

# Verbal De-Escalation & Violence Prevention



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Founder

Caldera Associates

- Martin Luther King

**“Violence is the language of the unheard.”**

## Violence Talks

To relieve my tension

To help control and dominate others

To give me a voice

To make me feel better

To protect myself



# Risk Factors for Violence

**CAUTION**

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- Age: 17 – 25
- Sex: Male
- Substance Abuse: Alcohol and Stimulants
- Intelligence: <90
- Brain Trauma
- Food Insecurity
- Housing Insecurity
- Generational Poverty

# Predictors of Violence

- Past history of violence
  - Types, frequency
- Significant change in behavior
- Increase in Gross Motor Activity (i.e. large muscle groups)

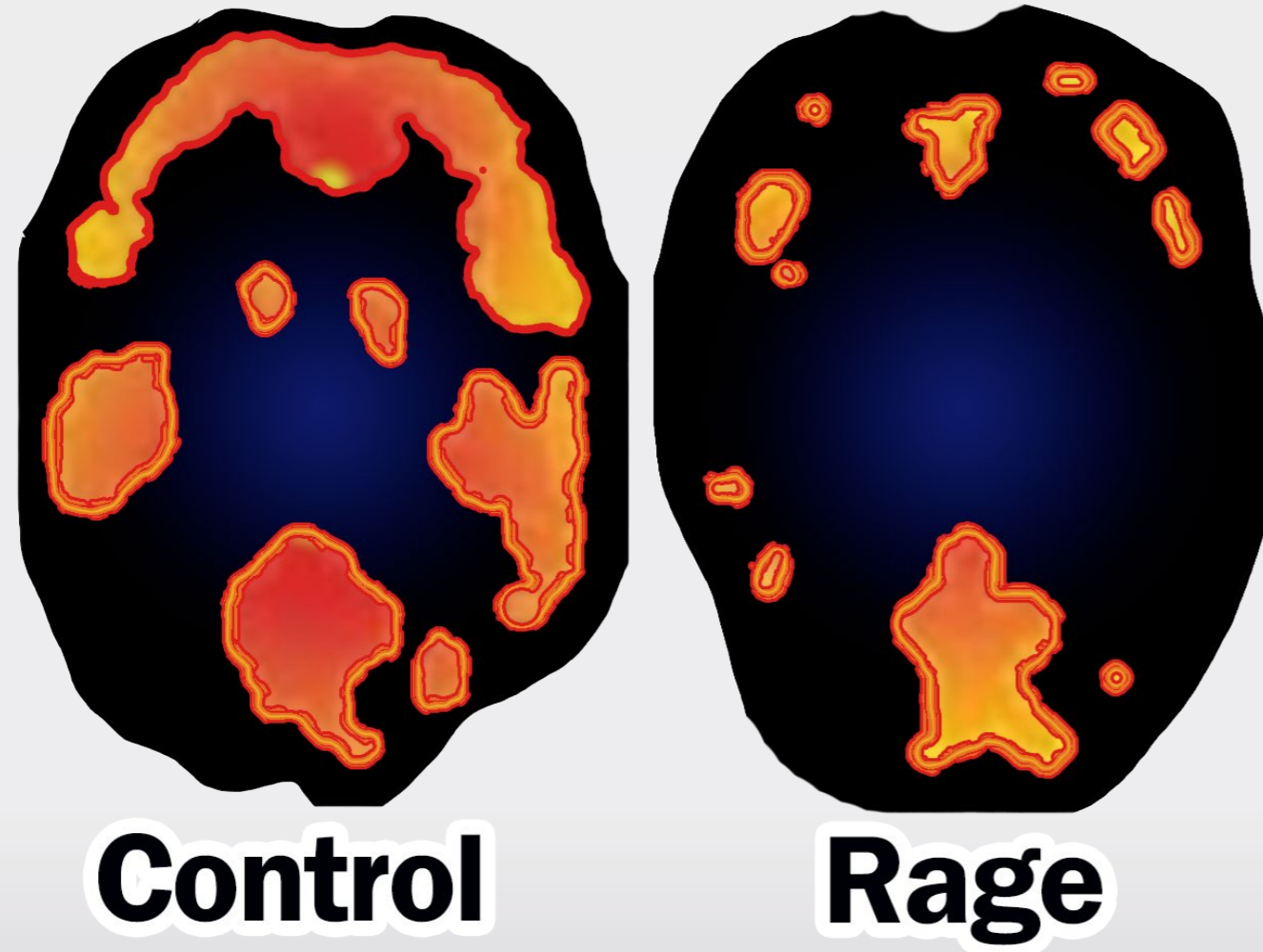


# Psychological Considerations

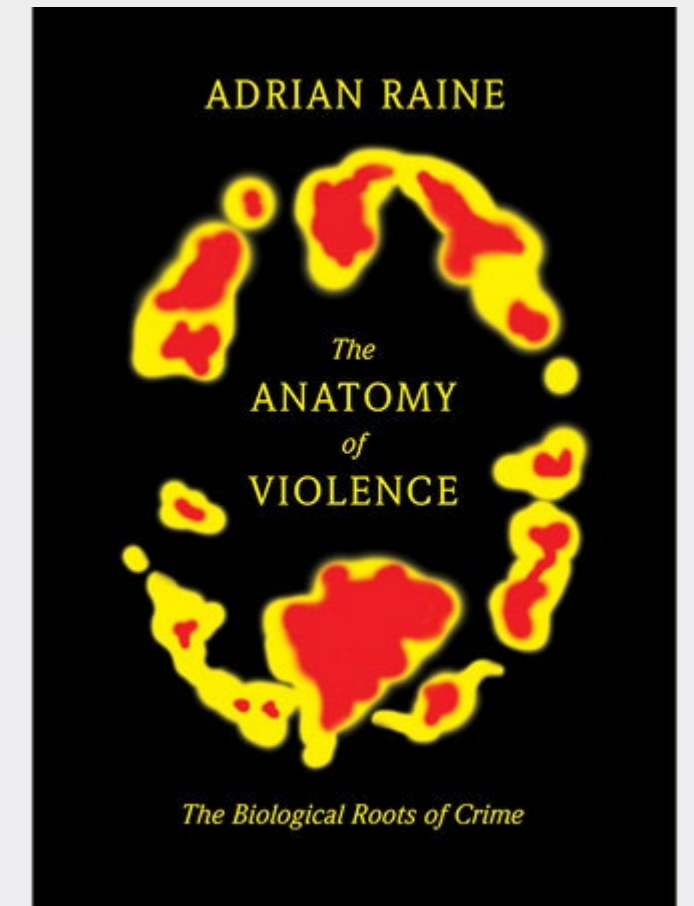
- Emotion versus Reason
- Takes time to settle down
- Building trust and rapport are essential in creating a safe interaction



# The Physiology of Rage



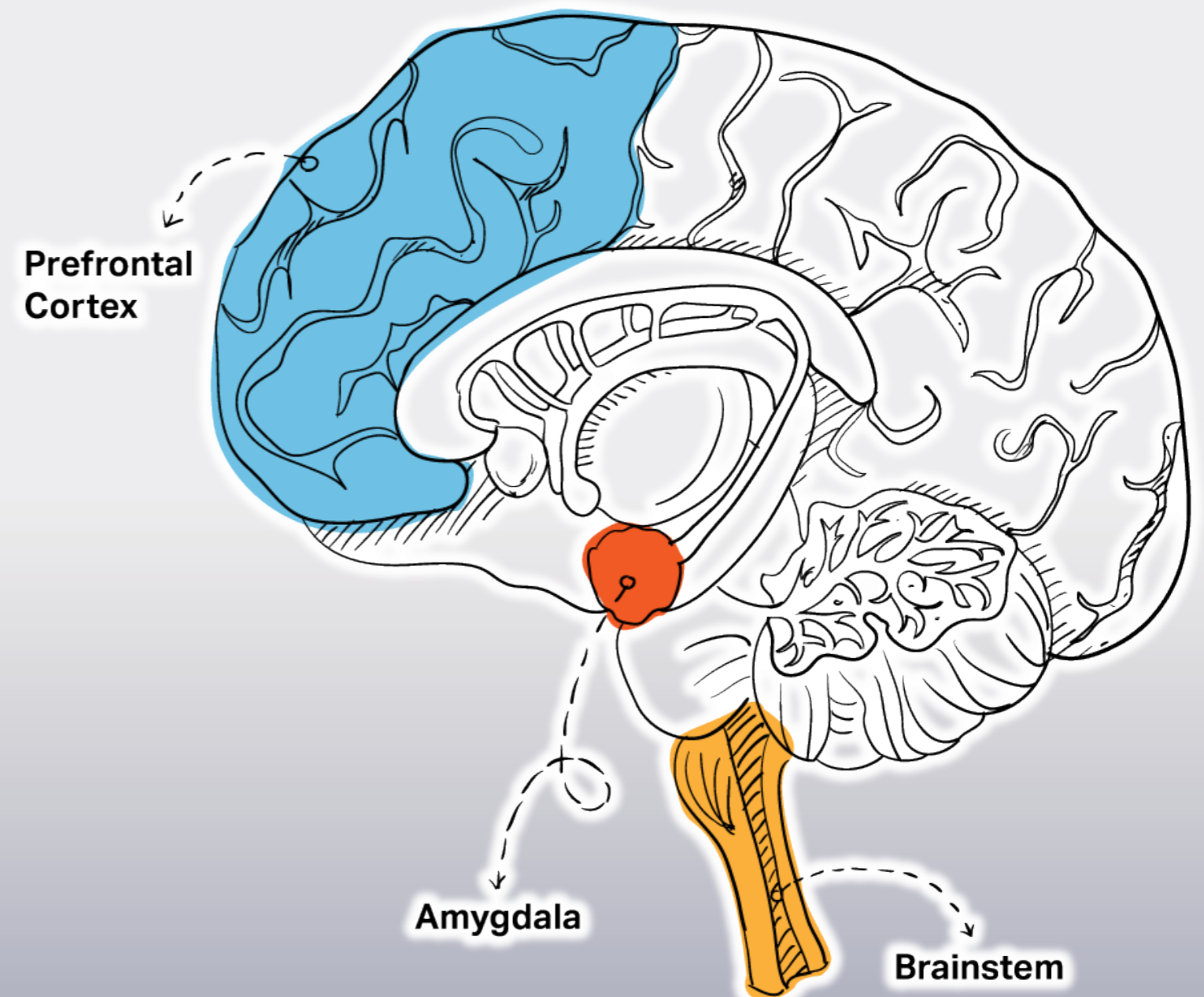
PETscan detects glucose metabolism in various parts of the brain illustrating activity/non-activity.



Recommend Reading:  
"The Anatomy of  
Violence" Adrian Raine,  
April 2013.

# Back to the Brain

- When stressed, fearful, angry or enraged, we tend to experience greater activation of our limbic system, also known as the “emotional brain.”
- This can influence:
  - Problem solving
  - Decision making
  - Judgment
  - Logic
  - Reasoning
  - Impulse control
  - Verbal processing
  - All critical functions to resolve a crisis



# It Takes Time to Build a Relationship

- In order to influence someone's behavior you need to have some form of a relationship
- SLOW DOWN, Don't problem solve the wrong problem
- Negotiator vs. SWAT





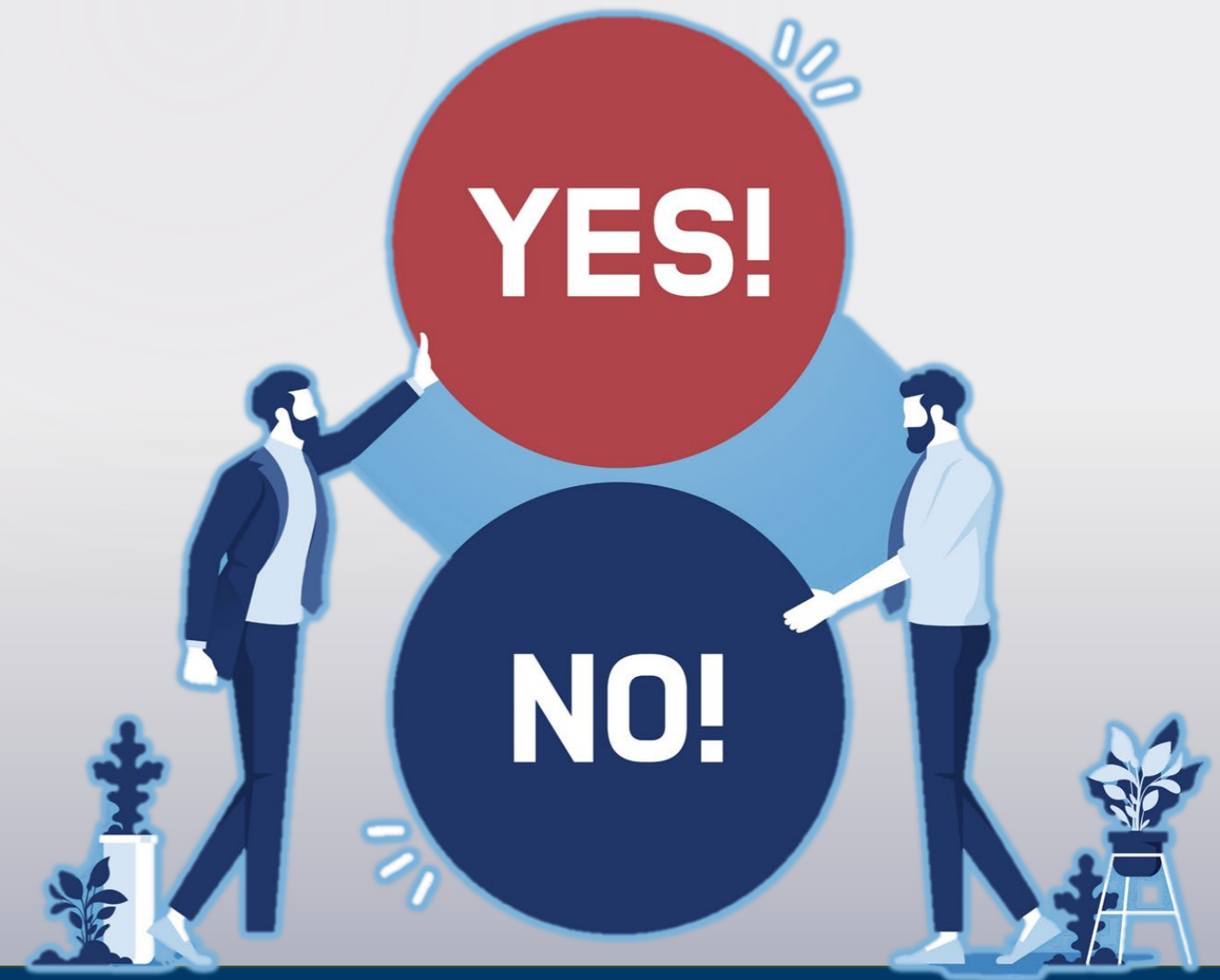
# Active Listening

- “Listen” vs. “Talk”
- 80% Listen --- 20% Talk
- Let the person have the opening words while you LISTEN



# Active Listening Cont.

- Use non-judgmental attitude
- Be accepting.
- Do NOT inject your values into the situation.
- Focus on the person's feelings, values, lifestyles and opinions.



# Be Aware of Values

- Values are what people think are important.
- Try to clarify what the person's values are.
- Values influence behaviors!



## Active Listening Cont.

# Emotional Labeling

- The intent of emotional labeling is to respond to the emotion heard in the person's VOICE rather than the content
- For example use phrases like: "You seem" or "You sound..", "You look to me..." or "I hear you are ..."
- Use the same terminology as the person

John, you seem angry right now.



# Active Listening | Emotional Labeling Cont.

- Avoid telling a person how they feel and focus on how they seem or sound
- Don't worry if you label the emotion incorrectly, it's your own perception
- Be aware of YOUR own emotions and what emotions you are conveying



## Active Listening Cont.

# Paraphrasing

- Summarize in your words as to what they have told you
- Creates empathy, it shows you're listening, and you are trying to understand
- For example: "I want to make sure I have this right, are you telling me...?" or "Are you saying...?"
- Clarifies statements and themes



## Active Listening Cont.

# Effective Pauses (Silence)

- An effective pause is silence
- Most people are uncomfortable with silence and will fill it with talk (12 seconds!)
- Remember, if they talk we get more information, with information comes the ability to resolve a conflict



## Active Listening Cont.

# Reflecting/Mirroring

- Simply repeat the last word or phrase the person said and say it in the form of a question
- Provides the person with exact feedback that you are listening
- Guides the person to further explain and gives us more details





## Active Listening Cont.

# Minimal Encouragers

- Encouragers are sounds made to let the person know you are listening and interested
- For example: “Oh” and “Really?” and “Ok”
- Encourages the person to continue talking
- Is natural in conversations



## Active Listening Cont.

# Use open-ended questions

- These questions cannot be answered with a yes or no response
- Usually begins with words like “How” “When” “What” or “Where”
- It helps to get the person talking
- It focuses the discussion on the person’s feelings



## Active Listening Cont.

# “I” Messages

- Used to confront the person about a behavior that is counterproductive, without being accusatory
  - You want the behavior to change, not them
  - You own your feelings, not blaming
  - Non-threatening

## Active Listening

# Use of “I” Messages to Confront

- Use the formula: “I feel (emotion) when you (behavior) because (your reason) and I would like you to (behavior).”
- For example: “I feel (frustrated) when you (yell) because (I am afraid I will miss something that is important to you) and I would like to talk with you over here so we can resolve this together.”

# Conversational Phrases

I would like to try to help you.

Tell me more about what's going on?

I would like to hear things from your side.

Could you share that with me?

This seems important to you.

You have a lot on your plate right now.

# Rapport

- This is the foundation of every relationship



# Phrases That Damage Rapport

- “Calm Down” – can be perceived as an order which may provoke intense anger
- “Why” – feels accusatory, creates defensiveness
- “I understand” – Often used to jump to problem solving; well intentioned but counter-productive
- “You should(n’t)” – a judgmental statement, implies superiority of the advice giver and may cause receiver to feel inadequate

**Never**  
in the history of  
**CALM DOWN**  
has anyone  
**CALMED DOWN**  
by being told to  
**CALM DOWN**

# Phrases that Help Build Rapport

“Calm down”

- “I can see (hear) how angry you are.”

“I Understand”

- “Help me to understand.”

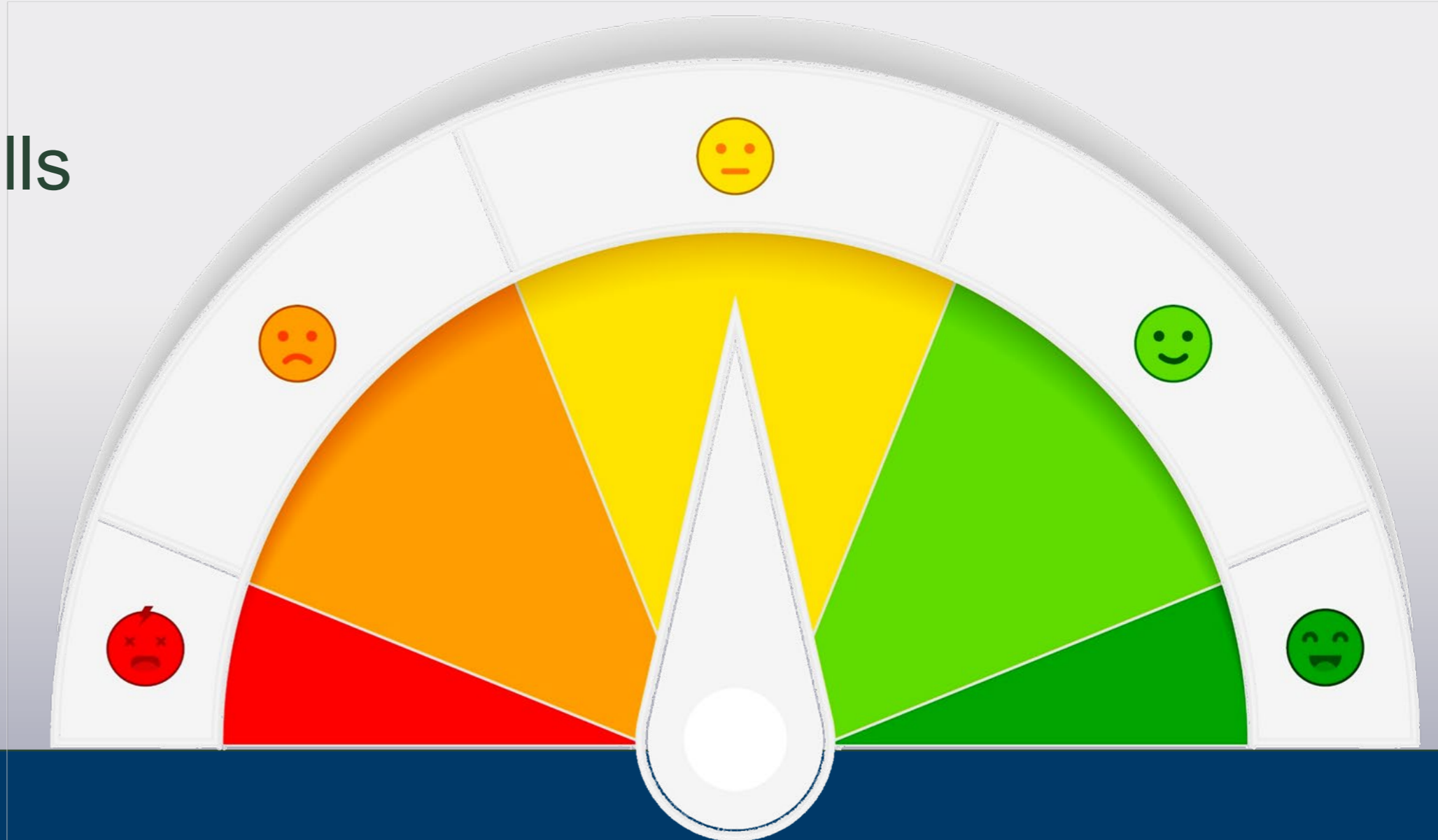
You should /  
shouldn't

- “What are your options at this point?”



# De-Escalation

- Helps calm a situation
- Builds Rapport
- Uses Active Listening Skills



# Stages of De-Escalation

- Recognize and Assess the Situation
- Respond Calmly
- Listen with Empathy
- Validate and Show Respect

Remember: You always have permission to retreat if you don't feel safe.



# De-Escalation Techniques

Validate the feeling

“You have every right to feel what you are feeling.” \*\*\*\*\*

Match the intensity of volume

Use similar tone to match and bring it down...think crowded restaurant

Physical Labeling

“Mr. Jones, I noticed you are pacing a lot?”

Derailments

Non-sequiturs; “Did you catch the game last night?” or referring to someone you know by the wrong name

Soft Shock

Purposeful MISS interpretation

**Thank You &**

**Stay Safe**

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