone

Q&A

14

## SLIDE 16.14 QUICK CLASS ROLEPLAY



**Trainer Note:** Use the roleplay activity below to demonstrate how a person’s tone of voice can affect how what they are saying is perceived.



**Quick Roleplay:** Select four participants to say, “You made it here on time” in the tones suggested on the slide. Emphasize that while the words do not change, the meaning does. Have participants come to the front of the room to make the body language more visible.



Following the roleplay, ask officers to describe the differences they saw and heard in the delivery of the statement “You made it here on time.” Highlight that the use of different tones and body language can change the meaning of what is being said.



## Active Listening Skills



- Attentiveness
- Restatement
- Reflection
- Open-ended questions
- Minimal encouragers
- Effective pauses
- Silence

**SPEAK LESS  
LISTEN MORE**

15

## SLIDE 16.15 ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS



**Trainer Note:** Point out that these are the key skills for active listening. Discuss the skills with the participants. Use the content note below to support this discussion.



**Attentiveness** – Being present and focused on the individual (their body language, tone, what they are saying, etc.). Note that officers must also be attentive to safety issues and the surrounding environment. However, when an officer has back up, it allows for the responding officer to focus significantly on the individual.

Also make note that the officer must be attentive to their own body language, tone, and what they are saying. It is important that body language, tone, and words are all consistent and presented in a non-threatening manner.

**Restatement** – Feeding back and clarifying the facts that a person has presented. This is a small “snippet” of what the person says. You can also ask the person to repeat back what you’ve said to better ensure mutual understanding.

**Reflection** – Feeding back the person’s feelings they are expressing, either from their words or their body language.

**Open-ended questions** – Open-ended questions allow the person to answer in their own words and to elaborate. The person may have slower speech or difficulty speaking. Officers should let the person speak at their own pace or communicate in some other way they prefer.

**Minimal encouragers** – Examples of minimal encouragers include nodding your head when someone is speaking, tilting your head, using hand gestures to encourage a person to keep talking, and using words like “okay,” “really?” “uh huh,” “tell me more,” etc. These subtle



nonverbal and/or short verbal actions are easy to execute but equally easy to omit. The rule: When present, they go unnoticed. When missing, communication suffers.

Make note that, for people with IDD who can easily miss or misinterpret verbal cues, especially subtle ones, minimal encouragers may not work as effectively to demonstrate you are listening. You may need to be more vocal with things like “tell me more.”

**Pauses** – Temporarily stopping in action or talking, a short break from talking. This is critical to be able to listen to the other person.

**Silence** – To stop talking for a longer period than pauses. So much can be communicated through silence. It can allow a person to talk more, and it gives the listener a better chance of hearing what the person is saying.

### What Active Listening is NOT

- Advice, judgement, or persuasion
- Discussion of topics not expressed by the person in crisis

*The person's feelings, values, statements, and opinions are what count.*



16

## SLIDE 16.16 WHAT ACTIVE LISTENING IS NOT



**Trainer Note:** Highlight each point on what active listening is not. Use the content note below to support this discussion.



**Content Note:** It is important to emphasize that active listening is not about problem-solving by giving advice or convincing. It is not your ideas or what you have done in similar situations. Do not inject your values (advice) into the situation. It is not about judging or distracting with non-related topics. It is not about you—it is about them. Advice-giving and convincing can be viewed as “traps” for individuals attempting to practice active listening—they are easy to fall into, but you can get out of them by going back to the active listening model.

**Attentiveness**

- Focusing your attention completely on the person in crisis
  - Words used
  - Rate of speech
  - Tone of voice
  - Facial expressions
  - Body language
- Also, pay attention to the above in yourself

Q&A 17

## SLIDE 16.17 ATTENTIVENESS



**Trainer Note:** Highlight the points on the slide, tying them back to previous modules that discussed the signs that a person may be experiencing a behavioral health- or IDD-related crisis. Reference the content below, as needed.



**Content Note:** Being attentive is one of the skills of active listening. It means paying attention to and focusing on the individual. For attentiveness, the officer will want to actively notice the things listed on the slide.



Ask officers to think back on what they have learned about the signs, symptoms, and behaviors of behavioral health conditions and IDD. What are some things they might notice about a person that could suggest the person has a behavioral health condition or IDD? Specifically, ask officers to consider the following questions:

- **What are the words, tone of voice, facial expressions, etc., the person may be using?**
- **What if the person’s verbal and nonverbal expressions do not match (e.g., if the person is shouting in an angry tone and yet says “I am just fine”)?**
- **How might their rate of speech be an indicator?**
- **What body language may be an indicator of a behavioral health condition or IDD?**



Building on the answers provided by the officers, mention the additional information below. Each bullet provides examples of things an officer might notice that could suggest the person they are interacting with has a behavioral health condition or IDD.

- **Words Used** – words that don’t make sense to the content of the subject, disorganized words, difficulty finding words or the right words, paranoid or words suggesting suspicion, concrete language



- Rate of Speech – talking very fast or pressured, talking very slow
- Tone of Voice – loud, aggressive, soft, flat tone, cheery, upbeat, harsh, sarcastic, slurring
- Facial Expressions – angry, fear, flat, sad, happy, contempt
- Body Language – closed (arms crossed), open (arms by side, hands together in front), intimidating, relaxed, stiff, defensive, restless, fidgeting, slumped, timid, agitation

**NOTE:** It is important for officers to also be aware of their own verbal and nonverbal language. How officers present themselves is very important. The individual will be reading the officer as well. In some situations, the officer’s stance and uniform will likely be intimidating and even frightening. In other situations, the presence of the uniform provides a sense of safety. The officer must make sure their words, tone, and body language are all consistent. Also, remind the class participants to use plain, easy to understand, language that does not have double meanings, which may cause confusion for the person.



**Restatement** 

**Restating or “feeding back” and clarifying the FACTS of the person’s crisis**

**Person in crisis:** “I stopped taking my medicine after I was fired and I’m sleeping in my car.”

**Officer:** “So you were fired from your job” OR “You were fired and you’re sleeping in your car”

18

## SLIDE 16.18 RESTATEMENT



**Trainer Note:** This is an animated slide. The title of the slide will be the first to appear. Tell participants that “restatement” can be one way to demonstrate active listening in crisis situations. Prompt the slide to show the definition of “restatement.” Use the content note below to support your discussion of this definition. Continue to click through the slide to show the example of restatement.



**Content Note:** Restatement is the process in which the officer repeats back a small fact the person shares when they are telling their story. This is not a full summary. It is more of a snippet of one or two things the person said. When an officer uses restatement, it can convey to the person that the officer is listening. It is also an opportunity for the officer to obtain clarification about what the person is saying. A restatement may need to be repeated if the person has difficulty understanding what the officer is saying.



**Restatement** 

**THE FACTS**

**Person in Crisis:** “I started back using and me and my wife went to fighting. She left me. I didn’t go in today. It was my last chance. I’m fired. It’s just not worth it anymore.”

**Officer:** “You were fired, and your wife left you.”

19

## SLIDE 16.19 RESTATEMENT



**Trainer Note:** This is an animated slide in which “The Facts” come up first. Prompt the slide to show the statement from the Person in Crisis. Ask the class to provide potential restatements of these facts (keep in mind there can be variations). Then prompt the slide to have the example restatement come up.

There are several ways to illustrate restatement. Use the example on the slide or create different examples.



**Reflection** 

**Reflecting or “feeding back” the person’s FEELINGS about the crisis:**

**Person in Crisis:** “I don’t understand what’s going on. I was just walking around the park. Someone started yelling at me. I didn’t know what was happening. I wanted to run.”

**Officer:** “I can see you are scared.”

20

## SLIDE 16.20 REFLECTION



**Trainer Note:** This is an animated slide. The title of the slide will be the first to appear. Tell participants that “reflection” is another way to demonstrate active listening in crisis situations.

Prompt the slide to show the definition of “reflection.” Continue to click through the slide to show the example of a reflection. Discuss how reflecting on a person's emotions is a way to communicate the officers are listening. Use the content note below to support this discussion.



**Content Note:** Reflection requires paying attention to both the content and feelings expressed in another person’s communication. Reflective statements are also known as “emotional labeling.” Some common feelings of a person experiencing a crisis are fear, hopelessness, confusion, frustration, sadness, and anxiety.

The use of reflective statements can allow officers to gain clarification on what feelings the person is experiencing. If an officer does not identify the emotion correctly, that is okay; the person will usually provide a correction, informing the officer of their feelings more directly.



## Reflection



### The Feelings:

**Person in Crisis:** "I'm a failure. I had two years. I was going to meetings. My wife and I were doing okay. Work was good. I can't do anything right."

**Officer:** "I can see you are upset about what has happened."

21

## SLIDE 16.21 REFLECTION



**Trainer Note:** This is an animated slide in which "The Feelings" come up first. Prompt the slide to show the statement from the Person in Crisis. Ask the class to provide potential reflections of these feelings (keep in mind there can be variations). Then prompt the slide to have the example reflection come up.

There are several ways to illustrate reflection. You may use the example on the slide or create different examples.



## Summarizing/Paraphrasing



- Sorting through the information presented to pull out and paraphrase the essential ideas.
- Requires you to determine what is important, condense the information, and state it in your own words.

22

## SLIDE 16.22 SUMMARIZING/ PARAPHRASING



**Trainer Note:** Tell participants that “summarizing” or “paraphrasing” is another communication strategy they might use to demonstrate active listening in crisis situations. Highlight that a summary is a short explanation of the key ideas of what a person has said. Summarizing or paraphrasing can include both the facts and feelings identified by the person in crisis. Cover the information on the slide.

## Summarizing/Paraphrasing



“My husband keeps playing games with me. He is so manipulative. He is telling everyone it is my fault, that I am a bad mother saying I am unstable. I can’t help it if I get depressed at times. Life can be so tough and overwhelming. Now he is trying to keep me from seeing my own kids. I have the court papers that give me custody and he won’t send them back. What do I do?”



23

## SLIDE 16.23 SUMMARIZING/ PARAPHRASING



**Summary Exercise:** Read the scenario on the slide, then ask participants to summarize what is stated by the person. An additional statement (Scenario 2) is presented below and can be read out loud for more practice in summarizing/paraphrasing.

**Scenario 1:** *“My husband keeps playing games with me. He is so manipulative. He is telling everyone it is my fault, that I am a bad mother saying I am unstable. I can’t help it if I get depressed at times. Life can be so tough and overwhelming. Now he is trying to keep me from seeing my own kids. I have the court papers that give me custody and he won’t send them back. What do I do?”*

Example response: “You’re having trouble trusting that your husband won’t use your depression against you. You want to make sure your rights to child custody are upheld.”

**Scenario 2:** *“I live in a group home. The people there aren’t always nice to me. They won’t let me do the things I want to do. They tell me when to eat. They tell me when to sleep. I want to live on my own. I don’t like it where I am anymore.”*

Example response: “You’d prefer to be more independent.”

**ACTIVITY**

**Scenario Practice:  
Restatement, Reflection, Summary**



24

## SLIDE 16.24 ACTIVITY



**Trainer Note:** The restatement, reflection, and summary scenarios for this group activity can be found at the back of this guide as well as in the additional Trainer’s Materials for this module. This activity consists of three short scenarios designed to give participants the opportunity to practice their skills in restatement, reflection, and summary. The co-instructor should read the scenario statements. The lead instructor should facilitate the exercise and give feedback to each volunteer when they accurately do a restatement, reflection, or summary—depending on which they were assigned to.



**Group Activity:** Ask for nine volunteers. Group them into three groups of three participants (one group of three for each scenario). The co-instructor should read/act out the first scenario to the first group of volunteers (Group 1). The first volunteer should provide a restatement, the second volunteer should provide a reflection, and the third volunteer should provide a summary. If a participant gets stuck, the lead instructor can ask the class for some suggested examples.

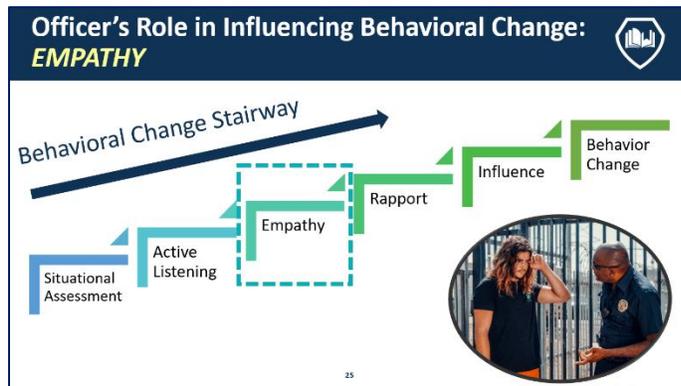
The co-instructor will then read/act out the second scenario and the new set of three volunteers (Group 2) should respond as follows: the first volunteer should provide a restatement, the second volunteer should provide a reflection, and the third volunteer should provide a summary.

Finally, the co-instructor will read/act out the last scenario and the last set of volunteers (Group 3) will respond as follows: the first volunteer should provide a restatement, the second volunteer should provide a reflection, and the third volunteer should provide a summary.

When performing their part, all volunteers should focus on and use the skills of restatement, reflection, and summary discussed in this module. The instructor guiding this activity will let each volunteer know when they have successfully demonstrated a restatement, reflection, or summary.



**NOTE:** This activity can also be a large group activity with the whole class in which the instructor reads each scenario and asks class participants to share a restatement, reflection, or summary.



**SLIDE 16.25**  
**OFFICER'S ROLE IN**  
**INFLUENCING BEHAVIOR**  
**CHANGE: EMPATHY**



**Trainer Note:** Wrap up the discussion on active listening by reiterating what it is and how officers' use of communication strategies like restatement, reflection, and summarizing can demonstrate active listening in crisis situations. The next step in the Behavioral Change Stairway that will be discussed is Empathy.



## Empathy – What is it?



- Empathy is the ability to recognize, understand, and share the thoughts and feelings of another person
- Empathy is the ability to understand things from another person's perspective

26

## SLIDE 16.26

## EMPATHY – WHAT IS IT?



**Trainer Note:** Suggest to participants that they should try to empathize with the person in crisis. Officers should ask themselves, "What would it be like for me to be in this situation? How would I feel?" Use the content below to assist with this slide.



**Content Note:** Empathy is the ability to understand or feel what another person is experiencing. It is the capacity to imagine what it is like for them. You do not need to have the same experiences as someone else to express empathy toward that person.

Being empathic is not about judging the “realness” of a person’s experience, but rather focusing on their experience, how it is for them, and communicating to them that you understand their feelings. For example, if somebody is experiencing a delusion, it is likely that you will quickly realize the person is having a delusion. But – you don’t say “you’re being delusional.” Instead, it can be helpful to acknowledge the person’s feelings (e.g., “that has got to be very scary...”).

## Demonstrating Empathy



Accurately **restating** another person's experience and **reflecting** on their feelings.

Take a walk in my shoes



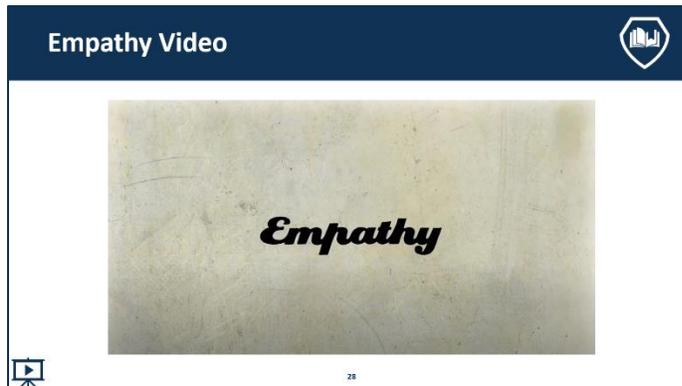
before you judge me

27

## SLIDE 16.27 DEMONSTRATING EMPATHY



**Trainer Note:** Read the statement on the slide to discuss how officers can demonstrate empathy when responding to crisis situations. Highlight that restatement and reflection are two communication skills that comprise active listening. Emphasize that the use of active listening can support empathy in these incidents.



## SLIDE 16.28 EMPATHY VIDEO



**Trainer Note:** Play the short video “Brené Brown on Empathy,” then use the next slide to lead a discussion on why empathy is important.



**Video Activity:** Show “Brené Brown on Empathy” (2:53)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw&ab\\_channel=RSA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw&ab_channel=RSA)

This is a short, animated film developed by the Royal Society for Arts (RSA). It is narrated by Dr. Brené Brown, a well-known researcher who studies courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. In this clip, Dr. Brown discusses the difference between empathy and sympathy, and how practicing empathy in our conversations with others can help create connections.

**Empathy: Why is it Important?**



- Conveys understanding
- Can make others feel understood and supported
- Encourages others to share more
- Creates a connection
- Establishes rapport

29

**SLIDE 16.29**  
**EMPATHY: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**



**Trainer Note:** Prior to going over this slide, offer the following explanation:

Most of us like to fix things quickly. Police officers are used to fixing problems: going to one job and “fixing” it, and then moving on to the next call. Whether somebody is in law enforcement or not, there is a lot of satisfaction in fixing things quickly. However, when people are upset, they are usually not ready or prepared for the problem to be solved before they feel understood. Before they can be open to engaging in problem-solving, they need to know that you understand and actually care about what they are going through. Even if the solution is obvious to you, in most situations the person will not be open to your solution until you have demonstrated to them that you really do care. “CONNECT – then DIRECT.”

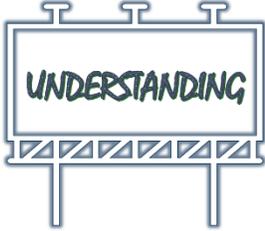
Showing empathy can help when responding to individuals who are emotionally distressed or upset, but it can also be valuable when interacting with others (e.g., colleagues, spouses, kids). Present the brief example below to highlight this point.

*Think about a time your significant other came home upset about something that happened, and you quickly offered a solution without first acknowledging they are upset. That is not usually effective.*

Source: D. Kamin, “A Train-the-Trainer Workshop for Teaching Empathy and De-escalation” (presentation at the annual Crisis Intervention Team International Conference, Chicago, IL, April 2016).

**Communicating Understanding**

- Simple, short phrases
- “Interested” tone
- Slow
- At times, tentative...
- Use empathic stems



30

## SLIDE 16.30 COMMUNICATING UNDERSTANDING



**Trainer Note:** Instruct participants on how they might communicate their understanding to a person experiencing a crisis. Note that simple, short phrases in an interested tone are key here. Big long explanations or long summary statements are usually not helpful and could even be confusing to the person.



**Content Note:** While there may be time for longer statements after you’ve connected with the person, brief statements that are said clearly and slowly are often the best option when trying to make an initial connection. This is particularly true when responding to people with IDD.

“Empathic stems” are short phrases that can be used to start these brief statements. These stems acknowledge the feelings of a person or provide the opportunity to ask for more information about the person’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

At times, an officer may not be sure what “the feeling” a person is experiencing is, even though they have listened very carefully. In that case, it is okay to be tentative.

- “Maybe you feel...”
- “I wonder if...”
- “It seems like you might feel...”

If they get it right, the person will likely say “yes” or agree and often add more context to their situation. This can contribute to creating rapport and de-escalating the situation. It is also okay to get it wrong. The person will often say something like, “Well, no, not really, I feel more...” This provides another opportunity to acknowledge their feelings.



**NOTE:** At times, officers may be able to relate to what the person is going through, whether it is a divorce or a job loss, or problems with their children. It is important that officers do not prematurely disclose information about their own experiences because (1) their experience may be very different from the experience of the person they are talking to and (2) it can call attention away from the person’s experience and feelings at the moment.

Source: D. Kamin, “A Train-the-Trainer Workshop for Teaching Empathy and De-escalation” (presentation at the annual Crisis Intervention Team International Conference, Chicago, IL, April 2016).

**Empathic Stems**

- Maybe you feel....
- Sounds like a \_\_\_\_\_ day
- What a day you've had...
- That is a lot to deal with.
- You wish things were different.
- It's hard for you to know what to do...
- *Right now*, it feels like there is no hope.
- That is the last thing you wanted.
- That's confusing when that happens.



Q&A

31

## SLIDE 16.31 EMPATHIC STEMS

**T N** **Trainer Note:** Explain as many of the stems on the slide as you can, depending on how much time you have. This slide reinforces the content discussed in the module on suicide. Specifically, it is okay to acknowledge the despair a person is experiencing. In many instances acknowledging these feelings can be helpful and provide some relief to the person—knowing that someone understands the extent of their pain. Use the content note below, as needed, to support this discussion.

If time allows, you may choose to complete the optional activity below. The scripts for this activity are located in the Trainer Materials. If you do not want to use this activity, it is recommended that you develop a separate example to engage participants in practicing empathic stems.

**C N** **Content Note:** Being empathic is not as simple as saying some prepared lines. It must fit the moment and be genuine, and you must feel comfortable saying it. Some officers may already use similar phrases. However, if they are not used to talking like this, it might feel a bit awkward initially.

- “Maybe you feel \_\_\_\_\_”

Note the “maybe,” since you might not be sure.

- “Sounds like a horrible day” is a summary statement with an empathic twist.
- “*Right now*, it feels like there is no hope.”

This can be validating to a person who is thinking of suicide or is feeling very depressed.

- “That’s confusing (or difficult) when that happens.”

This can be observational and reflect back to what the person may be going through.

- “It seems hard for you to know what to do...”



- “I can see how you might...”

This allows you to articulate what the person may be feeling and validates those feelings.

- “Let me see if I understand you...”

This is a good segue into a summary.



**Optional Activity: Empathy Scripted Roleplay** Use the scripts provided for this activity or write your own scripts. The script can be found at the back of this guide as well as in the additional Trainer’s Materials for this module. You can either ask for two volunteers to participate in this activity or pick two people to come to the front of the room.

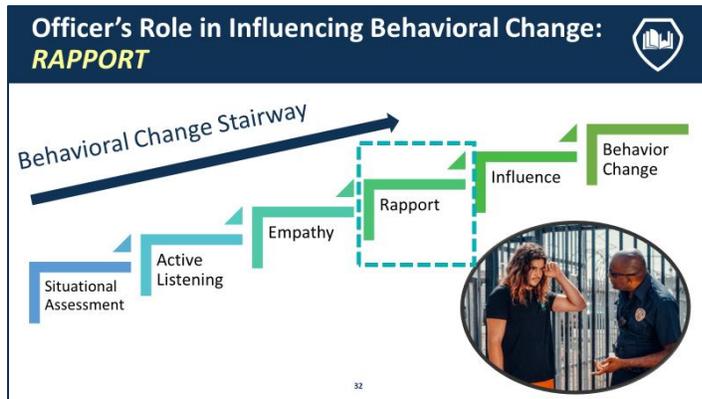
**Scenario Version #1:** Role Player 1 should be instructed to read the lines of the script as written. Role Player 2 should be encouraged to read their lines and to be irritable and short-tempered in their reading. Once they complete the scenario—ask Role Player 1 whether they feel like Role Player 2 understood how they were feeling. The answer should be “no.”

Ask the class to rate how empathic Role Player 2 seemed on a scale from 1–10. Often, you’ll get negative ratings or zero.

**Scenario Version #2:** Use the same role players. Role Player 1 will have the same lines. Role Player 2 will have different lines and should be encouraged to use a nicer tone. Following the scenario, ask Role Player 1 how they are feeling and then ask the audience to rate Role Player 2 on the level of empathy they demonstrated.



**Ask the class why the responses given in the first scenario aren’t effective for developing rapport. What differences did they notice in the responses provided in the second reading of the scenario?** If needed, point out that the initial responses were critical and attempted to problem-solve immediately. In contrast, the responses in the second scenario were all versions of empathic statements.



**SLIDE 16.32**  
**OFFICER'S ROLE IN**  
**INFLUENCING BEHAVIOR**  
**CHANGE: RAPPORT**



**Trainer Note:** Highlight that using **active listening** and **practicing empathy** can help develop rapport with a person in crisis. **Rapport** is the next step on the Behavioral Change Stairway.

**Rapport**

**Building a relationship of mutual trust**



33

**SLIDE 16.33**  
**RAPPORT**



**Trainer Note:** Briefly explain what rapport is. Use the content note below to support this discussion.



**Content Note:** Rapport is a connection or relationship with someone else. It can be considered as a state of harmonious understanding with another individual or group. Building rapport is the process of developing that connection with someone else. Sometimes, rapport happens naturally. We have all had experiences where we “hit it off” or “get along well” with somebody else without having to try. This is often how friendships start. However, rapport can also be built and developed consciously by finding common ground and being empathic. It’s about building mutual trust. When you have established rapport with the person experiencing a crisis, you now have a connection.

Rapport

**CONNECT then DIRECT**



34

**SLIDE 16.34**  
**RAPPORT**



**Trainer Note:** Explain the phrase on the slide using the information below.



**Content Note:** The goal of showing empathy is to connect with the person in crisis. That connection is also known as rapport. Once rapport has been established, the officer can begin to make suggestions to the person experiencing a crisis, learn what the person may want as the outcome, explore potential and realistic solutions to the crisis, and consider the likely alternatives available to the person in crisis.

If the officer has established a solid relationship with the person experiencing a crisis, they may be able to influence and propose solutions to the crisis that may affect the desired behavioral change, the last step in the Behavioral Change Stairway. The phrase to remember is: **Connect, then Direct.**

Source: D. Kamin, “A Train-the-Trainer Workshop for Teaching Empathy and De-escalation” (presentation at the annual Crisis Intervention Team International Conference, Chicago, IL, April 2016).



## SLIDE 16.35 PHRASES THAT MAY DAMAGE RAPPORT



**Trainer Note:** Use the **Q&A** to discuss phrases that may damage rapport. Use the content note below to support this discussion.

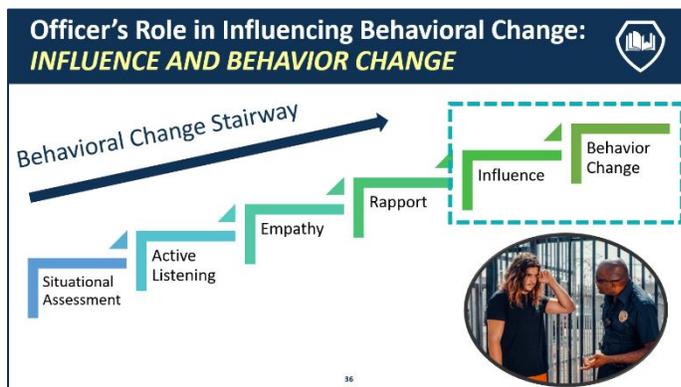


Ask participants why they wouldn't want to say the specific phrases on the slide. What are some empathic substitutions they might use instead of these phrases?



**Content Note:** These phrases are often used in ways that direct WITHOUT connection.

- **“Calm down”** or **“Relax”** may be perceived as orders, which may provoke anger. These phrases come across as not listening and possibly as condescending.
- **“I understand”** is often the phrase that others use to interrupt a person to jump into problem-solving. It can be well-intentioned, but also a counter-productive shortcut. You may understand; however, understanding must be demonstrated through active listening to maintain rapport.
- **“You should”** is a judgmental or advice-giving statement. It can imply superiority in the advice-giver and may cause the receiver to feel inadequate.
- **“You shouldn’t”** can have the same effect as “You should.”
- **“Why?”** feels accusatory, creating defensiveness. However, there are times the officer does need to ask “why” questions for purposes of gathering information. To be effective and to minimize a negative reaction from the person, it is important to use an empathic, interested tone and have body language that is consistent with that tone.



## SLIDE 16.36

# OFFICER'S ROLE IN INFLUENCING BEHAVIORAL CHANGE: INFLUENCE AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE



**Trainer Note:** Explain that **influence** and **behavior change** are the last two steps in the Behavioral Change Stairway. At these steps, the person in crisis should be more responsive to and cooperative in a resolution that helps alleviate the crisis and gets them the support and resources they may need. The next slide discusses steps to facilitate an effective outcome.

## Facilitating an Outcome



Once a person is calmer and the emotions around the crisis have been de-escalated, the next step is facilitating the outcome:

- Determine if there is a disability
- Learn what the person may want
- Explore resources to connect the person to – this can include family, friends, community resources
- Involuntary commitment should be the outcome of last resort

## SLIDE 16.37 FACILITATING AN OUTCOME

**T  
N**

**Trainer Note:** Review the points on the slide that address facilitating an outcome to the crisis and finding a resolution. Use the content note below to support this discussion.

**C  
N**

**Content Note:** While the officer is de-escalating the emotional energy of the crisis, they should also be gathering information to better understand what is going on and begin thinking about solutions. Once the person is calmer and able to work with the officer, the two will want to explore resources that may be helpful to the person. These may include contacting family or friends, bringing them to a community resource for services and support, or making referrals to community resources. Remind officers that they had an opportunity to learn about their community resources during the Community Resources module.

The outcome may involve taking the person into protective custody for an involuntary commitment examination. This outcome should be a last resort when it is determined the person may present imminent danger to self or others and no other alternative resources are available to keep the person safe.

**The Dos and Don'ts of Verbal De-escalation**

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show empathy</li> <li>• Reassure</li> <li>• Use active listening skills</li> <li>• Be patient</li> <li>• Build rapport</li> <li>• Guide the situation toward resolution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threaten</li> <li>• Argue</li> <li>• Challenge</li> <li>• Order</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Blame</li> </ul>

## SLIDE 16.38

### THE DOS AND DON'TS OF VERBAL DE-ESCALATION



**Trainer Note:** Highlight each of the dos and don'ts for verbal de-escalation, with a particular focus on the “dos” to reinforce the skills introduced in this module. Reference the content below to support this discussion.



**Content Note:** It is important to attempt to build rapport when interacting with people in crisis. If you show you care and are trustworthy, you will likely have a better outcome. Remember: CONNECT then DIRECT. It is important to practice active listening skills to encourage this connection, including:

- Showing empathy and understanding;
- Using modeling; Attempt to calm the person down by displaying your own level of calm. Speak slowly and evenly and do not raise your voice unless necessary.
- Reassuring the person; Calming them by assuring their safety.
- LISTENING.
- Using minimal encouragers. Encourage the person to keep talking by using small phrases, such as, “I see...” “Tell me more about that...” “That would be one option. Are there others?” “Uh-huh, ok, mmhmm...”
- Restating what the person has said to demonstrate your understanding.
- Using reflective statements about the person’s feelings to show that you understand and validate their experience.
- Providing summary statements on what the person has shared to show that you are engaged and listening.

**REMEMBER:** We have two ears and one mouth for a reason: We should listen at least twice as much as we talk. This is especially true when we are first meeting someone in distress and trying to connect with empathy.



**Module Wrap-Up**

**Questions?**

This curriculum was created through support by Grant No. 2020-NT-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

## SLIDE 16.39 MODULE WRAP-UP



**Trainer Note:** Use this as an opportunity for participants to ask questions before moving on to the next module.

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## MODULE 16. DE-ESCALATION COMMUNICATION SKILLS

### Scenario Practice: Restatement, Reflection, and Summary

This activity consists of three short scenarios designed to give participants the opportunity to practice their skills in restatement, reflection, and summary. Ask for nine volunteers. Group them into three groups of three participants (one group of three for each scenario).

The co-instructor should read/act out the first scenario to the first group of volunteers (Group 1). The first volunteer should provide a restatement, the second volunteer should provide a reflection, and the third volunteer should provide a summary. If a participant gets stuck, the lead instructor can ask the class for some suggested examples.

The co-instructor will then read/act out the second scenario and the new set of three volunteers (Group 2) should respond as follows: the first volunteer should provide a restatement, the second volunteer should provide a reflection, and the third volunteer should provide a summary.

Finally, the co-instructor will read/act out the last scenario and the last set of volunteers (Group 3) will respond as follows: the first volunteer should provide a restatement, the second volunteer should provide a reflection, and the third volunteer should provide a summary.

**This activity can also be facilitated as a larger group activity where the instructor reads each scenario to the full class and asks participants to share a restatement, reflection, or summary of the scenario.**

#### **SCENARIO 1:**

I have to get these signs posted right away. God had said if I don't then the end of the world is going to happen. Then really bad things will happen to all. I am so worried I will fail. I cannot sleep because of this. I've been out here for the last week trying to get these signs up. Can you please help me?

#### **SCENARIO 2:**

They are in the attic again. They keep me up all night whispering about me. I know they are trying to hurt me. I don't know what to do. No one ever believes me. I have to get them out of the house if I am ever going to be safe. They have been coming in for years now. I have tried to get my neighbors to help me, but no one will help me. Will you please help me?



### **SCENARIO 3:**

I can't leave this corner. If I leave this corner then I don't exist. No one will see me, and I will be all alone. Do you know what it is like to be all alone? No one listens to me. I don't want to be alone. I go places and I don't matter to anyone. This corner is my existence.



## MODULE 16. DE-ESCALATION COMMUNICATION SKILLS

### Empathy Scripted Role Play

#### Scenario Version # 1:

Role Player 1 should be instructed to read the lines of the script as written. Role Player 2 should be encouraged to read their lines and to be irritable and short-tempered in their reading. Once they complete the scenario – ask Role Player 1 whether they feel like Role Player 2 understood how they were feeling. The answer should be “no.”

Ask the class to rate how empathic Role Player 2 seemed on a scale from 1–10. Often, you’ll get negative ratings or zero.

**Role-Player 1:** I had the worst day ever.

**Role-Player 2:** So? My day was no picnic either.

**Role-Player 1:** First, I ran out of gas on the way to work...

**Role-Player 2:** I told you last night the car needed gas!

**Role-Player 1:** Then, the Sergeant asked me for that report I’ve been working on, but I left it at home.

**Role-Player 2:** That’s happened before. Maybe if you put stuff like that by the door, that wouldn’t happen.

**Role-Player 1:** Later, I backed the cruiser into a pole and broke the taillight...

**Role-Player 2:** Are they going to dock your pay *again*!?

**Role-Player 1:** And then, as I was leaving to come home, I tripped and fell going out of the precinct and about 10 teenagers saw me and laughed.

**Role-Player 2:** You really can be a klutz sometimes.



## **Scenario Version # 2:**

Use the same role players. Role Player 1 will have the same lines. Role Player 2 will have different lines and should be encouraged to use a nicer tone. Following the scenario, ask Role Player 1 how they are feeling and then ask the audience to rate Role Player 2 on the level of empathy they demonstrated.

**Role-Player 1:** I had the worst day ever.

**Role-Player 2:** That sounds awful.

**Role-Player 1:** First, I ran out of gas on the way to work...

**Role-Player 2:** What a way to start the day!

**Role-Player 1:** Then, the Sergeant asked me for that report I've been working on, but I left it at home.

**Role-Player 2:** You must have felt terrible when that happened.

**Role-Player 1:** Later, I backed the cruiser into a pole and broke the taillight...

**Role-Player 2:** Bad things just keep happening to you!

**Role-Player 1:** And then, as I was leaving to come home, I tripped and fell going out of the precinct and about 10 teenagers saw me and laughed.

**Role-Player 2:** By then I bet you were wishing you just stayed home today.



**Ask the class why the responses given in the first scenario aren't effective for developing rapport. What differences did they notice in the responses provided in the second reading of the scenario?** If needed, point out that the initial responses were critical and attempted to problem-solve immediately. In contrast, the responses in the second scenario were all versions of empathic statements.