

De-Escalation Practice – Uncontrolled Environment

Setting: Paramedics transporting patient in an ambulance

Characters: Sarah, Patient (*she/her*), James, Paramedic (*he/him*), Lisa, Paramedic (*she/her*)

Sarah is a 68-year-old woman with dementia.

She is being transported by ambulance from a long-term care home to a specialist appointment at a hospital.

James and Lisa are the paramedics who will be transporting her.

The appointment is about a 30-minute drive away.

What is the first thing James and Lisa should do?

Text on Screen:

A: The first thing they should do is a Point of Care Risk Assessment

They do a point-of-care risk assessment.

About 10 minutes into the journey, Sarah begins to show signs of agitation.

She begins shifting and shouting, “Where are we going? I want to go home!”

How should Lisa speak to Sarah to calm her down?

Text on Screen:

A: Lisa speaks in a calm voice, with a friendly tone and at a suitable volume. She makes sure Sarah can see her speaking.

Lisa positions herself so Sarah can see her face and speaks in an empathetic and caring tone saying, “We are going for a visit to the doctor, Sarah. It will be a short visit, and we’re here to take care of you.”

Sarah shouts, “No, no, I don’t want to go. Take me back.”

Lisa does another quick point-of-care risk assessment, noticing that Sarah’s shouting means she is having an emotional crisis.

Lisa feels safe to continue.

How should Lisa de-escalate the situation?

Text on Screen:

A: Lisa should acknowledge and validate Sarah's feelings

Lisa acknowledges and validates Sarah's feelings by saying, "I can see you're worried, Sarah. It's okay to feel that way. We will be there in 15 minutes, and then afterwards we can drive you home."

Lisa then distracts Sarah by asking her questions about her childhood.

By the time they arrive at the hospital, Sarah is significantly calmer and more cooperative.