



Dealing with an Angry Public in a Post-Covid Environment: Best Practices for Municipalities

Presented by:

Agenda

Understanding sources of today's anger

Impact on municipal employees

Your own thoughts/feelings

Anger *versus* abuse

Strategies for defusing & self-care

The World Today

**95% of Americans
say civility is a
problem.**

**70% say that incivility in
this country has risen to
“crisis” levels, up from 65
percent in 2014.**

Uncivil actions, such as name calling, bullying and calls to fisticuffs, seem to take priority over respectful dialogue and the healthy exchange of diverse viewpoints.



Sections ☰

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Coronavirus U.S. map World map Vaccine tracker Vaccine FAQ Variants FAQ A pandemic year Coronavirus Living

Wellness

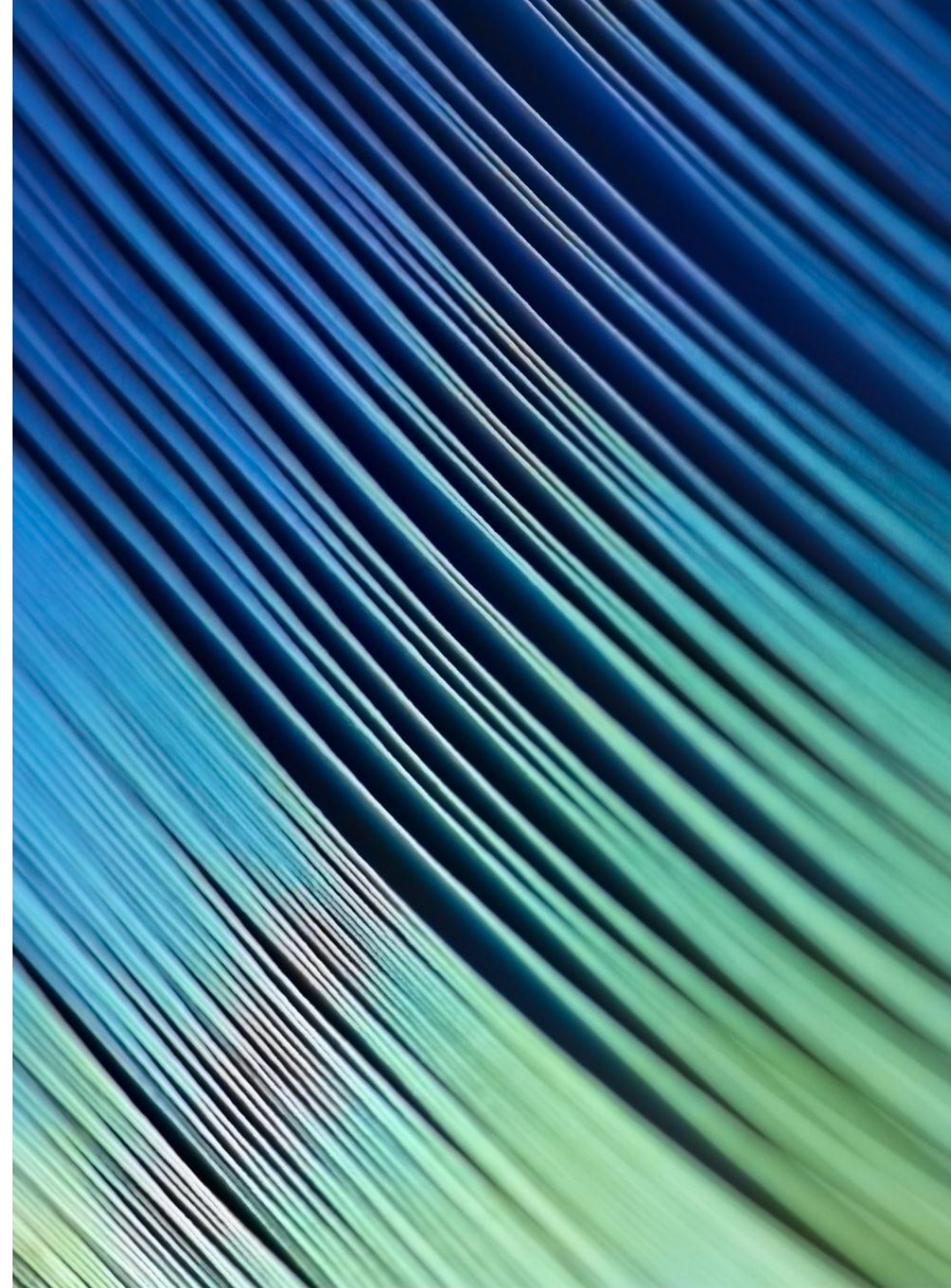
Americans are living in a big 'anger incubator.' Experts have tips for regulating our rage.



tp NEWSLETTER 7-DAY EMAIL COURSE

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Then, Covid



Displaced Aggression



What is the toughest resident situation for you?
or
What has been your toughest experience?





What is the impact on
you?

Burnt out?

Angry?

Hurt?

Just exhausted?

Anger v. Abuse

Where's the line?

Voice level

Harassment

Demeaning tone

Physically, psychologically
threatening

**SHIFT FROM *THE PROBLEM* TO
AN INDICTMENT OF *YOU* AS A
PERSON**



COMMON AMYGDALA TRIGGERS

- **Not being respected**
 - **Being treated unfairly**
 - **Being unappreciated**
 - **Not being listened to**
 - **Being held to unrealistic expectations**
 - **Having your identity challenged**
- 

**Tips,
strategies,
solutions**



breathe

Strategies for Self-Care & Resilience

Stop

- wishing they were different

Take

- care of you

Don't try

- to change them

Keep

- an eye on your internal stress barometer

Gain

- distance from, and perspective on, the situation

Seek out

- support



What helps
you?

**Empowerment
tips**

Team support/Talk with your boss/Call 911

Leadership/organizational backup;
e.g. 'Open Door' policy

Mental health break

Communicating your needs

Being resilient and remembering the Big Picture

De-escalation best practices



- Stay positive
- Avoid power struggles
- Clarify: *“It sounds like you..”*
- Focus on the problem, not the personality
- Listen more than you talk, initially



De-escalation Tips

- The Three Strike Rule
- A Code Word
- An Emergency Buzzer
- Tag Team
- The Maze
- Situational Awareness

Other defusing tips

Use their name

Use power words:
*"Let's", "We",
"Together"*

Provide options

The calm,
compassionate
response: *"Let's take
a walk together."*

Why are some people unhinged?

- A) Personality
- B) A situational misunderstanding
- C) A miscommunication
- D) Self-permission to behave badly
- E) Any of the above



Not my type

- ❑ Loud, angry or explosive
- ❑ Entitled, condescending and elitist
- ❑ Complaining, frequent flyer



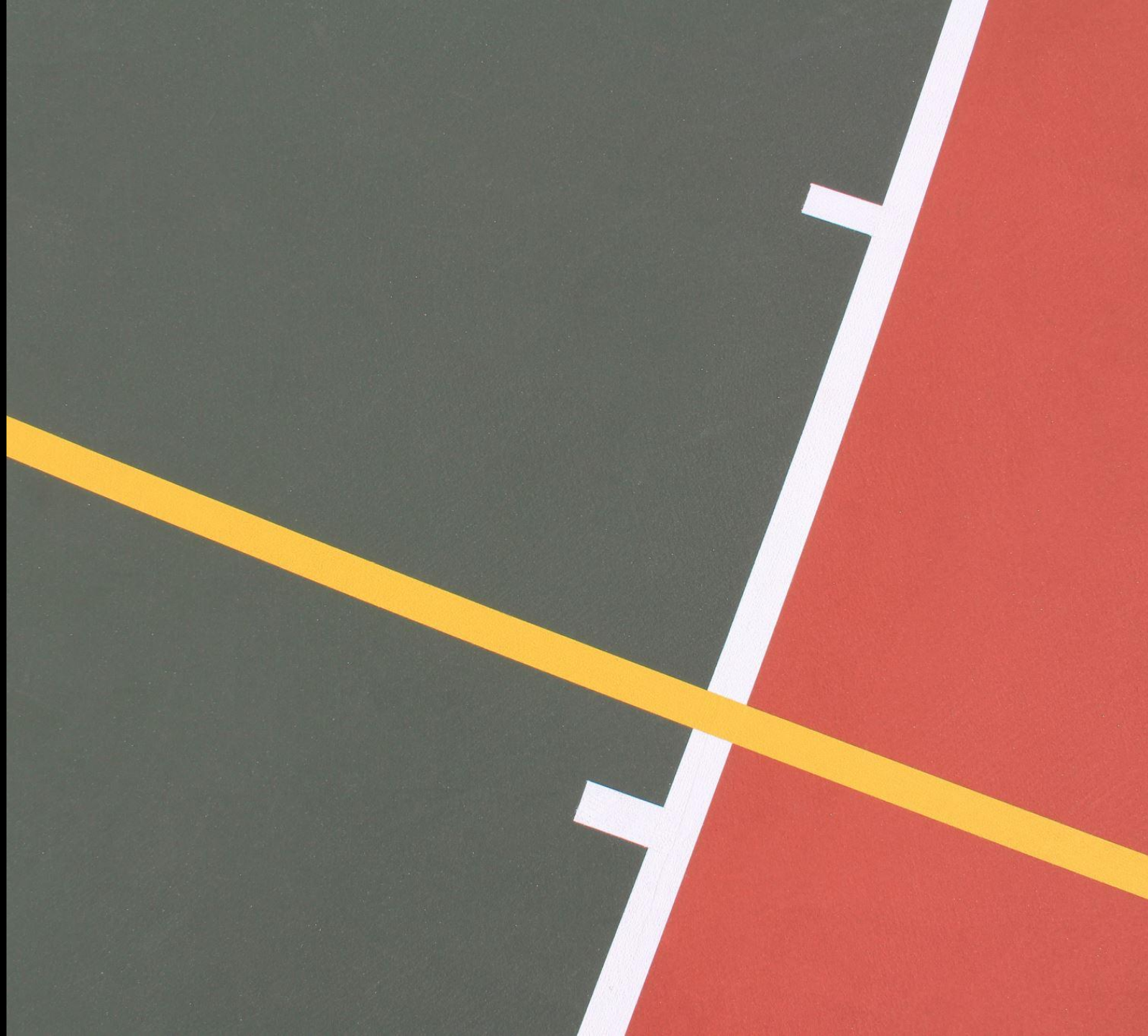


De-escalation ques

The *Behavioral Change Stairway Model*, developed by the FBI's hostage negotiation unit, describes 5 steps Conflict Resolution steps:

- **Active Listening:** Listen to their side and make them aware you're listening.
- **Empathy:** You get an understanding of where they're coming from and how they feel.
- **Rapport:** Empathy is what *you* feel. Rapport is when *they feel it back*. Maybe.
- **Influence:** Now that they trust you, you've earned the right to work on problem solving with them and recommend a course of action.
- **Behavioral Change:** They act. Maybe.

Setting
boundaries
and limits



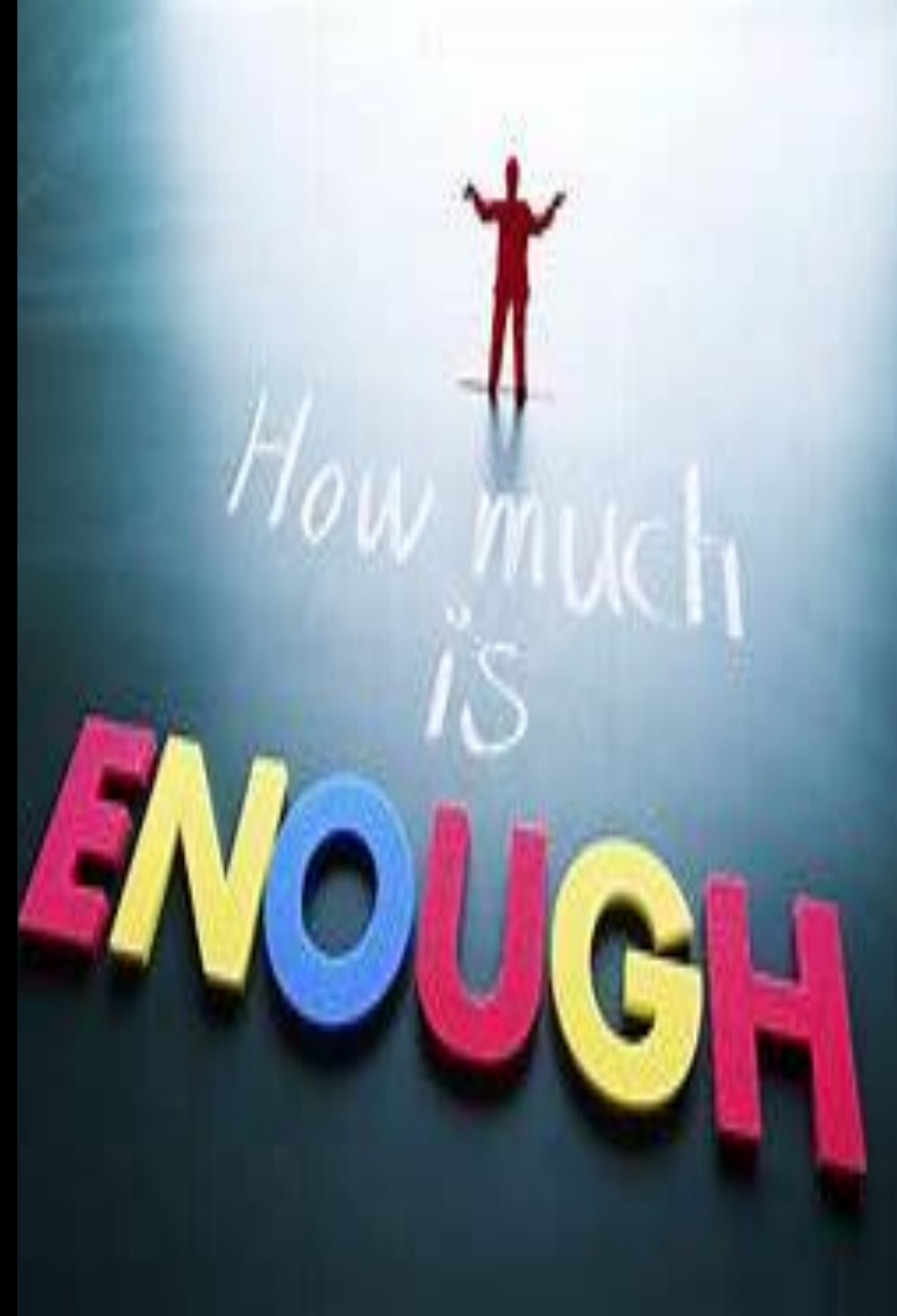
ENDING AN ABUSIVE CONVERSATION

*How much is an employee
expected to tolerate in the name
of 'customer service'?*



What to say when the going gets tough

- ❑ “I’m not comfortable with how this conversation is going. Can we hit reset?”
- ❑ “I’d like to see if we can make this conversation work. If not, I’m going to suggest we take it up another time.”
- ❑ “If you continue (offensive behavior) I will leave the room/house/ ask you to leave.”



When you have to say *No*

- Avoid saying, “It’s the policy.”
- Offer options: “I wish I could do that. This is what we can do.”
- Use self-disclosure: “I’ve felt that way too.”
- Ask open ended questions: “How will that work for you?”
- The Broken Record Technique
- Forward to Manager
- Suggest they Write a Letter





A Code of Conduct Allows for

A safe work environment

A welcoming Town/City Hall
experience leads to..

Upper Management support

A Visitors Code of Conduct



- Staff need support with situations that go beyond the definition of dealing with a “difficult customer”.

Developing a Code of Conduct

Self-Assessment:

Do we need a policy?

Consult with Employee Assistance Program

Drafting a Visitors Code of Conduct Policy



The Role of Leaders

- Be visible, approachable
- Communicate with transparency, authenticity
- Model self-care and resilience
- Help employees prepare for the future
- Support total employee well-being
- Offer positive feedback

What else?



Closing principals to keep in mind

It's normal to feel defensive, annoyed sometimes.

We can't change people. We can only control ourselves.

We never really know what's going on with people.

Take Care Of You

What if

- You're in a tight office space and a landscaper working on town property closely approaches you with a question, for the second time, without a mask. They won't stop talking.

What are your thoughts and how do you respond?

What if

You've had a long day and are patiently handling a long line. Your next customer begins by saying, "*What the hell's taking you so long? You think I've got nothing better to do!*"

What's an effective deescalation response?

External Mindfulness Resources

- ❑ Breethe -- <https://breethe.com>
- ❑ Buddhify -- <https://buddhify.com>
- ❑ Calm -- <https://www.calm.com>
- ❑ Headspace -- <https://www.headspace.com>
- ❑ [U Mass Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction \(MSBR\) Program](http://www.umhealth.org/center-mindfulness)
www.umhealth.org/center-mindfulness



How The MIIA EAP Can Help?

Contact:

1-800-451-1834

<https://allonehealth.com/miiaeap-2/>

**My Life Expert Log In Code:
miiaeap**

Mental Health Counseling

In-the-Moment Support

Management Consultation

Trainings and Seminars

Team Buildings, Morale Boosters