

The CALM Process

Use this process when someone is upset, frustrated, angry, or escalating emotionally during a conversation.

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STEP 1: CONTROL YOURSELF

Pause before responding.

- Take a breath and slow your speech
- Keep your tone steady and professional
- Maintain neutral body language

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STEP 2: ACKNOWLEDGE AND LISTEN

Show that you hear and understand the concern.

- Let the person speak without interruption
- Use empathy statements
- Avoid defending or explaining yet

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STEP 3: LOCATE THE REAL ISSUE

Clarify what the person actually needs.

- Paraphrase what you heard “I’m hearing the issue is...”
- Ask neutral questions “What outcome were you looking for?”
- Separate emotion from the problem

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STEP 4: MOVE TO NEXT STEPS

Shift from emotion to action.

- Explain what you can do
- Offer clear options or next steps
- Set realistic expectations

De-escalation works best when you follow a clear process: control yourself, acknowledge the emotion, clarify the issue, and move toward a solution. Staying structured helps prevent emotional reactions from driving the conversation.