

Helping Frustrated Buffs Be Herd: The Art of De- Escalation

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Escalation and Conflict

- **Conflict is inevitable**
- **Conflict is an opportunity**
- **Conflict can lead to growth**

What Fuels Escalation

- Perceived inability to achieve needs
- Life stress
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Hopelessness
- Feeling trapped or powerless
- Desperation
- Impairment



What Cools Escalation

- Monitoring tone and demeanor
- Knowing yourself and your role
- Creating options
- Demonstrating empathy
- Validating emotions but not behavior
- Seeking support
- Allowing student to leave with dignity and respect, while firmly setting limits



What to Avoid

- Trying to rationalize
- Attempting to reason or prove you're right
- Responding “in kind” by yelling, pointing, shaking fingers, or smiling
- Attempting to “establish control” by raising your voice
- Getting defensive or judgmental



Continuing a Conversation

- Set Expectations
- Identify where you can help
- Practice active listening
- State consequences if student re-escalates
- Re-start the conversation



Utilize Appropriate Resources

**Faculty & Staff Assistance Program
(303) 492-3020**

**Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution
(303) 492-5550**

**Office of Victims Assistance
(303) 492-8855**

**Student Support and Case Management
(303) 492-7348**



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Questions?

Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution

Center for Community, room S485

303-492-5550

StudentConduct@Colorado.edu



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Why De-Escalate?

- Re-focus the conversation
- End the conversation
- Maintain a relationship with the student
- Educational opportunity
- Achieve mutual goals
- Resolve the issue quickly

DE-ESCALATE



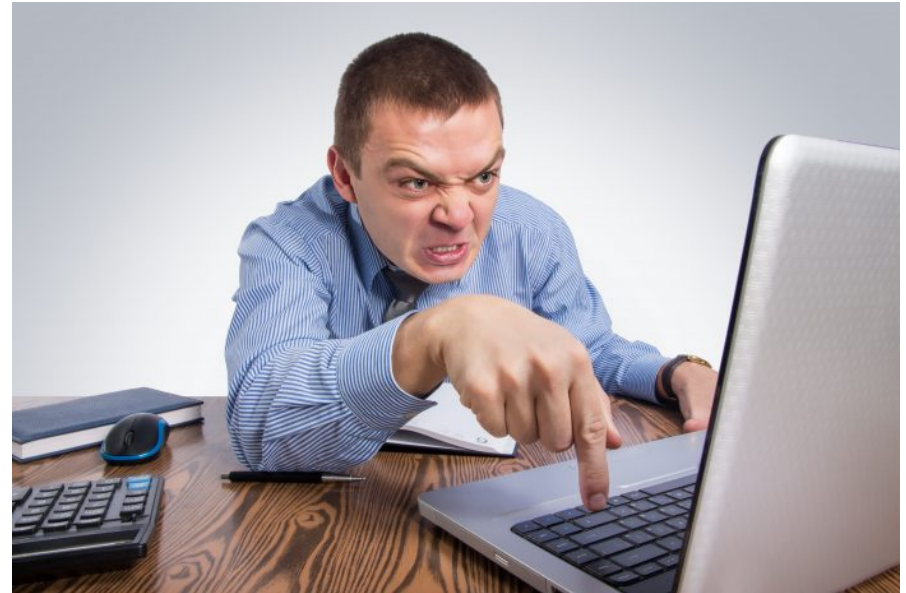
De-Escalation: Phone

- **Tone is vital**
- **Understand your goals**
- **Summarizing & the use of “and”**
- **Redirect and connect to the right person**
- **Phone traps**



Conflict Over Email

- **Misinterpretations are easy**
- **Acknowledge expressed feelings**
- **Respond selectively and keep the message short**
- **Try to arrange an individual meeting or phone call**
- **Avoid attempting to reason via email or responding in kind**



A QUICK GUIDE TO CU BOULDER'S

CONFLICT RESOLUTION SERVICES



Looking to manage conflict effectively? **Conflict Coaching** can help students gain skills and strategies that transform conflict into opportunity.



Stuck in an argument with a friend, roommate or significant other? **Mediation** offers the opportunity to share narratives and reach mutually beneficial solutions.



Struggling to reach agreement as a cohort, team or student group? **Circle Processes** are facilitated dialogues that build relations and strengthen community.

Elevated Email

Colin,

My conduct officer is a moron and didn't listen to a word that I said. They are complete assholes and are making me take a class that costs way too much money. I don't have time for this and I pay way too much in tuition to be dealing with crap like this. My finals are way more important than taking this stupid alcohol class. My friends don't have this expensive of a class. Your process is unfair and absurd. If you don't resolve this right now, I am going to sue you.

Ronnie



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Example Email

Hello Ronnie,

It sounds like you are frustrated with the sanction you received from my office. I am happy to discuss how our office sanctions students. When are you free to sit down with me and discuss this matter in person?

Colin Johnson

Alleged Violations of Policy

- **Failure to Comply**

- “A student refuses to follow the instructions of their RA”

- **Disrupting a University Activity**

- “A student’s behavior prevents class from continuing”

- **Abusive Conduct**

- “A student sends threatening texts to their roommate which causes them to fear for their safety”

When to De-Escalate?

- **Aggressive behavior – leave and call CUPD**
 - Threaten to touch or harm
 - Body language suggests physical contact imminent
 - Oppressive language targeting an identity
 - Actually makes physical contact
- **Rude behavior – try to de-escalate**
 - Comments such as “this is bullshit”
 - Asks questions and then interrupts during answers
 - Elevated voice or yelling, often with specific demands
 - Others?

