Trauma-Informed De-Escalation
A 17 year old male client has picked up a chair and is preparing to throw it through the window of an unoccupied room.

What do you do?
We've likely been (or been related to) an escalated patient.
In the last year, Escalated Behaviors....?

- Have increased
- Have decreased
- About the same
Why are escalated behaviors so problematic?
Touches on Childhood Experiences
Hurts us, patient, witnesses

Re-Traumatization

Mistrust of the Clinic
Highest Rates of Verbal Abuse

Receptionists
Stigma & Bias
Risk Factors for Aggressive Behaviors

- Chronic Pain or SUD
- Protective Empathy
- Not feeling heard
- Wound to dignity
The goal of de-escalation is always only emotional and physical safety for everyone.
Being Right
Ignoring
Disagreeing
Explaining Rules
Imposing Consequences
Self-assessment
My history

My personality

My skills
What do you know about yourself and your response to anger?
Prevention
• Eye contact
• Smile
• Greeting
• Names

• Humor
• Compliments
• Affirmations
• Offerings
patient A
Early & Middle Intervention
Helping people activate their pre-frontal cortex
Cutoff Gaze
Sighs
Pacing
Stare
Irritable Agreement
Repeating
Arguing
Shrugs
Raised voice
Humanize & Soothe

1. Use names
2. APOLOGIZE
3. Reflect feelings
4. Offer something
5. AGREE
Feelings Reflection: "You are angry" or 'Your super frustrated with us"

Normalize & Agree: "I'd feel the same way" or "Anyone would be frustrated" or 'I know our wait times are the worst"

Affirm & Offer: "I appreciate you sharing this with us" or "thank you so much for keeping your cool. It isn't always easy to do" or 'I brought you some water" or 'I'll text you when it's time'
Getting Comfortable with Inauthenticity
Agreement and Apology Practice

"The phone system is the worst. There is no point in even trying to get through!!"

"Every time I come here, it’s the same story, I'm sick of it!!"

"What the F-&#%@?!!! Masks don't protect you, or me!"