

Verbal and Non-Verbal Conflict De-escalation

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Paris-based staff participated in a scenario-based training on October, 20, 2015.

November 15, 2015 the Bataclan was attacked.

“Our crisis-action training with Phillip Van Saun, organized by Ines, proved very useful, as Melissa and I immediately teamed up to do outreach with the UC (ACCENT) students.

The scenario we had worked on during that training session was similar to this real-life one.

That was helpful (if eerie) as we relied on what we had just rehearsed when making decisions during this tragic night.

Having role-played this ***allowed us to keep a cool head*** as we remembered the importance of teaming up, delegating, bringing in relief pitchers, and keeping lines of communication open. (In this case, the phone and the internet.)”

Make It Stick

I will incorporate into this workshop lessons from recent and emerging research on learning theory (Brown, P, Roediger, H, McDaniel, M. (2014) *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, e.g.:

- Learning is deeper and more durable when it's effortful.
- The popular notion that you learn better with your preferred *learning style* is not supported by empirical research .
- If you practice elaboration (e.g. giving new material meaning by expressing it in your own words) the stronger your grasp of the new learning will be.

3 Topics – ‘How To’

- 1. understand and better deal with the impact of stress on their ability to effectively deal with conflict.**
- 2. Put into practice stress inoculation techniques.**
- 3. use scenarios to understand and respond to conflict and confrontation.**

P T C

PREACHING TO THE CHOIR

Observation #1

Stress Makes Us Stupid

System 1



Fast



Unconscious



Automatic



Everyday
Decisions



Error prone

System 2



Slow



Conscious



Effortful



Complex
Decisions



Reliable

Predictable Behaviors

- Focus more on negative aspects than on the positive
 - Different concerns and perceptions of threat than of experts
 - Difficulty hearing, understanding, and remembering information
 - Even if information relayed is understood and remembered, fear/concern can generate distrust or suspicion
-

Predictable Behaviors of Decision-makers

“...being pulled back into making tactical decisions and directly overseeing basic operations.”

“...(not) prepared *in advance* through training, exercises, and actual experience to assume responsibility.”

“...unduly exposed to the enormous flow of raw information, lest their attention be diverted from strategic issues and problems.”

- WHY WAS BOSTON STRONG? LESSONS FROM THE BOSTON MARATHON BOMBING. Harvard Kennedy School & Harvard Business School. 2014.

Know the Basics

Know the reality of our assumptions

- Prepare for what will happen, not what should happen



Observation #1

Stress Makes Us Stupid

Stress Inoculation Training

Overview of the Features and Value of Stress Inoculation Training

- Stress tolerance is enhanced by changing an individual's beliefs about their performance in stressful situations and ability to deal with distress by teaching, rehearsing and applying proven methods to prepare for and respond to stressful situations.
- Promotes hope, self-confidence, self-control and personal responsibility.

Stress Inoculation Training & Self-Awareness

Regulating the emotional responses to the problem that causes the stress (e.g., through combat breathing, executing a pre-planned response, smooth is fast purpose of movement)

Stress Inoculation Training & Self-Awareness

An individual is exposed to and learns to cope with stress (via productive thoughts, mental images, and self-statements) in increasing amounts, thereby enhancing his or her immunity to stress.

4 Steps to Stress Inoculation Training

1. Preparing for the stressor (e.g., “It’s going to be rough; keep your cool”)
2. Controlling and handling the stressor (e.g., “Keep your cool since he’s losing his cool”)
3. Coping with feelings of being overwhelmed (e.g., “Keep focused; what do you have to do next?”)
4. Evaluating coping efforts (e.g., “You handled yourself well”)

3 Phases of Stress Inoculation Training

Stress Inoculation Training

1: Education	Assist individuals in gaining a better understanding of the nature and effects of stress on performance
2: Rehearsal	Skill acquisition and rehearsal: decrease anxiety and increase coping skills
3. Application	Apply skills to increasingly stressful conditions that approximate real-world stressors

Saunders et al, 1996

Observation #2

Decision making skills are developed through practice

'Reflective' to 'Reflexive'

'Training for emergencies is all about teaching the basal ganglia and other brain structures to learn automatic reactions needed to survive.' - Arnsten, Mazure & Sinha. Scientific American. April, 2012



- **Intuitive Decision Making (reactive)**
Pattern recognition based on previous experience
- **Analytical Decision Making (planned)**
Calculated selection of alternatives

Decision Making Tools

Fluency heuristic

If one alternative is recognized faster than another, infer that it has the higher value on the criterion.

Schooler & Hertwig,
2005

Take-the-best

To infer which of two alternatives has the higher value: (a) search through cues in order of v (b) stop.

Gigerenzer and
Goldstein, 1996

Premortem

In a premortem, you imagine a future failure and then explain the cause. Also called prospective hindsight, it helps you identify potential problems that ordinary foresight won't bring to mind.



Close and evacuate or stay?

One alternative is recognized faster than another, infer that it has the higher value.

Which of two alternatives has the higher value – Stay or leave?

News Cover Story

DISPATCHES
THEY DON'T TEACH THIS IN B-SCHOOL

WHEN THE NATURAL RHYTHMS of our lives are brutally disrupted, we respond with fear, anger, calm, sometimes violence, and often with courage. Katrina was that kind of upheaval. It obliterated towns, submerged a great city, exposed a nation's frailties and prejudices, and uprooted thousands. It also brought forth untold instances of duty and determination. Here are the stories of two men and their colleagues, Gulf Coast residents who, when their world was torn apart one Monday, deftly managed their way through the storm.

'VERTICAL EVACUATION' AT THE HILTON

FRED SAWYERS, 44, THOUGHT HE WAS in for just another routine week as manager of the Hilton New Orleans Riverside. When news came that a hurricane might pass nearby, he figured the giant 1,616-room inn would be a safe haven in a short storm for staffers and their families, as well as tourists and locals who wanted to find high ground. He says old Hilton hands even have a term for accommodating storm refugees in its 29-story tower: "vertical evacuation." Instead, the Stanford University graduate who once taught English in Japan and worked in hotels on the West Coast before moving to New Orleans two years ago, survived the most harrowing week of his life.

FRIDAY, AUG. 26
A COLLEAGUE, David Blitch, hands Sawyers a weather report, saying "Katrina is aiming right for us."

With the general manager on vacation, Sawyers tells the staff to offer all corners half-price rates; the \$95-a-night fee goes mostly uncollected.

SATURDAY, AUG. 27
VERY QUICKLY, HALF the hotel's rooms are booked up, and many are packed with extra family members. An additional 200 reservations come in. Meanwhile, about 450 employees and their families have taken cots into the health club. By nightfall, Sawyers counts some 4,500 occupants, plus various pets. He cuts off more reservations: "I don't want to overtax our resources."

SUNDAY, AUG. 28
AFTER SPENDING the night at home in a nearby neighborhood, Sawyers and his

wife, Jayme, gather up their valuables and three cats and prepare to head back to the hotel. But he's uneasy about his wife staying. "Baby, I don't want you to come," he tells her. "I don't have a good feeling about this. I think you should evacuate." She leaves for Little Rock, Ark.

MONDAY, AUG. 29
BY 5 A.M., THE RAIN is thundering down, the wind is howling, and the sky is growing dark. On an open-air third level of the hotel, a cabana rips loose from its moorings, shattering a glass door and exposing an area that's being used to serve meals. "Now that's compromised," Sawyers says. Water covers the floor, and the wind roars.

As the storm intensifies, the aluminum roof of the health club starts peeling back. The water pours in. Employees with flashlights guide the 450 people there through darkened hallways and stairwells to the first-floor grand ballroom.

Returning to the third floor, where people are grabbing breakfast, Sawyers shouts at guests to stand clear of the windows, where some are watching the storm rage. Only a few rooms have their

PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES



46 | BusinessWeek | September 19, 2005

Evacuate [or follow MTA guidance] and stay?

- One alternative is recognized faster than another, infer that it has the higher value.
- Which of two alternatives has the higher value – Stay or leave?
- 2700 employees survive.
- Rick Rescorla
Director of Security at Morgan Stanley WTC 9/11

Situational Awareness Training on Violence Risk Training

There is no system or process which predicts and prevents violence, but...

...threat scenarios can be managed

Violence is complex, but comprehensible

**How you understand a problem effects
how you try to fix it**

Randy Borum, Psy.D., 1999

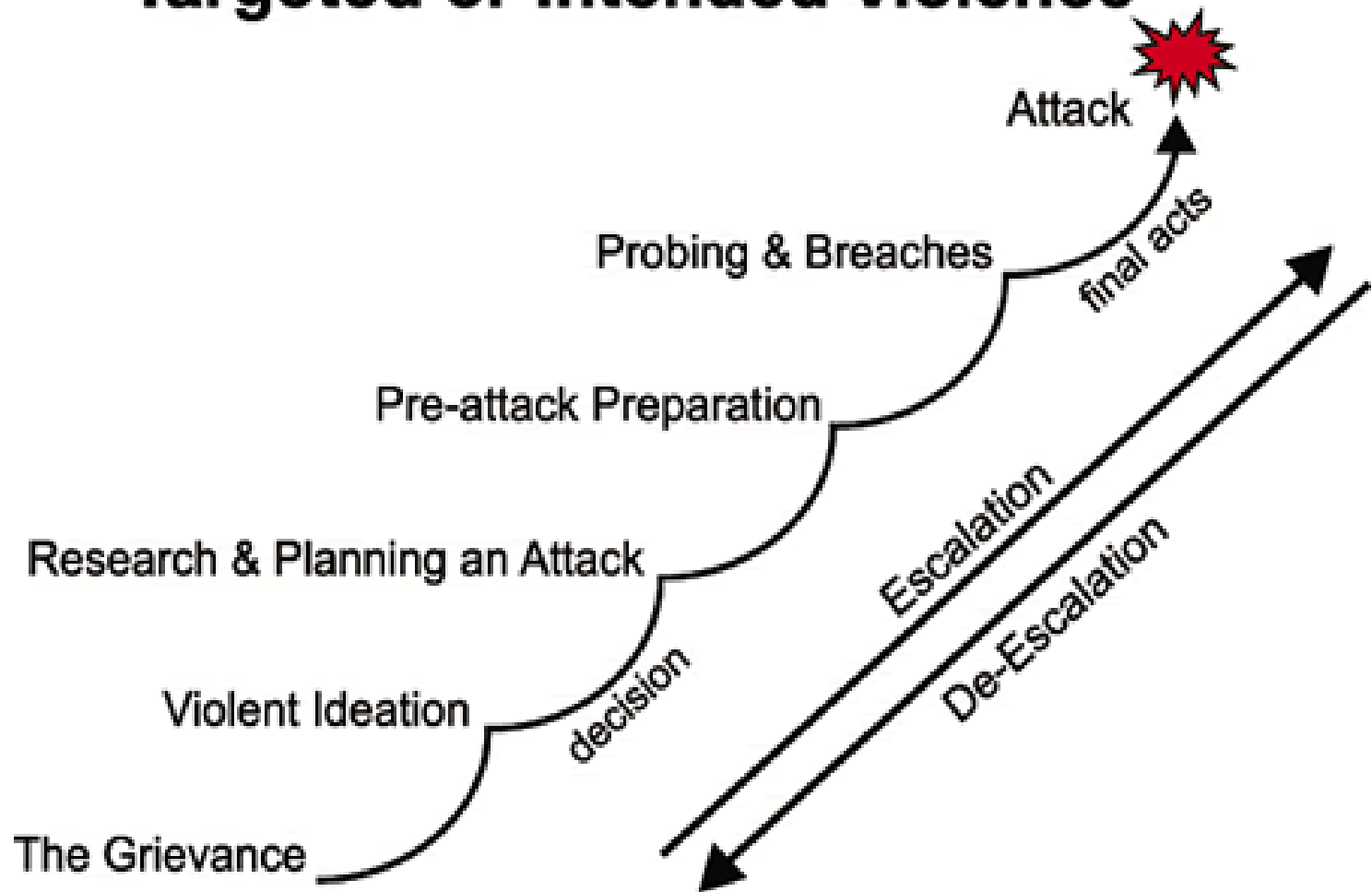
Aggression as Response to Threat

- Reaction and response that has evolved to enable people to deal with threats
- Develops into a behavioral pattern designed to warn outside aggressors to stop their threatening behavior
- Predominant behavioral, cognitive, affective, and physiological experience when a person makes the conscious choice to take action to stop threatening behavior of an outside force

Pre-Attack Behavioral Patterns

- Attackers don't just “snap”
- Attackers usually plan for days and months before committing their crime
- Attackers don't usually threaten their targets directly prior to the act
- Cohorts have concerns beforehand about a threat
- There is often prior communication (letter, poem, email) that implicitly or explicitly reveals the possibility of attack
- Attackers have often felt bullied or persecuted
- Attackers often experience loss, failure, humiliation shortly before attack

Pathway to Workplace Targeted or Intended Violence



Adapted with permission from F.S. Calhoun and S.W. Weston (2003). *Contemporary Threat Management: A Practical Guide for Identifying, Assessing and Managing Individuals of Violent Intent*.

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Issues

- Aberrant behavior
- Violence toward self/others
- Substance use: Alcohol, prescription drug abuse
- Mental Illness: Bipolar disorders, Depressive disorders, Psychotic episodes, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (returning veterans), Asperger's syndrome

Assessing Threats is Dynamic

- Some risk factors are static
 - e.g., **history of violence, a divorce last year**
- Some risk factors are dynamic, in play
 - e.g., **anger, access to weapons, substance use**
- Some risk factors we can control/influence
 - e.g., **how an employee is separated from the organization (potential triggering event)**

Assessment data unfold as we intervene and the subject reacts

Imminent Threat

“Imminent threat” to harm self or others is a matter of judgment.

- Intent
- Specific plan to follow in near future
- Access to the means

Imminent threat assessment weighs:

- Risk factors
- Protective factors
- Collateral information

Verbal De-Escalation Techniques

For Defusing or Talking Down an Explosive Situation

When a potentially violent situation threatens to erupt on the spot and no weapon is present, verbal de-escalation is appropriate

Verbal De-Escalation Techniques

- Reasoning with an enraged person is not possible.
- First and only objective in de-escalation: To reduce the level of arousal so discussion becomes possible
- De-escalation techniques are abnormal:
 - Fight, flight or freeze when scared is normal.
 - In de-escalation, we cannot do these
 - We must appear centered and calm even when we are frightened
 - These techniques must be practiced before you need them so they can become "second nature."

De-Escalation Techniques: The Physical Stance

- Never turn your back for any reason
- Always be at the same eye level. Encourage the person to be seated. If person remains standing, you stand up also
- Allow extra physical space between you – about four times your usual distance
- Do not stand full front to the person. Stand at an angle so you can sidestep away if needed
- Do not point or shake your finger
- Do not touch – even if some touching is generally culturally appropriate and usual in your setting. *Cognitive dysfunction in agitated people allow for easy misinterpretation of physical contact as hostile or threatening*
- Keep hands out of your pockets, up & available to protect yourself
- Do not argue or try to convince, give choices; i.e. empower
- Don't be defensive or judgmental
- Distract (e.g. “*Would you like a glass of water?*”)
- Time out/Break contact (e.g. “*I’ll be right back*”)

Things Not Advised – Don't...

- Raise your voice
- Tell the person to “*Calm down*” “*Get control of yourself*”
- Lower your guard – expect the situation could get worse
- Block the exit

Elements of a Potentially Violent Encounter

A potential **TRIGGER** to violence

A **TARGET**

A **WEAPON**

Level of stress or motivation -
AROUSAL

If Attacked

- Yell for help
- Defend yourself
- Use objects to strike – phone, lamp, chair, etc.
- Knee to groin, fingers to eyes
- Most fights go to the ground
- Get away/hide

Best Practice: Scenario-based Behavior of Concern and Violence Risk Gaming

Rehearse (game) possible response strategies to various scenarios

Adding Scenario Planning to your Toolkit

- Helps “penetrate the fog of uncertainty”
- Make sense of an otherwise chaotic future
- Teach managers how events can unfold, interact with each other and affect the organization
- Act as “change agents” in helping organizations understand how their structures and behaviors affect future outcomes

Scenarios are...

- What **could** happen, not what **will** happen.
 - A starting point for discussion.
 - Plausible hypotheses about the ways in which the forces external to us might evolve to impact us.
 - Stories which allow us to consider challenges and options, e.g.: What if X happens, what's our strategy? What if Y happens, what's our strategy? And,
 - How does current or intended strategy (positioning, business model, etc.) hold up in each scenario ?
 - Intended to focus on **options not actions**. Asks the question: “ what might we need to do?” not the questions: “ what will we do?” or “ how will we do it?”
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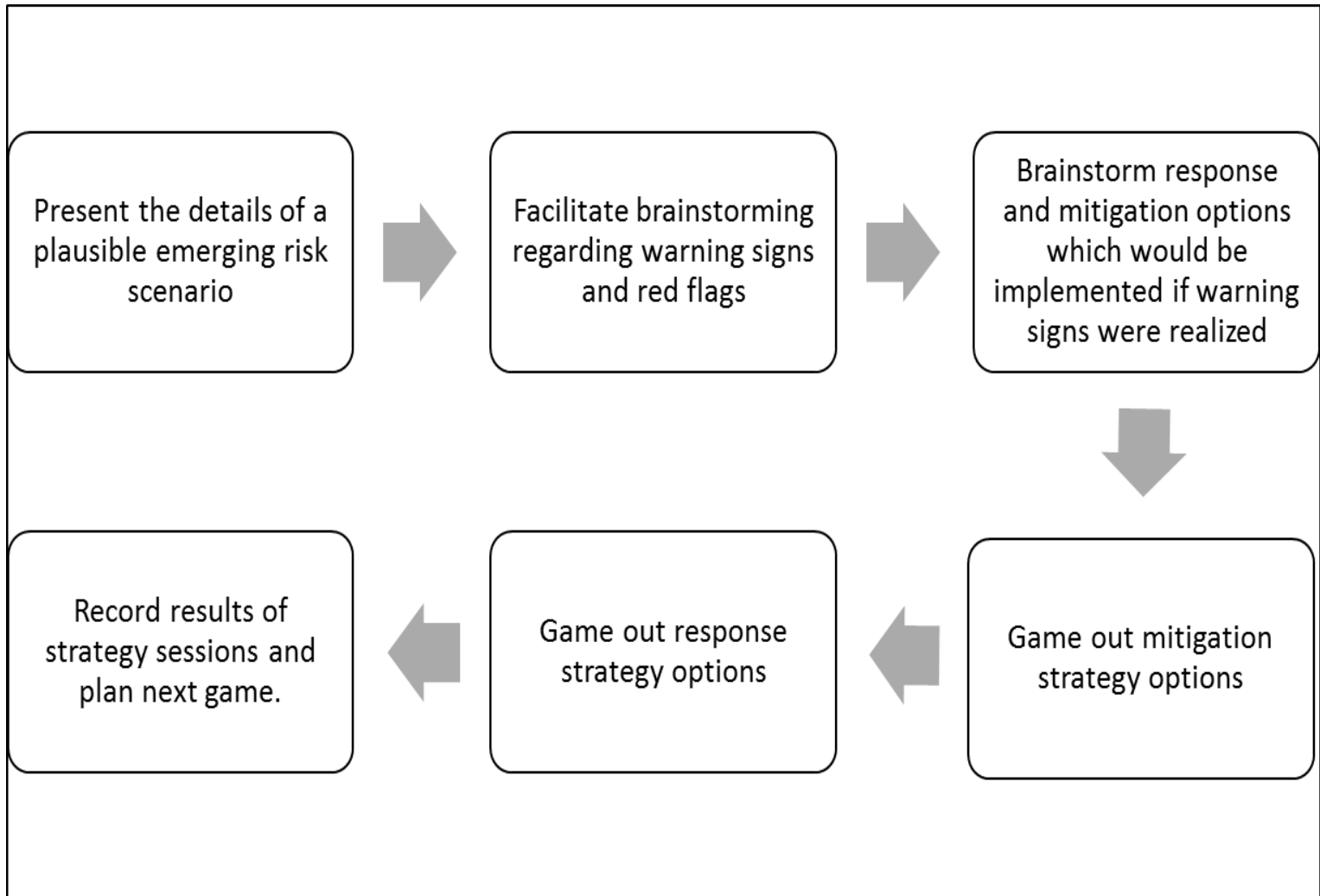
Why Scenarios?

- **Scenarios** = wind-tunnel articulating small set of what could happen TO you independently of your will
- **Options** = alternative possible courses of action
- **Strategy** = what YOU decide to do
- **Scenario planning** = manufacturing & using scenarios to generate/assess options and inform strategy

Crisis decision-making micro-games

- Present a problem – Problem Based Learning
- Facilitate the game
- Encourage brainstorming
- Identify and adjust for bias in the decision-cycle
- Guide the process to fast & frugal decision-making
- Close with plus/delta

Basic Game Flow



Scenario

Without an appointment or prior contact, a male enters the building requests to speak to a female employee who he names by her first and last name.

Response

- What are your options?
- What else might you need to do?

Scenario

The same male is raising his voice with a staff member who is attempting to assist him.

Response

- What would you do first?
- How would you reach the students under the circumstances?
- How would you account for their location and safety?
- What would you tell each student when you reach them regarding:
 - Where to go?
 - What to do?
 - How to communicate with you and your staff?
 - Whether to use public transportation in the short-term?

Next steps

- Conduct (at least) annual refresher training sessions
- Conduct violence risk awareness, assessment and response training

Chance favors the prepared mind

“When anyone asks me how I can best describe my nearly forty years at sea, I merely say, *uneventful...*”

*E.J. Smith, Captain
RMS Titanic*



Sources

- Gigerenzer and Goldstein
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- Kahneman, Daniel
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<http://slideplayer.com/slide/4215133/>