



GP Excellence



Greater Manchester
Primary Care Provider Board
The partnership of primary care providers

Responding Well to Conflict

Key Take-Home Messages



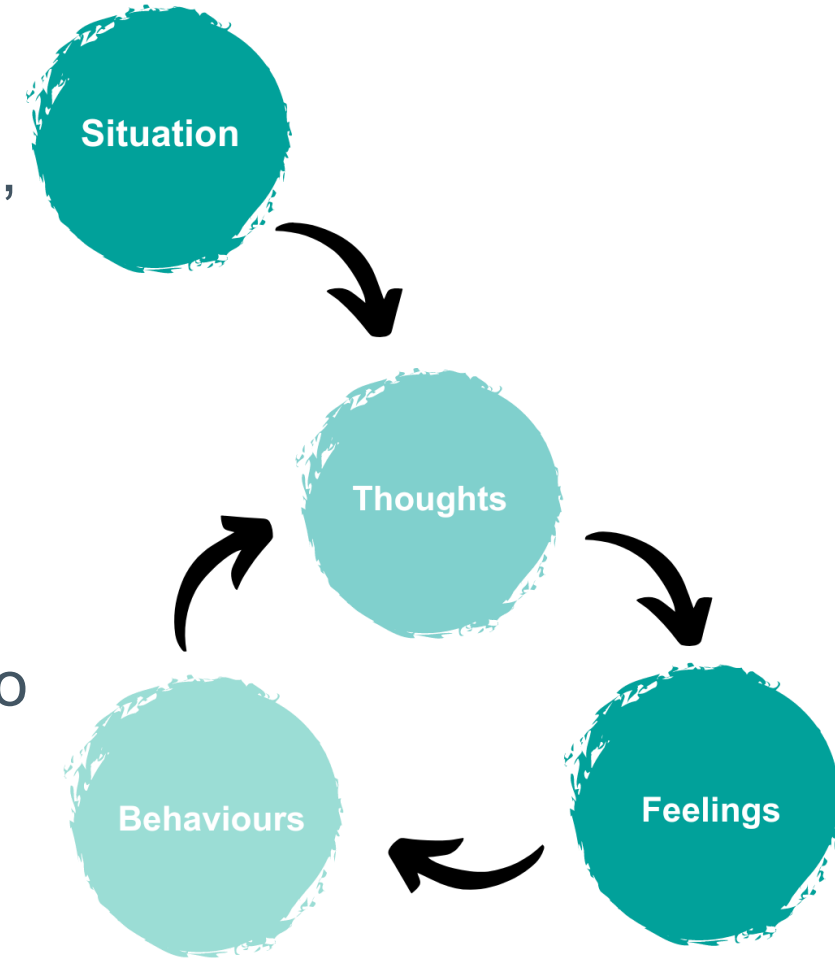


The cognitive behavioural cycle

Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviours, Beliefs and Values

- How people **think about a situation** affects how they **feel**, which shapes how they **behave**
- Strong **beliefs or values** (e.g. about fairness, respect, health, or being heard) can make reactions more intense
- Thoughts trigger feelings, an emotional response, **based on our previous experiences and our values**. The feelings we have then trigger our **behaviour** in response to the situation

Remember: Beliefs are things we believe to be true BUT may not be. You can't control others' beliefs, but you *can* influence the interaction through calm, respectful responses





What feelings trigger conflict?

Fear, Humiliation and Frustration

- Conflict often comes from **fear** (of illness, loss of control), **humiliation** (feeling dismissed or judged), or **frustration** (barriers, delays, rules)
- Anger can be a **surface emotion** hiding something more vulnerable underneath
- When a person is emotional our **tone of voice** and **body language** mean more than the words we use



Remember: Responding with empathy reduces intensity more effectively than correcting or defending



Conditions that impact behaviour

- A range of conditions (e.g. dementia, learning disabilities, mental health conditions, chronic pain, neurodiversity, substance use, fatigue) can affect our **communication, impulse control, emotional regulation**
- We don't excuse bad behaviour but try to recognise that it may be **unintentional** and not a personal attack, so try not to take it personally

Remember: Adjusting our communication in the moment can make interactions safer and more effective for everyone



Conditions that impact behaviour



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Relational Injury, Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Past trauma can shape how people respond to authority, boundaries, or perceived rejection
- Trauma can make people more sensitive to tone, body language, and perceived power differences

Remember: We don't know a person's background experience. A calm, respectful approach helps avoid re-triggering past experiences and supports building trust



How do we cope with stress?

- When stress is high, people may struggle to listen, process information, or problem-solve
- When we feel stressed, it can trigger our inner chimp, narrowing our capacity for thinking and causing us to respond emotionally rather than rationally
- We all need a certain amount of pressure to perform well
- Think about the coping strategies that work for you to manage your 'stress bucket' and make that a part of your daily routine



Remember: Taking a pause, breathing, and grounding yourself first helps you to take control and choose a rational response rather than an emotional response to a conflict situation



Escalation

What are the signs to look out for?

- Flushed or pale face
- Sweating
- Pacing, restless, or repetitive movements
- Trembling or shaking
- Clenched jaws or fists
- Exaggerated gestures
- Loud talking or chanting
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Scowling, sneering
- Glaring or avoiding eye contact
- Violating your personal space (they get too close)



Remember: Spotting escalation early allows you to intervene before things become unsafe



The CALM Model

De-escalate. Understand. Resolve. Move forward safely.

A simple 4-step approach for frontline staff in primary care



C

COMMUNICATE
& CONTROL
YOUR REACTION



A

ASSESS
& ACKNOWLEDGE



L

LISTEN
& LEARN



M

MEDIATE
& MOVE FORWARD
SAFELY





Communicate (and Control your Reaction)



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What it means in practice:

- Stay calm, keep your tone steady, use simple clear language, and manage your own emotional response - even when the patient is upset or confrontational.
- **Key point: Your calmness sets the tone. You're regulating the emotional temperature.**





Assess (and Acknowledge)

What it means in practice:

- Quickly identify what the person needs (information, urgency, reassurance). Acknowledge their feelings without necessarily agreeing (empathy) – this can reduce feelings of threat and isolation. Explicitly naming emotions (e.g. e.g. ***“I understand you’re frustrated right now”***) can deactivate the amygdala (emotional response) and activate the prefrontal cortex (thinking response).
- **Key point: You’re showing understanding while gathering useful information.**





Listen (and Learn)



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What it means in practice:

- People in a high-conflict state need to feel heard to lower their defensiveness. Active Listening includes maintaining eye contact, non-verbal cues like nodding, paraphrasing to show you're learning about their story, ***“It sounds like you’re telling me...”***. Gather those details to help you start to think about possible solutions.
- **Key point: You’re validating and clarifying - this stage builds trust and reduces potential escalation.**





Mediate (and Move Forward Safely)



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What it means in practice:

- Show empathy, offer options, and guide toward a safe, appropriate outcome while maintaining boundaries. Think of the problem (not the person). Does your knowledge and experience help you provide a better explanation of the system or can you think of potential solutions.
- **Key point:** Try to work towards the mindset that it's you and me against the problem, not me against you, while prioritising safety and clarity.



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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER – REMEMBER CALM



GOOD PRACTICE REMINDERS

- Be respectful
- Keep patients safe
- Follow your limits and safeguarding policies
- Look after your own wellbeing



You don't have to agree with someone to show you care.

DE-ESCALATION APPROACH

Help the brain feel safe first, then solve the problem.





Links to Support



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- [Pharmacist Support](#): The profession's independent charity offers free and confidential services, including peer support via *Listening Friends*, professional counselling, addiction support, and financial assistance. They also run leadership courses like *Embracing a Workplace Wellbeing Culture*.
- **NHS and Crisis Text Lines**: NHS staff can access the mental health hotline at **0300 131 7000** (7:00 AM – 11:00 PM daily) or text **SHOUT to 85258** for 24/7 confidential text support.
- [Community Pharmacy England \(CPE\)](#): Provides centralized guidance, resource links, and joint initiatives alongside Pharmacist Support to help teams manage high workloads and patient-related stress.
- [Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education \(CPPE\)](#): Offers over 40 soft skills guides and learning toolkits covering resilience, anxiety management, and personal well-being development.



Workforce Wellbeing Support

As a Healthcare professional there are a range of FREE and confidential resources available to support you

Greater Manchester Mental Health and Wellbeing Support Links

 **Speak with someone** directly and confidentially online or on the phone – you don't need to tell anyone else if you don't want to.

 **Online support** and tools for guidance, counselling and advice.



Crisis Support

Samaritans **116 123 (24/7)**

Crisis Helplines in Greater Manchester (free):

 **Call: 0800 953 0285** Bolton, Manchester, Salford, Trafford, Wigan

 **Call: 0800 014 9995** Bury, HMR, Oldham, Stockport, Tameside & Glossop

If immediate danger to life call 999



Greater Manchester Resilience Hub

Health and care staff wellbeing service for rapid access to evidence-based mental health services and support:

 **Email: GM.help@nhs.net**

 **Call: 0333 009 5071**
(Mon – Thur 9am - 5pm
Fri - 9am -1pm)



Greater Manchester Primary Care Provider Board Health and Wellbeing Webpage

 A range of materials and resources including a GM Wellbeing Podcast series can be accessed via this webpage.

An online hub for all the information you need about taking care of yourself.



Greater Manchester Wellbeing Engagement Quiz

 This quiz has been designed to help you to improve your practical, physical and psychological wellbeing.

At the end you will see a bespoke result **for you** with suggested links and resources to help improve your wellbeing.



Greater Manchester Wellbeing Toolkit

 An interactive toolkit to help support our health and care workforce to be at their best.

It provides advice on keeping well physically, practically and psychologically, as well as top tips on how you can support yourself, your team and other people around you.



Greater Manchester Moving Active Workplace Toolkit

 Physical activity plays a vital role in supporting mental health, musculoskeletal conditions, sleep and stress

Build movement into the working day to help create happier, healthier workplaces, increase productivity and reduce absenteeism



Financial Wellbeing and Cost of Living Support

The Money Helper Service can provide you with free independent support to help manage your finances.

 **Call: 0800 448 0826**
(Mon – Fri 8am – 6pm)

 **WhatsApp: +44 7701 342 744**



Access to Wellbeing Apps

 NHS staff have free access to the app Unmind.

 Sign up using your NHS email. If you require support accessing these apps, ask your local IT helpdesk or email ournhspeople.hwb@nhs.net



 **Unmind**