



Responding to a crisis

Brain injury can sometimes result in behaviour that is dangerous to the person with the injury and those around them.



Even with the best behaviour support plans in place, there may be times when a person's behaviour escalates. There are ways to help a person in crisis, while still maintaining personal safety as a priority.

It may be possible to prevent a crisis after a person's behaviour has started to escalate. However, when a crisis develops, personal safety takes priority over everything else. Ensure you have a crisis management plan that includes:

- when to disengage from an escalating situation
- making sure your exits are always unobstructed
- prior removal of any items that could be used as a weapon.

As behaviour starts to escalate, continue to work at understanding the triggers and purpose of the behaviour. It may still be possible to prevent a crisis with:

- a calm even tone of voice and reassurance
- active listening and expressing empathy
- simple, clear directions about what is required.

Tone of voice is very important. It is normal to feel adrenalin and speak in a higher pitch during a crisis situation, even if the intention is to defuse the situation. Being aware of this and deliberately speaking quietly in a normal tone can make a big difference.

Try to identify the message behind the behaviour. You might be able to avert a crisis if you can find the trigger and deal with it directly. A positive behaviour support plan should include how to respond to each possible crisis situation. Typical strategies during the escalation phase include:

- promoting coping skills
- breathing exercises
- redirection (distraction)
- stimulus change
- 'help me' requests
- introducing humour (this can be a difficult technique and should only be used by a familiar person)
- exiting the troubling environment.

Once the crisis is over, it can be helpful to talk about the situation with a family member or professional counselor, particularly if it is a regular occurrence. It is important for carers to look after themselves and ensure they are well supported.