

Exercise #2

Don't Pull the Trigger

This exercise helps you recognize cues and “best” responses for stopping the assault cycle.

Violent conflict, whether between loved-ones, co-workers, strangers, street gangs, or nations, typically follows a pattern. First, the perpetrator perceives or creates a justification for violent communication; this is the “event-trigger.” An escalation phase then builds to the point where violence erupts.

This basic social dynamic, “the assault cycle” (Smith, 1983), is fairly consistent whether it occurs in our personal or our professional lives. The cycle can take place in just a few moments, over a period of days, weeks, or years. It is when we fail to recognize or properly respond to the cues that occur early in this cycle that we miss our best opportunity of averting a crisis.

Instructions: In small groups, discuss the following questions.

1. What types of challenging, threatening, or dangerous people visit your library?

2. How do you spot them?

3. What attitudes can you or your co-workers display that will nudge people *toward* their event trigger?

4. What attitudes can you or your co-workers display that will nudge people *away* their event trigger?