

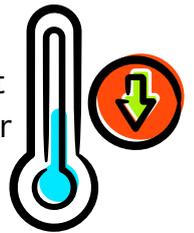


## Tool of the Month: De-escalation Techniques

In crisis situations, emotions can escalate quickly. Tension, fear, anger, and confusion often show up before clarity or calm. First responders and peer support teams regularly enter moments where distress is already high, and how we show up in those first few minutes can shape what happens next.

One of the most effective tools we have in these moments is de-escalation.

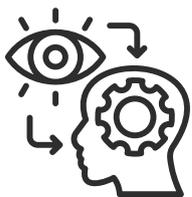
De-escalation is the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies to lower emotional intensity and create enough calm for safety and communication to take place. It centers on empathy, active listening, and steady presence rather than control or authority. Simple actions can make a meaningful difference, such as staying grounded in your tone, using open and non-threatening body language, acknowledging what someone is experiencing, and offering choices when possible.



For KCCRT members, de-escalation might look like:



- Approaching calmly and introducing yourself to **establish trust**
- **Listening** without interrupting and reflecting back what you hear
- Using **clear, simple language** to explain your role and next steps
- Avoiding power struggles and focusing on **collaboration** rather than commands



**De-escalation takes patience and self-awareness.** Crisis intervention research and widely used public safety training models show that calm presence and respectful engagement can reduce the risk of harm, improve cooperation, and support longer-term recovery. When people feel heard and respected, they are more likely to stay engaged and move toward safety.

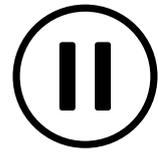


**De-escalation also protects responders.** It helps reduce stress, supports clear boundaries, and allows us to work more effectively in tense environments. Calm presence lowers risk for everyone involved.

### Try this:

The next time you walk into a tense situation, pause and ask yourself:

- How can I position myself to appear non-threatening?
- What can I say to show I understand what they are feeling?
- What options can I offer to give them a sense of control?



**Takeaway:** De-escalation can turn potential conflict into connection by prioritizing safety, dignity, and human connection. The story below is a powerful example of how calm presence and persistence can change outcomes.



## From History: The Angel of Nanjing



The Nanjing Yangtze River Bridge, completed in 1968, spans the Yangtze River in China and carries both highway and rail traffic. Over the decades, it became known as a site where many people in crisis went with the intent to take their lives.

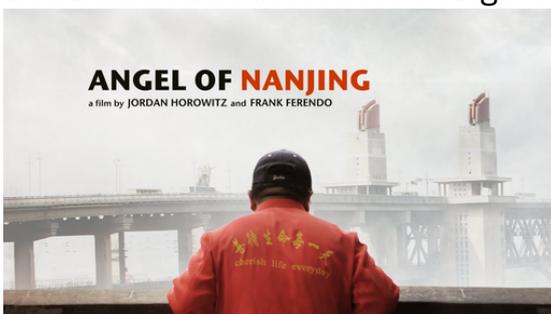


In 2003, Chen Si, a vegetable vendor with no formal mental health training, encountered a man preparing to jump from the bridge. Chen approached him, spoke with him, and stayed with him until he was safe. That moment changed the direction of Chen's life.

After that encounter, Chen began regularly patrolling the bridge on his own time. He learned to notice subtle signs of distress, such as wandering without direction or standing alone for long periods. When he saw someone who seemed overwhelmed, he approached gently, introduced himself, and started a conversation. He listened to people talk about loss, financial stress, family strain, and despair. Sometimes he offered practical help. Often, he simply stayed with them until the moment passed. He carried resource information and shared his phone number so people could follow up.



Over time, Chen was widely credited with helping save hundreds of lives. His story was later documented in the film *The Angel of Nanjing*, highlighting how consistent, compassionate presence can interrupt moments of crisis.



The lesson for KCCRT is straightforward and lasting.

Chen's approach was not about control or authority. It was about showing up, listening without judgment, and staying present long enough for the crisis to soften.

He did not fix people's lives. He helped them get through one dangerous moment at a time.

In KCCRT's work, we often step into emotionally charged situations where there is no quick solution. What we offer is steady presence, respect, and connection. That presence can be the difference between escalation and safety.



## What This Teaches Us Today

Much of KCCRT's work happens in the aftermath of crisis, when emotions are still raw and uncertainty is high. We often arrive after the initial event, when families, responders, or communities are trying to regain footing. In those moments, our value is not measured by having the right words or perfect solutions. It is measured by how we show up.



De-escalation begins with presence. It continues through **listening**, **validation**, and steady **engagement**. When we stay grounded and respectful, we create space for people to calm, feel seen, and take the next safe step forward. Even when we cannot change what has happened, how we engage can reduce harm and help people move through the moment with more stability.



## Upcoming Events and Trainings

### April 17, 2026

- SAFE Debriefing Training Full-day training available for KCCRT members

### April 18, 2026

- KCCRT Annual Conference
- Speakers, networking, and tabletop exercise focused on practical response skills

### May 14, 2026

- How 988 Can Be a Resource for KCCRT
- Virtual session from 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM EST
- This session will cover how the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline can support KCCRT deployments and complement on-scene response.

STAY  
TUNED

### More Trainings Coming in 2026

We're planning additional trainings and presentations throughout the year to continue building skills and resilience for responders across Kentucky. Stay tuned for updates in future newsletters, emails, and text messages.



# Help Us Share the Mission

KCCRT is here to support first responders and communities across Kentucky, but people can only reach out if they know we exist and understand what we offer.

One of the simplest ways to help is to engage with KCCRT on Facebook. When you like, share, or comment on our posts, it increases how often our information shows up for agencies and organizations that may not know about KCCRT yet.

You can also help by sharing KCCRT information locally. If your department, agency, or partner organization would benefit from posters or printed materials, let us know. These can be placed in fire stations, EMS stations, police departments, jails, dispatch centers, and partner agencies so people know how to request support when it's needed.

### If you are willing, consider:

- Liking and following the KCCRT Facebook page
- Sharing posts with your professional network
- Asking for posters or informational materials to display in your workplace
- Mentioning KCCRT in conversations with partner agencies who may not know about us yet

[CLICK HERE](#)

Request KCCRT Poster(s)

[Share](#)

Like and Share on Facebook

## February Focus: One Small Thing

This work can be heavy. You see tough situations and carry stress.

This month, focus on one small change to make your day a little easier:

- Organize part of your gear or workspace
- Set a simple boundary to protect your time or energy
- Take a short pause to reset after a difficult interaction

Small adjustments like these add up over time, helping you manage stress and stay ready for the people who count on you.



## Dad Joke Corner

HA  
HA  
HA

### 1. Why did the stapler go to therapy?

Because it had too many attachments.

### 2. Why are elevators so dramatic?

Because they always take things to the next level.

### 3. Why did the coffee file a complaint at work?

Because it was tired of getting roasted.

