



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

S.L.O.W.

Conflict De-Escalation Model

Taking care of our emotional and physical safety.

As staff, much of our time is spent preparing for positive and informative conversations with visitors, but preparing ourselves for difficult and emotional conversations is just as valuable. Sometimes when confronted by a visitor who is angry or upset, it can feel like everything is happening all at once. If we could SLOW things down and understand what is happening, we may be able to de-escalate a tense conversation or encounter. Note: SLOW is not intended to be followed in sequence, but rather used as appropriate to the situation.

STAY COOL

Don't take it personally. It is hard to do, but allowing a visitor's words or actions to get under your skin will only escalate the situation. When people are feeling hurt, vulnerable, ignored, or unsafe, emotions tend to dictate their behavior. Keep a composed tone of voice and body language.

LISTEN

When a visitor is upset, often hearing them out will help. Allow them to express what is upsetting them. To show that you are listening, try restating, reflecting, or summarizing what you have heard. When someone feels like they are being listened to, they feel valued and important. This can often lead to a calmer conversation.

OFFER VALIDATION

We've all been there. Upset, angry, or frustrated with a situation or request that is beyond our control. Sometimes we just want someone to tell us that the way we are feeling is valid. You don't have to agree with a visitor's beliefs, values or interpretation of a situation, but a simple, "that sounds frustrating" goes a long way. A part of offering validation is to acknowledge that what is happening needs to stop. Set limits, make requests and be firm.

WALK AWAY

Sometimes, unfortunately, nothing you can do or say will calm a situation. Know when to leave, and trust your pre-planning with law enforcement colleagues. Pay attention to body language, reactions from others nearby, and other factors that point to the need to walk away. Don't let anyone else take control of you or your emotions. If the interaction is turning into an unsafe situation, walk away and get some help. A supervisor or law enforcement should step in at that point.