

# Stages of Violence

By Stephen P. Hinds  
Principal at Hindsight

## Stage One

Characterized as Perceiving Injustices and Actively Expressing Opposition

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS	APPROPRIATE RESPONSES OR INTERVENTIONS	
	THINGS TO SAY	THINGS TO DO
<p>Argues at times with customers, employees and management</p> <p>Distorts issues and passes those distortions to others in the form of gossip or rumors</p> <p>Does not listen well</p> <p>Fatalistic - "Who cares"</p> <p>Finds fault with the actions of others</p> <p>Interrupts</p> <p>Occasional inappropriate language</p> <p>Places responsibility for problems on everyone else</p> <p>Rigid in approach to situations and/or people</p> <p>Signs of depression</p> <p>Takes criticism poorly</p> <p>Withdraws</p>	<p>Encourage the person to talk</p> <p>Give them factual information</p> <p>Use of please and thank you</p> <p>Use the word "relax"</p>	<p>Find out person's name and use it in addressing them</p> <p>Ask clarifying questions</p> <p>Listen to their concerns patiently</p> <p>Be an empathetic listener</p> <p>Be non-judgmental</p> <p>Report concerns to supervisor</p> <p>Ask for their ideas on solutions</p> <p>Smile</p> <p>Remove other people or things if they are reacting to them</p>
	<b>INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSES</b>	
	<p>Do not try to minimize the situation make it seem less serious or less important than it is to the individual</p> <p>Do not make statements which discount the situation</p> <p>Avoid saying:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Don't worry about it"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"It's no big deal"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Get over it"</p>	

## Stage Two

Characterized as Difficult and Having a Victim Mentality Something is wrong with everything

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS	APPROPRIATE RESPONSES OR INTERVENTIONS	
	THINGS TO SAY	THINGS TO DO
Argues with co-workers constantly	Accept criticism in a neutral way	Ask probing questions
Belligerent towards employees and others	When a complaint may have merit, use statements like "You are possibly right", or "It may be my fault"	Create "yes" momentum
Bends, changes or ignores company procedures to "get the job done"		Draw them back into facts
Bullying or harassing behavior		Frame the context - set limits
Increasingly complains of heightened stress at work and about poor working conditions	If the criticism doesn't seem justified, ask clarifying questions	Make a sincere attempt to clarify concerns
Continual excuses and blames others	Acknowledge the person's feelings	Project calmness
Has difficulty controlling temper	Indicate that you can see that they are upset	Relocate to a quiet location
Perceived injustices in the workplace result in disgruntled attitude	Move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently	Reward desired performance
Feels powerless or hopeless sense of defeat	Remind the person of company policies	Reassure them as appropriate
Impatient	Use statements like "I can see how you would feel that way"	Talk with your supervisor about your concern for the individual
Increasing use of inappropriate language		Use neutral body language – no change or visible response when something negative is said
Demonstrates an overreaction to stimuli		Use a teamwork approach
	<b>INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSES</b>	
Feels persecuted	Do not criticize or act impatiently toward the agitated individual	
Appears distracted	Do not take sides or agree with distortions	
Makes inappropriate sexual comments	Do not argue with the individual	
Tries to bait you		
Refuses to cooperate with those in authority and to obey policies and procedures		
Sees self as victimized by the department and the company (them against me)		
Unsure of next course of action		
Wants to get back power		

## Stage Three

Characterized as Volatile and Initiating a Resolution

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS	APPROPRIATE RESPONSES OR INTERVENTIONS	
	THINGS TO SAY	THINGS TO DO
Abusive	Ask for recommendations	Allow the person to vent
Circular thought pattern	Repeat back to the individual what you feel is being requested of you	Avoid an audience Remove others away from the person
Derogatory	Ask for small, specific favors such as asking the person to move to a quieter area	Be aware of the environment and discretely plan for ways to disengage from the individual
Direct or veiled threats of harm	Do not argue with comments made	Call for assistance if possible
Explosive angry outbursts without provocation	Do not offer solutions; discuss options	Contact a supervisor or security immediately
Expressions of a plan to hurt self or others	Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists	Maintain a relaxed posture yet keep yourself focused on the individual
Fast or rapid eye movement; avoiding eye contact	Calmly describe the consequences of any violent behaviors. State options	Position yourself at a right angle to the individual rather than directly in front of them
Getting in someone's face over an issue	Use non-directive questions, repeating back what you believe the person is saying	Remain calm
Hostile toward customers or coworkers	Lower your voice and talk at a smooth, calm pace	Set and enforce appropriate ground rules/boundaries
Inappropriate reactions to situations		Use delaying tactics, to give the person time to calm down For example, offer them a cup of water
Loss of control		Use smoothing or downplaying hand motions
Obscene language and gestures		
Occasional rapid breathing when upset		
Poor impulse control - Temper control difficulties		
Pounding fists, pointing fingers		
Rash or impulsive behavior out of proportion to stimuli		
Sabotages equipment and steals property for revenge		
Shouting or screaming at people		
Talks about wishes to hurt co-workers, and/or management		
Violence towards inanimate objects		
	<b>INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSES</b>	
	Avoid physical contact	
	Do not point fingers	
	Do not have long periods of fixed eye contact	
	Do not try to bargain with a threatening individual	
	Do not challenge, threaten or dare the individual	
	Do not intrude into the person's personal space	
	Do not make false statements to the individual	
	Do not make promises you cannot keep	
	Never belittle the individual or make them feel foolish	

## Stage Four

Characterized as Violent and Taking Action

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS	APPROPRIATE RESPONSES OR INTERVENTIONS	
	THINGS TO SAY	THINGS TO DO
Acts of physical harm or property damage	Speak slowly, quietly and confidently	Remain calm
Breathing rapidly	Ask the individual if it would be appropriate for them to lower their voice	Avoid direct eye to eye contact
Destruction of property		Disengage and evacuate
Direct threats	Avoid any type of confrontational language	Give yourself an escape route
Physical actions or threats which appear imminent		Trust your instincts If the individual's actions are frightening to you, escape
Physical altercations - assaulting others, slapping, hitting		Secure your own safety first
Recurrent physical fights		Attempt to isolate the person if it can be done safely
Recurrent suicidal threats		Alert a supervisor or other employee Contact security immediately
Sabotage		Call 911 Cooperate with law enforcement
Stalking		
Throwing objects		
Verbally assaultive		
Very focused eye contact; glaring		
	<b>Inappropriate Responses</b>	
	Do not allow yourself to become trapped without an escape route	
	Do not try to remove weapons from the individual	
	Do not try to overpower the individual	
	Do not meet with the individual alone	