

Worksheet 15:

Person-centred techniques for de-escalating behaviour viewed as challenging

While we are trying to understand what might be triggering a person's behaviour, we might also find ourselves in a situation which was not possible to predict and for which we have no explanation. This behaviour may make us feel threatened ourselves.

Our sense of threat will be communicated to the person with dementia, and our behavioural response may be perceived as a threat by them. This may lead to a cycle of threat-response-behaviour which needs to be understood and reduced.

The following strategies may be helpful in this situation:

- **Validate the person's feelings:** how might we do this?
- **Keep an open posture:** what does this look like?
- **Use non-threatening body language:** what might be perceived as threatening?
- **Avoid using words that challenge:** 'you always...', 'don't be silly'; 'if you don't behave yourself I'm going to...'
- **Respect personal space:** ensure that there is a metre between yourself and the person. Don't block the person's exit and don't let your exit be blocked.
- **Keep calm:** taking a few deep breaths may help. Practice this but don't hyperventilate!
- **Ask for help:** you aren't expected to put yourself at risk; you can leave a situation. Check your organisation's procedure for reporting an incident and for receiving emotional support afterwards.
- **Policy and procedure:** your organisation will have a policy and procedure around 'Responding to challenging behaviour', 'Lone working', 'Violence at work' or 'Safety at work'. Check what it says and find out if everyone is aware of it.