

# Surviving Verbal Conflict®

*“What Every Public Service Professional Needs to Know About Verbal De-escalation”*



## Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference

October 12th, 2016  
Pigeon Forge, TN

### WORKBOOK

Presented by:  
Chief Harry P. Dolan, (Ret.)

# Chief Harry P. Dolan, (Ret.)

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Harry P. Dolan is a 32-year police veteran who brings 25 years of public safety executive experience to his courses. He retired in October 2012 as Chief of Police of the Raleigh Police Department and is now the CEO of Dolan Consulting Group LLC, an organization of public policy experts who address issues related to public service provision organizations, such as law enforcement agencies, corrections agencies, fire departments, emergency medical services, hospitals and school districts.

Chief Dolan began his law enforcement career in 1980 as a deputy sheriff in Asheville, North Carolina, and served there until early 1982 when he joined the Raleigh Police Department. In 1987 he was appointed Chief of Police for the N.C. Department of Human Resources Police Department, located in Black Mountain. He served as Chief of Police in Lumberton, N.C. from 1992 until 1998 when he became Chief of the Police of the Grand Rapids, Michigan Police Department. Chief Dolan led the Grand Rapids Police Department for nearly 10 years before becoming Chief of the Raleigh Police Department in September 2007.

Chief Dolan has lectured throughout the United States and has trained thousands of public safety professionals in the fields of Service Excellence, Leadership & Management, Communications Skills and Community Policing. Past participants have consistently described Chief Dolan's presentations as career changing, characterized by his sense of humor and unique ability to maintain participants' interest throughout his training sessions.

Chief Dolan is a graduate of Western Carolina University and holds a Master's Degree in Organizational Leadership and Management from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

## Acknowledgements

*Surviving Verbal Conflict®* is the culmination of lessons learned during a 32-year career in public service and the mentorship provided to me by some very dedicated practitioners. Growing up in a family comprised of experienced "Coppers" prepared me well to survive and de-escalate the verbal encounters I would confront throughout my life. *Follow your calling and genuinely care for those who need you the most* was a steadfast lesson I tried to follow throughout my career.

I am deeply indebted to the late Dr. George Thompson for his personal guidance and mentorship. He improved the professional quality of life for countless public service professionals through his "Verbal Judo" training. His dedication to the cop on the beat resulted in hundreds of thousands of police officers being better equipped to de-escalate verbal abuse and serve honorably as "contact professionals".

# Presentation Outline

## I. Introduction – Verbal Conflict is A Fact of Life

- A. A Life Mastering Verbal Conflict – And Still Learning
- B. Don't Let Your Training Tape Run Out
  - 1. *Workplace Conflict* – Handling a tough case . . . cold!
- C. Goals – My Personal Message to You
  - 1. SVC Will Save Your Career and More - Overcome Hypervigilance
  - 2. Be Who You Admire
  - 3. How to Raise Morale at Home or Work

## II. How “Guardians of the Peace” Verbally De-escalate conflict – Winning Community Confidence and Trust

- A. *Warning Signs* – Notice when verbal conflict is about to change your career and your life and not in a good way (*Why can't people just act more like me?*)
- B. The descendants of Valley Forge want to know WHY
- C. Connect to the wisdom of Aristotle - Introducing Chief Dolan's *Rhetorical Continuum*
- D. “Audiences are made not found” - Aristotle

(Graphic – The Rhetorical Continuum: *How Aristotle would de-escalate people under the influence*)

- 1. Ethos
  - 2. Logos
  - 3. Pathos
- E. Rhetorical Continuum
    - Safety first* – Establish the ground rules
    - 1. Situation I - **Meet and Greet**: Ethos– Ethical appeal- Reason for encounter

- a) Credo – Yes, your appearance and what you say matters – You’re your credibility (*80% of people comply with our requests and directives when we act and look the part of the professional*)
  - (1) Manage your moment of truth
  - (2) From the receiver’s point of view- 93% Delivery Style
  - (3) Human Universals
  
- 2. Situation II - **Explain**: Logos: Logical appeal - Explain the Why
  - a) Commanders Intent - Raise organizational morale by telling people WHY and explaining the rationale for the decision, practice or policy.
  - b) One Voice
  
- 3. Situation III - **Options**: Pathos - Emotional appeal
  - a) What’s in this for me? - Greed motivates
  - b) Alternatives/Consequences
  
- 4. *Act / Closure –To comply or not comply the citizen’s decision*
  - a) Resolve the conflict
  - b) Exhaustion of the Rhetorical Continuum Strategies
    - (1) Confirm decision
  - c) Take action and/or disengage
  
- 5. *The Rhetorical Continuum* in action
  - a) Examples

### III. **The Nuts and Bolts of Surviving Verbal Conflict – What Works!**

- A. How the Veteran Communicator Survives Verbal Conflict – Read and Heed
  - 1. *Listen* – Just don’t wait to talk; gather intel
    - a) *Body language* – “Your body language shapes who you are.”- Amy Cuddy
    - b) Watch for verbal and non-verbal pre- attack indicators – The body can’t lie
      - (1) Beware your personal danger zone
      - (2) *Interpersonal Cues Predicting Violence*- Johnson, Ph.D.
    - c) Paraphrase – Reflect your understanding

2. *Focus* – You are *the* professional
  - a) Single Voice - One person talks at a time
  - b) Proceed with Caution – Agreeable, Challenging and Manipulative People
  - c) Take *time outs* – Use the Time Out sign to slow things down
3. Veteran communicators *Overriding Question*- “Just how important is all this?”
4. *Empathize* - See the world through the eyes of the other
  - a) Avoid being *Rope-A-Doped*
  - b) Replay – “Let me start over, that didn’t come out right”
  - c) Find common ground- “I see where you’re coming from, if you were a \_\_\_\_\_ what would you do if someone \_\_\_\_\_...”
  - d) Provide people options – And, there is always a better option- Alternatives and consequences
5. *Deflect* - Deflect verbal abuse – I hear what you’re saying “However...”
  - a) “Don’t debate when you are trying to de-escalate.”- Dolan
  - b) Don’t bring negative people home with you for dinner
  - c) Practice Chief Dolan’s *Verbal Contact and Cover Principle*
    - (1) Confront the bystander effect and group think
    - (2) Supervisor Coffee wants to talk you!

#### IV. More Tools for Your Tool Box

- A. Appreciate what the research reveals
- B. Understand “Legitimacy”
- C. Get off the “Hypervigilance Rollercoaster”
- D. *More with Twenty-four* – Employ Chief Dolan’s 24 Hour Rule
- E. *TUI* – Talking, texting or Typing under the influence of a substance, anger, rage or grief
- F. Apply the FAA sterile cockpit rule
- G. Manage the *crime scene social*
- H. Dust’em’ off - Sgt. Jim Dolan– Leave people understanding the reason for your actions
- I. Debrief - The importance of debriefings

#### V. You Too Can Survive Verbal Conflict

- A. Take-A-Ways
- B. Closing Comments

# Section 1

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## Verbal Conflict is A Fact of Life

### A Life Mastering Verbal Conflict- And Still Learning

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#### The Inevitability of Verbal Conflict

*“Conflicts are a normal part of life; how we deal with them can make a big difference. Often when people resolve conflicts, one person ends up a winner, and one loses out. This may solve the problem for the moment, but resentment and bad feelings can cause more problems later.*

*Another way to look at conflicts is to try to find a WIN-WIN solution, in which both sides can benefit. In this way, conflicts are turned into opportunities to grow and make things better. This approach is the cornerstone of "conflict resolution" - an important tool for bringing peace into our personal lives, our communities and to our world.”*

*– Robert Alan Silverstein*

#### Don't Let Your Training Tape Run Out

– Handling an unhappy citizen. . . cold!



**SVC – What It Is - “Live Long and Prosper”**  
*Simple enough - even a police chief can do it*

## **My Personal Message to You**

- SVC Will Save Your Career and More
- Assist you with Managing Hypervigilance
- Help you Become who you Admire

**Stop Bringing People Home with you for Dinner Who Verbally Abuse you at Work!**

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## **Want to Improve Morale at Home and Work?**

*Raise expectations and tell people why!*

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*“The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.”- Michelangelo*

## **Goals of “Surviving Verbal Conflict” Training**

- Provide public service professionals with expanded verbal de-escalation tools
- Enhance public service providers and community safety
- Improve relationships between the service provider and the community
- Decrease complaints
- Honor the proud tradition of “Guardians of the Peace”

## **How to Get the Most out of This Course?**

Getting to the Carnegie Hall of Communication- Practice, Practice, Practice

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# Section 2

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## How “Guardians of the Peace” Verbally De-escalate conflict – Winning Community Confidence and Trust

### **Warning Signs**

Notice when verbal conflict is about to change your career and your life and not in a good way

- “Self-Referential Language” (*Resume’ recital*) taking words personally as a challenge to one’s position and experience
- Facial expressions/body language
- “You talkin’ to me \_\_\_\_\_?”
- “I don’t get paid to take this \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “I don’t have time for this \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “\_\_\_\_\_ See-Saw”
- “Do you want to go to jail \_\_\_\_\_?”

### **Don't Take Anything Personally**

*“Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.”*

*- Miguel Ruiz*

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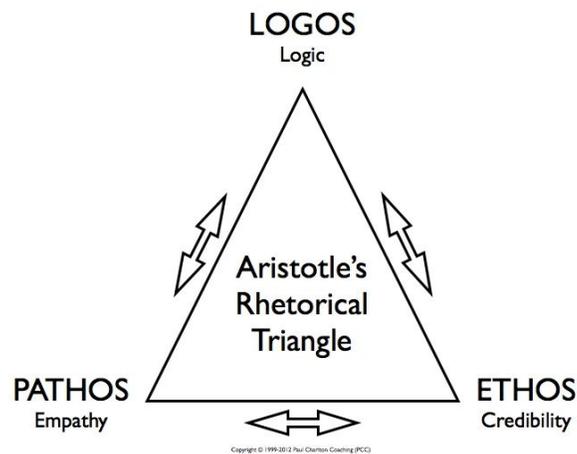
## The descendants of Valley Forge want to know WHY

Commanders' Intent & lessons learned from Friedrich "Baron" Von Steuben and the significance of WHY!

*'The genius of this nation is not in the least to be compared with that of the Prussians, Austrians, or French. You say to your [European] soldier, "Do this," and he doeth it, but I am obliged to say, "This is the reason why you ought to do that," and he does it.'*

- Friedrich "Baron" Von Steuben

## Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle



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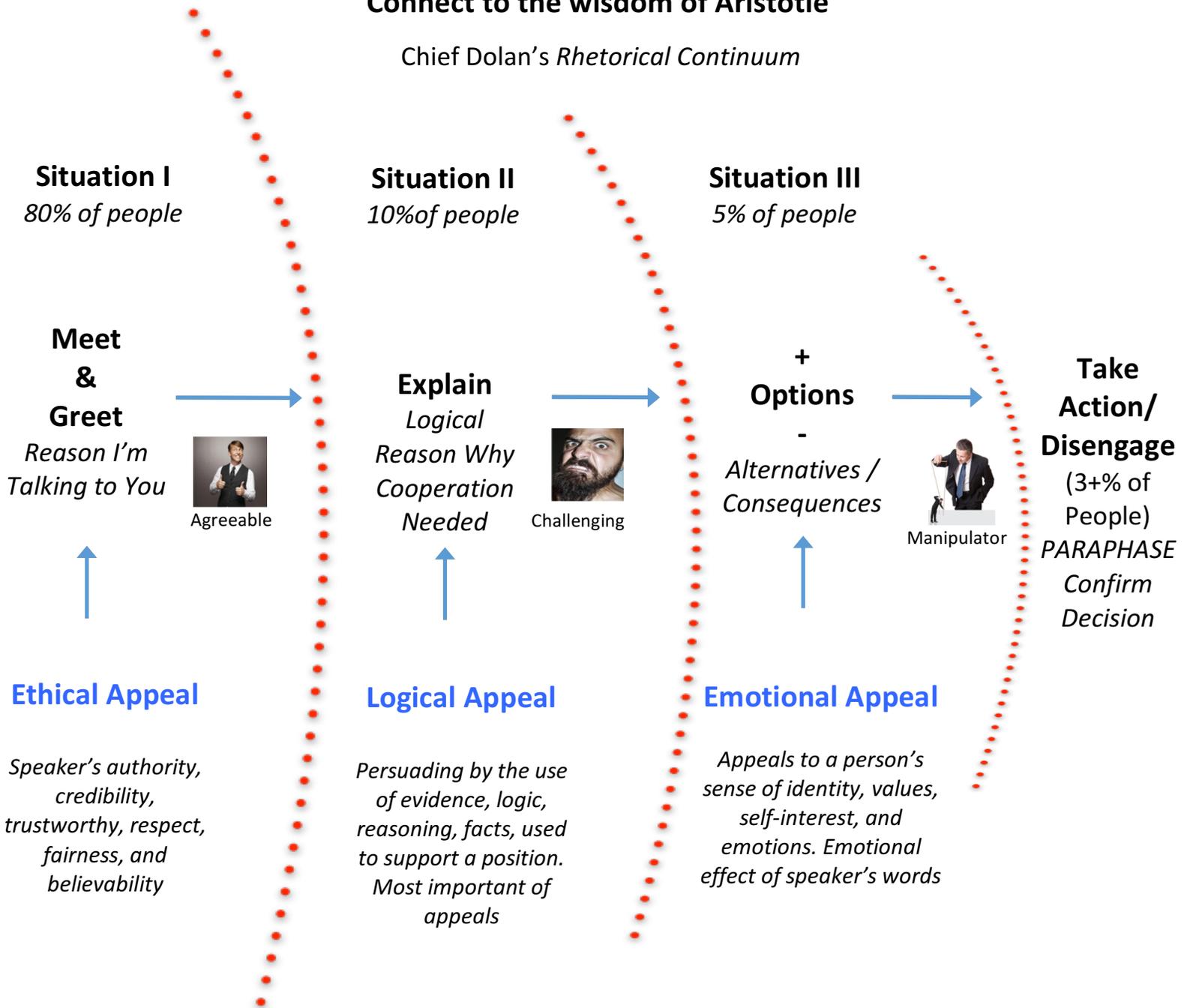
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# Connect to the wisdom of Aristotle

Chief Dolan's *Rhetorical Continuum*



**Ethical Appeal**

Speaker's authority, credibility, trustworthy, respect, fairness, and believability

**Logical Appeal**

Persuading by the use of evidence, logic, reasoning, facts, used to support a position. Most important of appeals

**Emotional Appeal**

Appeals to a person's sense of identity, values, self-interest, and emotions. Emotional effect of speaker's words

## Adapt to your audience

"Audiences are made, not found"

- Aristotle

## The Rhetorical Continuum

*Safety first* – Establish the ground rules

*Public Service Provider & Citizen Safety FIRST!*

*Whenever your SAFETY, or the safety of another person is compromised, you need to take action which include disengaging and/or calling for assistance.*

### Situation I - Meet and Greet: Ethos – Ethical appeal- Reason for encounter

Credo (credibility) – Yes, your appearance and what you say matters – You’re your credibility

- Does What You Wear at Work Matter?<sup>1</sup>

*“Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.”*

– Mark Twain<sup>2</sup>

- Makes a **STATEMENT**
- A **MENTAL SHORTCUT** statement
- We all “ **JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER**”
- We all like to be **RIGHT**
- **NANO SECOND** statement

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<sup>1</sup> Plecas, D. (2009). *Police Uniform Appearance*. Speech presented at the Raleigh Police Leadership Institute, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>2</sup> Twain, M. (1998). *The Wit and Wisdom of Mark Train: A Book of Quotations*. Mineola, NY: Dover.

## Manage your moment of truth- When a citizen first encounters our service

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### From The Receiver's Point Of View<sup>3</sup>

Content = 7-10 %

Voice = 33-40 %

O.N.V. = 50-60 %

(Other Non-Verbals)

**93% = Delivery Style**

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## Human Universals- What we all have in common as opposed to how we are different

“Human universals--of which hundreds have been identified--consist of those features of culture, society, language, behavior, and mind that, so far as the record has been examined, are found among all peoples known to ethnography and history.”

“A few examples of human universals, those in the cultural realm include myths, legends, body adornment, daily routines, rules, concepts of luck and precedent, and the use and production of tools; in language there are grammar, phonemes, polysemy, metonymy, antonyms, and an inverse ratio between the frequency of use and the length of words; in the social realm there are a division of labor, social groups (including thinking of them as entities or agents), age grading, the family, kinship systems, ethnocentrism, play, exchange, cooperation, and reciprocity; in the behavioral realm there are aggression, gestures, gossip, and facial expressions; mentally there are emotions, dichotomous thinking, wariness around or fear of snakes, empathy, and psychological defense mechanisms.”

- Donald E. Brown

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<sup>3</sup> Mehrabian, A. (1981). *Silent Messages: implicit communication of emotions and attitudes*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

## George Thompson's 5 Universal Truths

According to Dr. George Thompson, instead of focusing on how people are different, we should focus on how people are the same.<sup>4</sup>

1. All people want to be treated with **DIGNITY** and **RESPECT**.
2. All people want to be **ASKED** rather than being **TOLD** to do something.
3. All people want to be told **WHY** they are being asked to do something.
4. All people want to be to be given **OPTIONS** rather than **THREATS**.
5. All people want a **SECOND CHANCE**.

### Chief Dolan's *Language of The Street Fallacy*- Street language vs. Professional Language

- Avoid inflating people with adrenaline
- Prevent creating service provider jeopardy
- Beware of position courage
- Chief Dan Savages' "G" Rated Communication Rule
- Get Ready "*Officer Shit Storm is on Scene*"

"Swearing doesn't make your argument valid; it just tells the other person you have lost your class and control."  
— Shannon L. Alder<sup>5</sup>

"Police officers who choose to use profanity in their interactions with the public might as well expect the outcome to be further alienation toward the police, especially when these individuals are already negatively disposed toward them."  
- Mervin White<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Thompson, G. J., & Jenkins, J. B. (1993). *Verbal judo: the gentile art of persuasion*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company.

<sup>5</sup> Alder, S. L. (2011). "Sharon L. Alder Quotes" on Good Reads website:  
[http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1391130.Shannon\\_L\\_Alder](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1391130.Shannon_L_Alder) (accessed October 25, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> White, M., Cox, T., & Basehart, J. (1994). The theoretical considerations of officer profanity and obscenity in formal contacts with citizens. In T. Barker & D. Carter (eds.) *Police Deviance*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.

**Situation II - Explain:** Logos: Logical appeal - Explain the Why

- Commanders Intent - Raise organizational morale by telling people WHY and explaining the rationale for the decision, practice or policy.
  - One Voice
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**Situation III - Options:** Pathos - Emotional appeal

- What’s in this for me? - Greed motivates
  - Alternatives/Consequences
  - Confirm Choice: “So, what you’re saying is you would rather..... than.....with my professional request...”
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**Act / Closure –To comply or not comply the citizen’s choice**

- Resolve the conflict
  - Exhaustion of the Rhetorical Continuum Strategies
  - Take action and/or disengage
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**The Rhetorical Continuum in action: (Examples)**

*Using “Meet and Greet Basics” & Forecasting Future Behavior*

- Meet & Greet with REASON
- Identify Yourself
- Ask Relevant Questions and for Identification if Needed
- Close Professionally

# Section 3

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## The Nuts and Bolts of Surviving Verbal Conflict – What Works!

### How the Veteran Communicator Survives Verbal Conflict – Read and Heed

**Listen** – Just don't wait to talk; gather intel

- *Body language* – “Your body language shapes who you are.” -Amy Cuddy
  - What message are you sending without saying a word?
  - What do others see when you arrive on scene?
  -

**Your body language shapes who you are - Amy Cuddy<sup>7</sup>**  
*What does yours say?*



**Read the Signs**

*Our nonverbal communication governs how other people think and feel about us.*

**Watch-** for verbal and non-verbal **pre- attack indicators** – The body has difficulty lying

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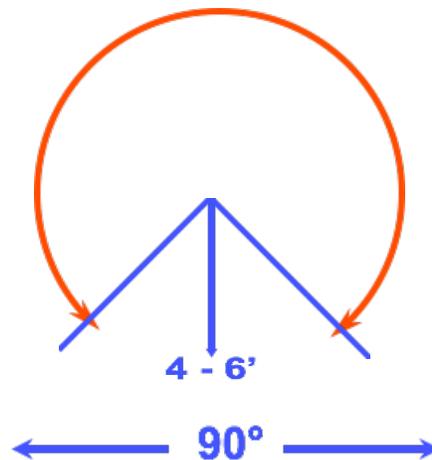
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<sup>7</sup> Cuddy, A. J. C. (2015). *Presence: bringing your boldest self to your biggest challenges*. New York, NY: Little, Brown, & Co.

## What is YOUR Personal Danger Zone (PDZ)

### The Personal Danger Zone



*Interpersonal Cues Predicting Violence*- Johnson, Ph.D.

*"The body never lies."*  
~Martha Graham<sup>8</sup>

### Psychological Research Reveals Top 7 Human Behaviors Most Associated with Impending Physical Violence<sup>9</sup>

- ✓ Assumes a boxer's stance
- ✓ Invades personal space
- ✓ Clenches his hands
- ✓ Makes verbal threats
- ✓ Looks around the area (for witnesses or your backup)
- ✓ Performs head / neck roll stretches
- ✓ Tenses jaw muscles

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<sup>8</sup> De Mille, A. (1991). *Martha: the life and work of Martha Graham: a biography*. New York, NY: Random House.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, R. R., & Aaron, J. (2013). Adults' beliefs regarding nonverbal cues predictive of violence. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 40(8), 881-894.

**These 11 behaviors are the behaviors the majority of the officers identified as predictive of an attack:**<sup>10</sup>

- ✓ Assuming a fighter's stance
- ✓ Invading personal space
- ✓ Placing one's hands in one's pockets
- ✓ Clenching / balling hands into fists
- ✓ Making verbal threats
- ✓ Looking around the area
- ✓ Head rolls / neck stretches
- ✓ Tense jaw muscles
- ✓ Pacing back and forth
- ✓ Sweating profusely
- ✓ Stretches arms / shoulders

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<sup>10</sup> Johnson, R. R., & Aaron, J. (2013). Adults' beliefs regarding nonverbal cues predictive of violence. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 40(8), 881-894.

**Paraphrase** – Reflect your understanding back to the other in his/her words

- “So what you’re saying is....., is that right?”
- “You would rather be \_\_\_\_\_ than simply comply with my professional request”

**Focus** – You are *the* professional

- Single Voice - One person talks at a time
- Proceed with Caution
  - ✓ Agreeable,
  - ✓ Challenging and
  - ✓ Manipulative People

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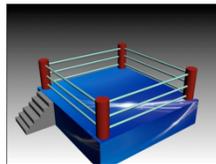
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### Veteran communicators Overriding Question

**“Just how important is all this?”**

**Empathize** - See the world through the eyes of the other

- Avoiding “The Rope-A-Dope Syndrome”<sup>11</sup>



- Replay – “Let me start over, that didn’t come out right”
- Find common ground- “I see where you’re coming from, if you were a \_\_\_\_\_ what would you do if someone \_\_\_\_\_...”
- Provide people options – And, there is always a better option- Alternatives and consequences

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<sup>11</sup> Hauser, T. (1992). *Muhammad Ali: his life and times*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

**Deflect** - Deflect verbal abuse – Amateurs respond to words, Professionals listen to the meaning of words behind the emotion

➤ **Fundamental Rule of Verbal De-escalation:**

- “Don’t debate when you are trying to de-escalate.”- Chief Dolan
- (*“Avoid the Natural Tendency to Fill People with Adrenaline”*)

- I hear what you’re saying “However.....”

- “I ‘preciate that, **however** . . .”
- “I understan’ that, **however** . . .”
- “I hear that, **however**. . .”
- “I got that, **however** . . .”
- “I’m sorry you feel that way, **however** . . .”.

➤ **Note:** *Combination Phrases Work Best*

*“The best impromptu speeches are the ones written well in advance.”*

– Ruth Gordon

- I hear what you are saying, and I got that, **however**....
- I understand that you are angry, and I might be too under the same circumstances, **however**....
- I hear that, and I’m listening, **however**...
- I can see you are upset, and I’m sorry you feel that way, **however**...
- It seems that way, and I agree it’s difficult, **however**...

*Why do people verbally assault you?*

*IT WORKS!*

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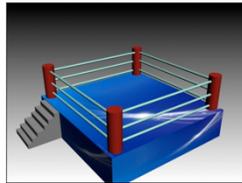
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## Why Deflect Verbal Abuse

- You are a “Guardian of the Peace!”
- Deflection is key to “**Avoiding the Rope-A-Dope Boxing Ring**”.
- Keeps you from bringing negative people home with you for dinner.

*“Never argue with a fool. Onlookers may not be able to tell the difference.”*  
-Mark Twain<sup>12</sup>

‘I hear that, **However** Professional “G” Rated Language



### Phrases to Avoid

- Calm Down
- What’s Your Problem?
- You People
- Come Over Here
- I’m not going to tell you again
- Because these are the rules

*Don’t make me mad then tell me to calm down. That’s like stabbing someone and then wondering why there're bleeding*

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<sup>12</sup> Twain, M. (1998). *The Wit and Wisdom of Mark Train: A Book of Quotations*. Mineola, NY: Dover.

### Phrases to Consider Using

- Excuse Me Sir, May I Talk To You?
- What can I do to Help?
- For Your Safety And Mine.
- Could I Ask You?
- Would You Assist Me?
- Can You Work With Me?
- You Look Like A Reasonable Person.
- What's The Matter?

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**Don't bring negative people home with you for dinner who verbally abuse you at work.**

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**Take *time outs* – Use the Time Out sign to slow things down**



“Time Out”



“Slow Down”

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## Practice Chief Dolan's Verbal Contact and Cover Principle

- Overcoming the "Bystander Effect"<sup>13</sup> & "Groupthink"<sup>14</sup>

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- Supervisor Coffee Wants to Talk with You!

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- "Pluralistic Ignorance"<sup>15</sup> and Catherine Genovese<sup>16</sup>

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### Training Tip From Barney Fife<sup>17</sup>

"Nip it in the \_\_\_\_\_"



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<sup>13</sup> Darley, J. M., & Latane, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies: diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 377-383.

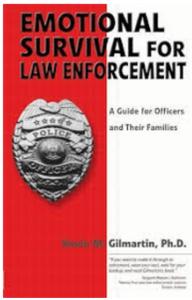
<sup>14</sup> Turner, M. E., & Pratkanis, A. R. (1998). Twenty-five years of groupthink theory and research: lessons from the evaluation of a theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 73, 105-115.

<sup>15</sup> Prentice, D. A., & Miller, D. T. (1993). Pluralistic ignorance and alcohol use on campus: some consequences of misperceiving the social norm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 243-256.

<sup>16</sup> Cook, K. (2014). *Kitty Genovese: the murder, the bystanders, the crime that changed America*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

<sup>17</sup> Robinson, D., & Fernandez, D. (2004). *The definitive Andy Griffith Show reference guide*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.





### Hypervigilance Rollercoaster

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*Produces Cops who are Emotionally Over-Invested at Work, and Emotionally Under-Invested at Home (Magic Chair Test)*

### “I Usta” Syndrome

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### Don't Be an Eeyore!

*Victim-Based Thinking*

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### Become an Emotional Survivor

Emotional survivors are good *public safety professionals*. They are also good golfers, good bike riders, good fishermen, good football coaches, good spouses, and good parents. They are multi-dimensional people.

-Dr. Kevin Gilmartin<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gilmartin, K. M. (2002). *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement: A Guide for Officers and Their Families*. Tuscon, AZ: E-S Publishing.

## Chief Dolan's 24-Hour Rule

Leaders often find themselves in challenging emotional circumstances at work and at home. Although in some cases an immediate reaction is necessary, many situations provide the leader with the opportunity to delay a response. Over the course of my career, I have discovered the overwhelming benefits of delaying a response for 24 hours.

- Information first delivered in the midst of a crisis is rarely completely accurate, so be very careful responding with a “knee jerk” comment you will long regret!
- In 24 hours you will always respond more professionally and effectively, absent emotion.
- We often find that with the clarity 24 hours brings, the matter didn't warrant action at all; we simply allowed our anger to elevate the incident to a false level of importance.
- If you can't delay 24 hours, try 2 hours 40 Minutes, 2 minutes 40 seconds, or as in the case of a live T.V. interview 2.4 seconds before responding to a question.

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### TUI

*(Texting, typing, talking under the influence of anger, rage, grief, misinformation, substances etc.)*

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## It's Time for Police Officers to Consider "The Sterile Cockpit Rule"

*("No flight crew member may engage in, nor may any pilot in command permit, any activity during a critical phase of flight which could distract any flight crew member from the performance of his or her duties or which could interfere in any way with the proper conduct of those duties." (FAA Sec. 121.542)*

- While in public conducting official business, public safety professionals should always use professional language and maintain a professional demeanor
- We are "Contact Professionals" living in a digital video world where a "ShowTime" demeanor must be displayed with a "Professional Face".

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## Manage the "Crime Scene Social"

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## Sgt. Jim Dolan's "Dust 'Em Off Rule"

*"Pick 'em up, dust 'em off and send 'em back on their way"*



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## The Importance of Debriefings

- Throughout my career as both a chief and line officer, I learned most from candid non-threatening debriefing sessions. When managed properly by the leader, first reviewing what went well and then discussing areas for growth or improvement, all present will depart more knowledgeable than when they entered.
  - Teams that regularly debrief following critical incidents, special events, or unusual occurrences create a learning organizational culture focused on constant improvement
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“Don’t act as if the question ‘Why?’ was a form of disrespect, respond as if it’s your obligation to explain ‘Why’, and when necessary go ahead and explain your rationale. You may just be surprised by the response you receive”

– Chief Harry P. Dolan, (Ret.)

# Section 5

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## You Too Can Survive Verbal Conflict

Take-A-Ways & Closing Comments

*“When the debate is lost, slander becomes the tool of the loser.”*

- Socrates

"Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser -- in fees, expenses, and waste of time."

- Abraham Lincoln

### Chief Dolan Concluding Thoughts

Now we have come full circle. Just what does it mean to survive verbal conflict? In a word, the essence of it means – *Professionalism*.

Actually when you boil it down, successful human interaction is artful common sense. The ancients got it right. Rhetoric, the art of persuasion, is based on connecting with people as human beings; all of us want to be treated with respect, understood and know the right thing is being done. Getting along with people is understanding that we are a wonderful mashup of personalities. In fact, depending on the situation, each of us most times are agreeable or a bit challenging. We can even be a bit manipulative. Yes, you can admit it. Yet, we want the same things. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we met someone, especially your public service provider, your nurse or your internet geek for example, who practices the skills we discussed here no matter which personality I showed up with!

A master of the *Rhetorical Continuum* and the various techniques is a master at developing relationships and making friends. In the course of doing so he and she become better people, better husbands, wives and fathers, better colleagues and certainly better at delivering public safety services and community well-being. Yes this is work, necessary work and worth the work of mastering the process, methods and techniques of human interaction.

I do offer you a caution should you choose to learn and practice this singular art of the professional. While this workshop has given you the basic theory, process and skills of surviving verbal conflict - mastery of it *never* ends. Begin now! Even when having everyday casual discussions, take the conversation through the steps: Listen with empathy, discuss the facts, and explain options. Even when communication is bright and positive, your day will go better, much better. Certainly practice this skill every moment you spend with those you serve. Remember you are the professional! Practice until it becomes more than second nature, practice until it is intuitive, automatic, part of you. I still practice today, at home, with my neighbors and on the lecture circuit. Oh the interesting people you will meet and the friends you will make! I ask you now - How do you wish to be remembered?

If I had to point to the essential skill that contributed to my most meaningful and memorable policing career, it has to be how I got along with those around me and especially with those I served. Actually, in distilling all those years; if I had to pin down the essential character of a law enforcement professional it would have to be that he or she has mastered and continues to master surviving verbal conflict.

# Thank you!

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