

Defusing emotionally charged situations

Professional Skills

Theme:
Conflict handling skills

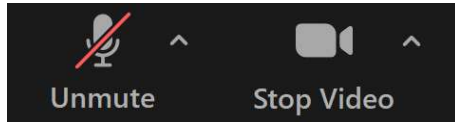
Before we start, please make sure...

- ✓ your name on Zoom is clear (use Latin letters)
- ✓ your camera is on and mic is off (unmute when needed)
- ✓ you are in a quiet area that helps you focus
- ✓ you have a notebook or a note app ready to take notes

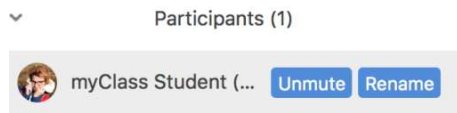


Zoom features

Check your audio and video settings

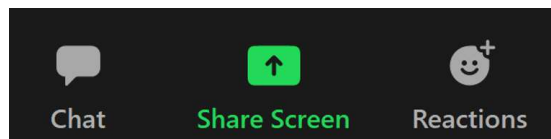


Use Latin letters for your name



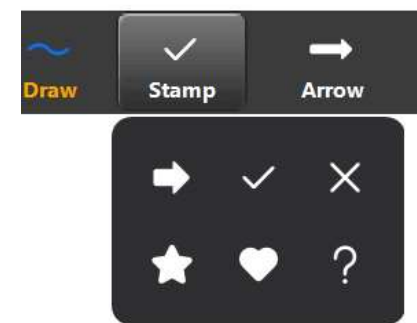
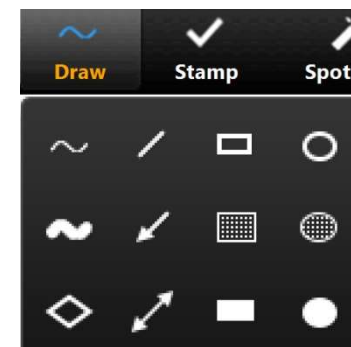
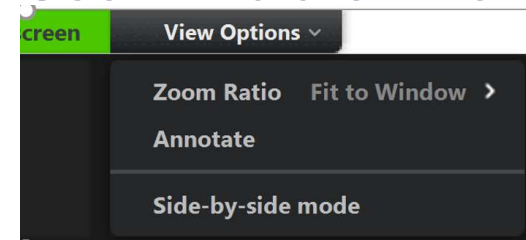
Ask questions in the Chat or use Reactions

Share Screen when the teacher asks



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Use Annotate when a screen is shared



Use Save to make screenshots

How does it work?



**You need to complete all three parts
to get the most out of your course.**

Prepare
before class



Live class



Practise
after class

Pre-class activities



Non-verbal techniques for defusing emotion 1



Non-verbal techniques for defusing emotion 2



Verbal techniques for defusing emotion

Your learning journey

As a result of this lesson, you should be better able to...

defuse emotionally charged situations using nonverbal and verbal behaviour, enabling productive outcomes

You will find out about...

- using non-verbal techniques for defusing emotions.
- using verbal techniques for defusing emotions.

You will practise...

applying verbal techniques to your situations to defuse emotions.



Lead in



Think about how emotions and thoughts can be conveyed through body language and tone of voice.

- Which non-verbal behaviour would you expect to see or hear if someone was angry?
- Which non-verbal behaviour would you expect to see or hear if someone was content?
- Do you think people are always so easy to 'read'?

Skills focus 1: Non-verbal behaviours to defuse emotion

For each the non-verbal behaviours below, guess what the person is feeling.
How would you feel if you were on the receiving end of this behaviour?

	1. The person stares at you	2. They speak slowly, in a low voice	3. They look at the you through narrowed eyes
What are they feeling?			
How do you feel?			
	4. They lower your eyebrows and frown	5. They point or jab you with their index finger	6. They clench and raise their fists slightly
What are they feeling?			
How do you feel?			
	7. They sit with arms and legs crossed, leaning back in their chair	8. They move suddenly into your personal space by leaning forward	9. They purse or tighten their lips when looking at you
What are they feeling?			
How do you feel?			

Skills focus 1: Non-verbal behaviours to defuse emotion

This behaviour can seem threatening or aggressive	Change to this instead
Facial expressions and eye contact	
Tightened/pursed lips, narrowed eyes, tightened jaw and neck, clenched teeth	Loosely held jaw, gently closed mouth, relaxed eyes
Frowning/scowling/lowered eyebrows	Smooth forehead
Steady eye contact/glaring	Reduce constant eye contact; make contact for about 60% of the time
Gestures and posture	
Pointing/jabbing fingers, clenched fists	Open hand gestures
Crossed arms and legs	Arms and legs uncrossed
Quick, jerky movements	Steady, calm stance and movements
Moving into other's personal space	Enough space, don't crowd the other person
Crouched posture/leaning backwards	Sit/stand upright, lean slightly forward, nod head to show understanding
Tone of voice and breathing	
Short, shallow/quick breathing	Slow, deep breathing
Quick pace of speech	Steady, calm pace of speech
Loud volume, high or low pitch	Moderate volume and pitch

Top tip:

Trust is built when our behaviour is similar to that of the other person. For example, to calm down an agitated customer or colleague, start by matching their energy of tone and body language then introduce a calmer tone and gestures to bring down the heightened energy of the situation.

Skills focus 2: Verbal techniques for defusing emotion

Match the techniques to the details.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. Listen | a. by finding areas of common agreement, no matter how small. |
| 2. Acknowledge | b. to something. It's difficult for a person to stay angry if they agree with you. |
| 3. Disarm | c. with undivided attention and without interrupting to let the person vent. |
| 4. Empathise | d. what can be fixed immediately, creating a small change and experience success. |
| 5. Focus on facts | e. with their feelings even if you don't agree with what they said. |
| 6. Fix | f. their perspective and clarify your understanding of key points by paraphrasing. |
| 7. Get them to say yes | g. when you explain your perspective. |

Skills focus 2: Verbal techniques for defusing emotion

1. **Listen** with undivided attention and without interrupting to let the person vent.
2. **Acknowledge** their perspective and clarify your understanding of key points by paraphrasing.
3. **Disarm** by finding areas of common agreement, no matter how small.
4. **Empathise** with their feelings even if you don't agree with what they said.
5. **Focus** on facts when you explain your perspective.
6. **Fix** what can be fixed immediately, creating a small change to experience success.
7. **Get them to say yes** to something. It's difficult for a person to stay angry if they agree with you.

Skills focus 2: Verbal techniques for defusing emotion



Your
colleague

You walked away from the photocopier leaving a paper jam.

You

You're right ... I was in a rush. Sorry, I should have fixed it.

Verbal
technique

Acknowledging

Skills focus 2: Verbal techniques for defusing emotion

Choose the most appropriate verbal technique to respond to the statements in the case studies below.

1

Your colleague: *You never tidy your desk – it's always so messy looking.*

Your response:

Verbal technique used:

2

Your manager: *I thought your presentation was good, but you could have given more examples. You seemed to be in a rush to get it over with.*

Your response:

Verbal technique used:

3

Your manager: *Where have you been? You were supposed to be on the call at 10.00am and it's now 10.30!*

Your response:

Verbal technique used:

4

Your customer: *You guys are terrible! I've wasted so much time trying to get through to someone who can speak to me!*

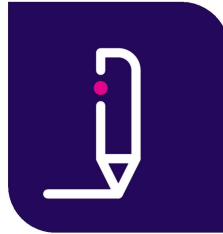
Your response:

Verbal technique used:

Task



Task: Putting it all together



- Choose a real-life conflict situation
- Write the conversation

They said:

You said:

Task: Applying verbal techniques to resolve conflicts



- Share your conflict case study.
- Suggest verbal techniques to prevent or resolve the conflicts.

Task: feedback

- **Which techniques will you find difficult to apply back in your workplace? Why?**
- **Which technique will be easier for you to use? Why?**

Your learning journey: assess your progress

Now you are better able to...

defuse emotionally charged situations using nonverbal and verbal behaviour, enabling productive outcomes

You have found out about...

- using non-verbal techniques for defusing emotions.
- using verbal techniques for defusing emotions.

You have practised...

applying verbal techniques to your situations to defuse emotions.



What's next?

1. Don't forget to complete the post lesson activities
2. Read more about defusing conflict situations:

<https://www.talentedladiesclub.com/articles/how-to-change-your-body-language-to-improve-your-conflict-resolution-skills/>

<https://www.zenbusiness.com/blog/diffuse-anger/>

<https://www.inc.com/young-entrepreneur-council/avoid-work-place-conflict-escalation-with-these-7-tips.html>

<https://recoveringengineer.com/resolving-conflict/three-ways-to-deal-with-an-angry-person/>



Action planning

Set yourself some goals to improve your conflict-handling skills.

- What non-verbal behaviour will you need to be aware of and change to manage emotions in your workplace conflict situations?
- Which verbal techniques would you like to have more practice in?
- What support do you need to start or continue using appropriate verbal and non-verbal techniques to defuse emotions in your workplace?



Materials

Make sure you have

- downloaded the materials shared by the teacher
- saved the Zoom Chat



What do you think?

Do you like our new Professional Skills themes?

What did you think of the online activities?

What further information do you need?

For more information, write to

support.englishonline@britishcouncil.org



Teacher's Notes

This slide deck was adapted by Reshmi Murali.

Notes

Share your thoughts about the lesson with the next teacher