



# Conflict Management in Public transport



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# Learning Objectives

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1. Identify conflict as an opportunity for change and growth

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2. Explore five root causes of conflict

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3. Determine common escalation points during the interpersonal conflict



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# Conflict

Conflict is a disagreement in which the people involved see a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns.

- Damaging effects in terms of:
  - What is said
  - Actions taken
  - Injury suffered
- Potential conflict is everywhere
- When handled properly, negative effects can be minimized, and positive effects may result.
- Be prepared



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# Discussion

Let's identify some situations which might cause conflict. Examples include:

Rudeness

Profanity

Fare disputes

Delays in service

Poor hygiene



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# Triggering event

Triggering event: an incident which is perceived as a threat by the individual

Two types of triggering events:

Fear-inducing event: an event where the individual feels threatened or is about to lose something of value

Frustrating event: an event where the person feels their needs are not being met.



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# Scenario 1



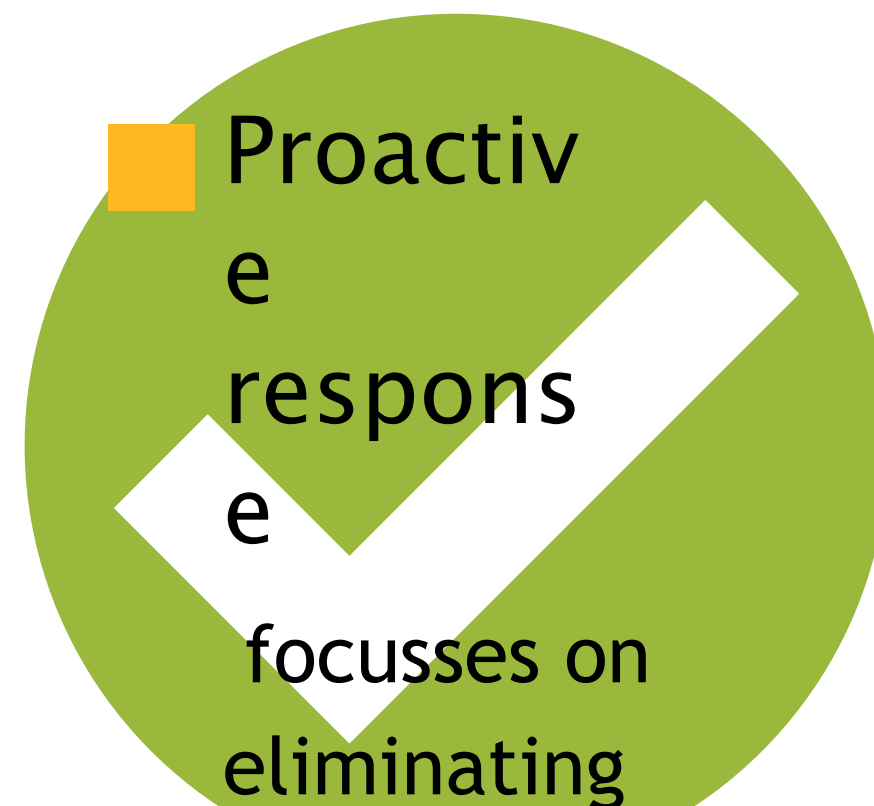
A passenger board the bus and immediately states:  
“You’re late, you’re always late!”



## Self-Control

Changing the outcome of the a situation

Recognize your trigger words



Proactiv

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respons

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focusses on

eliminating



Reactive

respons

e

depends on

emotions



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# Scenario



How would you respond?

## Answers

- An acceptable response could include an apology for the inconvenience using a tone that conveys empathy. If possible, providing a proactive interaction rather than a reactive response may eliminate the problem before it occurs. For example, if it is visibly obvious that the passenger is frustrated before you even open the door, an immediate apology and acknowledgement of tardiness may prevent the scenario altogether.
- An unacceptable response may be in a tone that is much more aggressive, such as, “be quiet and sit down or we will be even later!”
- While it may not be your fault that the schedule is too tight, or that construction on the route causes perpetual tardiness, it may ease the nerves of the passenger if you apologize for circumstances out of your control.

Does the order of your response make a difference? • Especially when dealing with younger population cohorts, it is helpful to state the most important information first. For example, “If you take a seat, I can get you to your destination” is preferred over “I can get you where you want to go if you would take a seat.”

Do you recognize your own trigger words? If yes, how do you maintain self-control if your trigger words are used?

- To ensure you do not react emotionally, you should recognize your trigger words while understanding that the use of those words is meant to escalate a situation. By maintaining self-control, you are also maintaining control of the situation. Remember to always respond with respect.



# Scenario 2



The operator performs improper bus stop procedures and prematurely engages the door on departure.

The passenger's arm gets stuck in the door



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# Scenario



## Answers

How could this happen?

- While it is not purposeful, the anticipation of entering or leaving a stop may lead to premature closure of the door.

How would you react to this scenario?

- An apology would be appropriate in this scenario.
- Be sure to follow agency protocol when dealing with potential passenger injury.

What can you do to prevent this from happening again?

- Do not leave hand on release while passengers are boarding or alighting.



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# Scenario 3



A frustrated rider is looking for directions/connection information.



## Self-Control

Changing the outcome of the a situation Recognize your trigger words

## Use active listening skills

- Use “I” statements
- Ask open-ended questions
- Paraphrase the frustration
- Do not interrupt, let them vent



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# Scenario



## Answers

How would you respond to the passenger?

- Giving personal directions rather than referring passengers to read a map will likely result in a positive outcome.
- Listening to the concerns of the passenger, and helping them find their way may reduce their frustrations.
- Not listening to their needs, responding with a harsh or rude tone, or ignoring the passenger, could escalate the passenger's frustrations and lead to conflict.



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# Scenario

## 4



A passenger on a 3-wheeled mobility device insists the operator uses their method of securement rather than typical procedure.



### Adapt

Adapt in the moment of needs for the person you're trying to support

### Adapt

The only response that works every time is the right response for that specific situation

### Positive interactions

Explain what CAN do rather than what you CANNOT do



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# Scenario



## Answers

How would you respond to the passenger?

- If you ask why they want their mobility device secured differently, the reasoning may be sound. You should adapt to the needs of each passenger when possible.
- If you cannot secure the device the requested way, tell the passenger what you can do rather than what you cannot do.

Keep the interactions with passengers positive. Explain what you CAN do rather than what you CANNOT do. One response does not fit all situations.

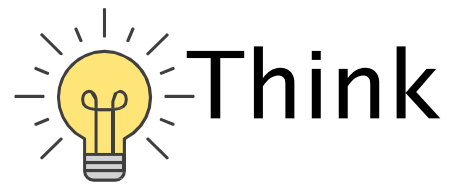
You will be most effective when you can adapt at the moment to the needs of the person you're trying to support. The only response that works every time is the right response for that specific situation.



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# Scenario 5

A passenger tries to board the bus with an iguana on his/her shoulder.



## Think

If you change your thinking about a situation, you can change the outcome

## Think before you react

Take a few seconds before you respond, this can give you a chance to positively make a difference



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# Scenario



## Answers

How would you respond to the passenger?

- Think about the situation and the potential outcomes before you react

Thinking before you react is important in all situations but especially when using de-escalation techniques. By modifying your thought processes before you respond you can influence others' actions. Make a mental note to take a few seconds to compose your thoughts before responding. Those few seconds give you a chance to positively make a difference



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# Scenario



## Answers

How would you respond to the passenger?

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Thinking before you react is important in all situations but especially when using de-escalation techniques. By modifying your thought processes before you respond you can influence others' actions.

Make a mental note to take a few seconds to compose your thoughts before responding. Those few seconds give you a chance to positively make a difference.



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# SPLA T



## Self-control:

When you maintain self-control you can change the outcome of the situation

## Prevent:

Using what you learned during a prior event to keep it from happening again

## Listen:

To understand what a person is communicating by letting them vent and not interrupting

## Adapt:

The only response that works every time is the right response for that specific situation



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# Recognizing the warning signs

## Situational awareness

Recognize and “read” the indicators of difficult passengers

- Evaluate the entire situation before you react
- Be mindful of your own stress response
- Maintain self-control
- Proactive response vs reactive response



## Body language of Difficult Passengers

- Heavy breathing
- Slouching
- Crossed arms
- Evasive eye contact
- Clutched hand in a fist
- Raised hands
- Hidden hands



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# Intoxicated passengers



## Signs

### and Symptoms

Smell of alcohol

Lack of coordination

Inability to remain focused

Inability to carry on a  
logical conversation

Slurred speech

Glazed eyes or dilated  
pupils Slow motor skills

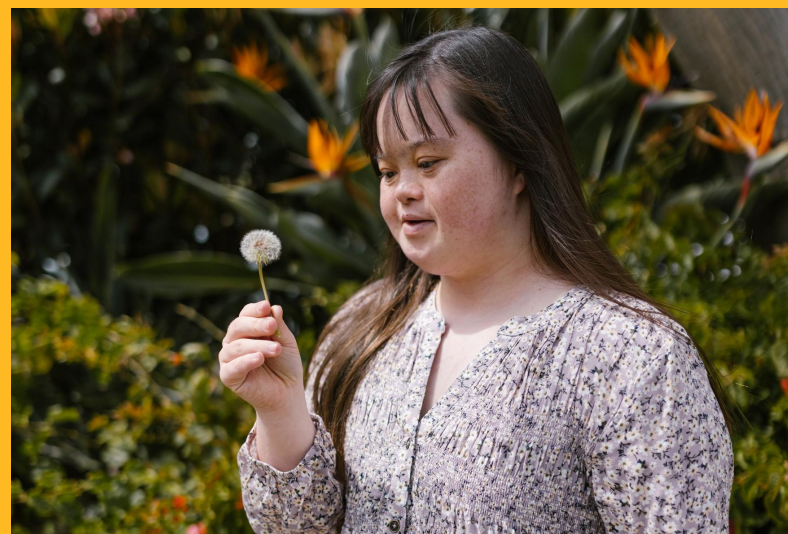
Trembling hands

Maintain self control and pay close  
attention



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# Passengers with disabilities



## To do

- Focus on the individual not the disability, “person with a disability” rather than “disabled person”
- Speak directly to the person rather than their companion or interpreter
- All assistive mobility devices are personal property or extensions of that person
- Always ask before providing assistance
- Don't be afraid to make a mistake



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# Teenager

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## To do

Resolve issues differently with a teenager than with adults

- Address them by name
- Build a relationship to recognize unusual behaviour
- Paraphrase what they say to demonstrate active listening skills

A technique that works with both adults and teenage passengers:

- Put the most important information first
- Instead of saying:  
“I will get you home soon if you sit down” Try saying:  
“Please sit down and I will get you home soon”



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# Elderl

y



## Tips for communication

Face the person and make eye contact  
Speak slowly, clearly, and in a steady tone of voice

Repeat the same statement

Use short phrases and common words

Use gestures and body language to help clarify

Allow more time for the person to process information and respond

Watch your tone of voice

Acknowledge their feelings



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# Homeless

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## Tips for communication

Maintain a calm and soft yet firm voice Avoid using your title or authority

Do not offer lengthy explanations or excuses



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# Words to defuse conflict

■ **I CAN CALL  
SOMEONE**



■ **SORRY ABOUT  
THAT**



■ **I HEAR  
YOU**

■ **I APPRECIATE  
THAT**



■ **I'LL DO WHAT I  
CAN**



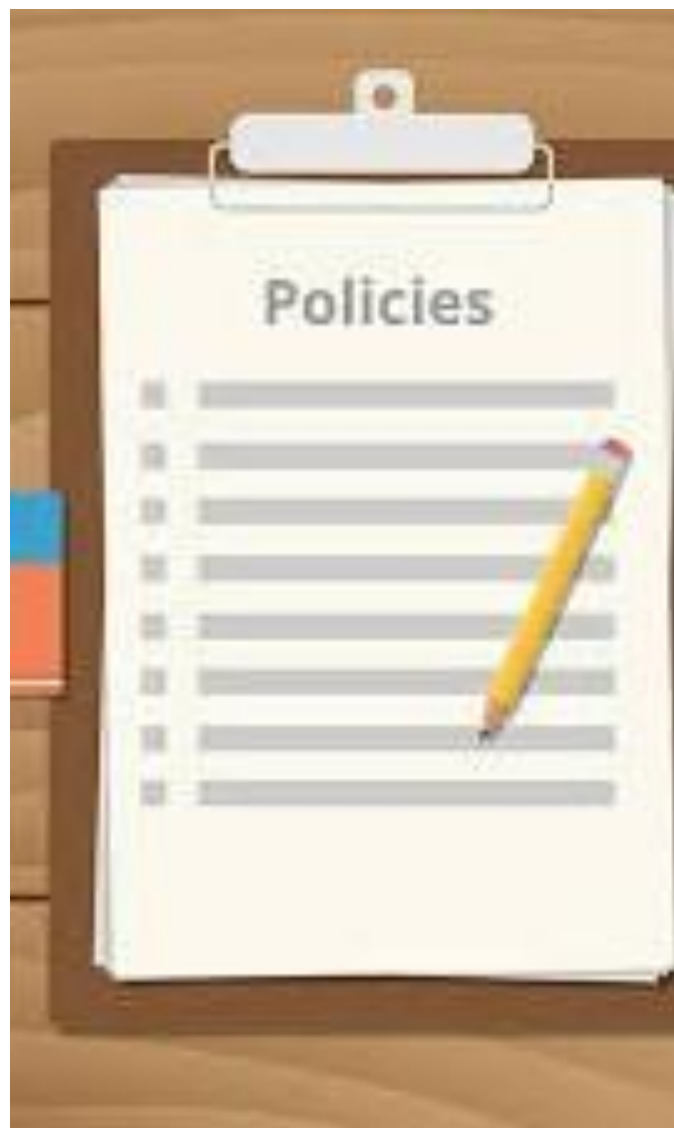
■ **I  
UNDERSTAN  
D**

**CAN YOU THINK OF ANY ADDITIONAL  
STATEMENTS?**



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## Collect the policies

Collect the agency policies

Customer service  
Fare collection and evasion

Unruly passengers  
Intoxicated passengers

Operator Conduct