

When Behaviour Starts to Escalate: What To Notice and What To Do First

👉 *A practical frontline guide to recognising early changes
and responding safely in the moment*



The Resilience Echo

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Something has shifted.

The tone changes.

The pacing starts.

Responses become shorter.

You're not in crisis – but it's building.



What to look for

- Changes in tone or volume
- Pacing, fidgeting, or restlessness
- Withdrawal or shutting down
- Repeated questioning
- Refusing support that was previously accepted
- Increased agitation or frustration
- Fixed thinking or “all or nothing” language
- Sudden changes in facial expression or body posture



👉 If you notice 2–3 of these signs, act early

YOUR FIRST RESPONSE

Start here – before explaining, correcting, or directing.

- Slow your voice
- Slow your pace
- Reduce demands
- Give one clear instruction
- Acknowledge emotion first
- Create space quietly



LANGUAGE THAT HELPS

Helpful phrases » 🖱️ **Use:** ✓

- I can see this is hard right now
- Let's slow this down
- You have two options
- I'm here to help
- We can take a short break
- Help me to understand what you need

Phrases to avoid » 🖱️ **Avoid:** ✗

- Calm down
- Stop it
- You need to listen
- I've already told you
- There's nothing to be upset about
- If you don't stop, then...

Short sentences work better under stress

WHEN TO ESCALATE SUPPORT



Escalate support when:

- Safety is uncertain
- Behaviour continues to escalate
- You feel out of depth
- Additional staff or clinical support is needed
- The situation may require emergency services

AFTER THE INCIDENT: DOCUMENT



What to record after the incident

- What changed first
- What you noticed
- What you said and did
- What helped or did not help
- Whether anyone was injured or at risk
- What follow-up is needed

WANT TO GO DEEPER?



**This is one situation.

The same pattern shows up again and again.**

This guide covers what to do in the moment.

The next step is understanding patterns—and responding consistently.

👉 Where this leads next:

- The Behaviour Chain Principle » understand the pattern
www.theresiliencecho.com/the-behaviour-chain-principle
- Frontline Safety Training Workbook » apply it in real situations
www.theresiliencecho.com/frontline-safety-training-workbook

