

# THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN'S GUIDE TO DE-ESCALATION

The school library is a shared space for every learner, including those having hard days. De-escalation strategies help students regulate emotions, preserve relationships, and maintain a safe learning environment.

## **Regulate Yourself First**

Remember that calmness is often contagious. Students often mirror adult energy, so

- Lower your voice instead of raising it
- Slow your speech and movements
- Keep facial expressions calm and neutral
- Pause before responding

## **Prioritize Connection Before Correction**

Avoid arguing or demanding immediate compliance in the heat of the moment. A student in distress often needs regulation before redirection, so try saying:

- “I can see something feels hard right now.”
- “Help me understand what’s going on.”
- “Let’s figure this out together.”

## **Offer Choices, Not Ultimatums**

Keep choices simple and realistic. Choice gives students a sense of control. Examples of choices you can give students include:

- “Would you like to take a quick break or stay here quietly?”
- “You can finish this now or come back in a few minutes.”
- “Would you rather talk here or step into the hallway?”

## **Protect Dignity**

Avoid sarcasm, embarrassment, or power struggles. Public correction can quickly escalate emotions.

**Instead of:** correcting in front of peers

**Try:** a quiet, private conversation when possible

## **Notice Early Signs of Escalation**

A quick check-in can make a big difference. Intervening early can prevent bigger disruptions.

Look for:

- withdrawal or shutting down
- raised voices or frustration
- pacing, restlessness, or agitation
- conflict with peers

## **Know When to Pause**

Not every situation can be solved immediately. Students process better when emotions settle.

Sometimes the best response is:

- providing space
- involving support staff
- revisiting the conversation later

## **A School Library Reminder**

The library serves students across ages, experiences, and emotional needs. Consistent expectations matter, but so do empathy, patience, and relationship-building.

**A calm adult can help create a calm space!**