



REACTING TO AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Aggression is a complex subject and defining it can prove difficult in that, distinguishing between acceptable aggressive behaviour, which can occur when individuals are angry or frustrated, and violence, which involves the use of physical force and inflicts damage or injury to a person or property. The difficulty is where one person sees as an acceptable form of expressing anger or frustration others may see it as a violent action or aggressive behaviours. Regardless, it is very important that on the first contact with a potentially aggressive person to allow them time to express themselves fully and listen to what they have to say. An open and friendly approach at the beginning helps to define the relationship as a supportive one, rather than one of confrontation.

Reaction to disruptive behaviour and aggression needs to be analyzed quickly in order to identify at whom the anger is directed.

- Is it directed at you?
- Is it directed at another person?
- Is it aimed at the establishment, etc.?

If it is towards you, attempt to safely resolve the matter by being reassuring the person. However, should you feel threatened, calmly leave the room and call the police. If it is against the organization encourage the aggressor to take responsibility e.g., by making a written complaint.

The following are some tips that might help you safely resolve disruptive incidents:

- If there is no apparent reason for the behaviour, ask politely why the person is angry and then listen
- Attempt to defuse the situation by being understanding.
- “I understand that you might be upset, but...”
- If verbally threatened, give the aggressor the opportunity to calm down, or obtain clarification
- Be aware of your own body language and present a non-threatening, open stance.
- Keep good eye contact but ensure this does not appear confrontational.
- Move slowly and steadily. Try to keep physical movements calm.
- Respect personal space.
- Try to identify the reasons that triggered the behaviour in the first place
- If there appears to be a personality conflict between the person and you, consider having someone else continue the meeting/conversation

In all cases, remain calm and polite and attempt to resolve the problem. If unable to do so, politely and calmly terminate the discussion report and document the encounter