

The Danger Spectrum: Do you know who you're dealing with?

The Danger Spectrum identifies the types of people you interact with in the workplace and the risks they pose. When you know who you're dealing with, you can interact appropriately.



The Danger Spectrum



There are three types of people you interact with in the workplace:

Different people



Different people are people who don't look, act, or interact with others the same way you do. However, these people are non-threatening and pose no danger. For instance, a group of unruly sports fans may be loud, and they may shove each other in excitement, but they keep their behaviour to their own group. They wouldn't shove someone they didn't know.

Different people may differ from you in:

- Gender
- Age
- Socioeconomic status
- Ethnicity or heritage
- Culture or subculture
- Appearance
- Non-threatening actions or behaviours

Difficult people



Difficult people are upset. They direct their anger, hostility, and frustration at others, but they aren't yet a direct threat to your safety, or anyone else's. Normally, the anger or hostility they're displaying isn't about you, it's just, unfortunately, targeted at you.

Difficult people may:

- Raise their voice, shout, or yell
- Make rude or broad gestures
- Say unkind, uncalled for, or rude things
- Attempt to intimidate you through words or body language
- Make verbal or written demands in a hostile or angry way

Dangerous people

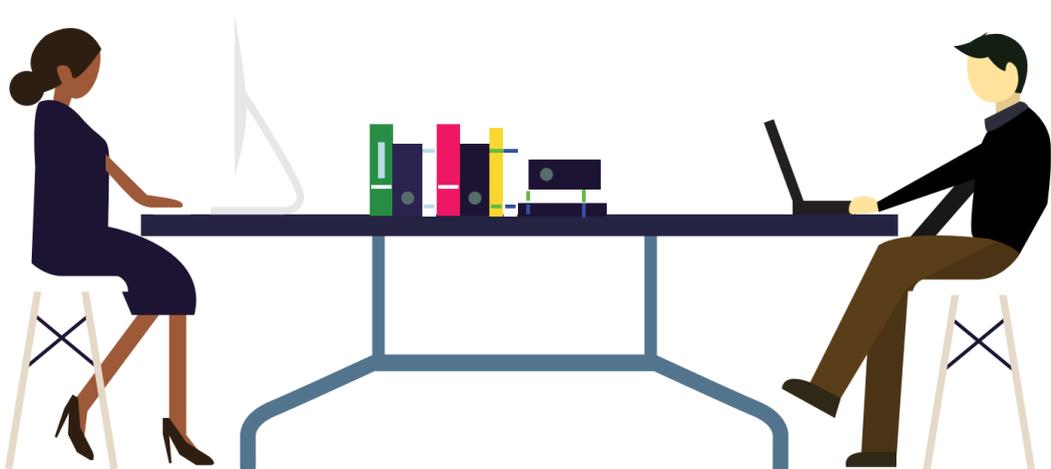


Dangerous people pose an immediate threat to your safety and the safety of others. They are volatile, violent, and willing to damage, injure, or even kill. Your top priority, when faced with a dangerous person, is to protect yourself, and, if you can do so safely, protect others.

Dangerous people may:

- Carry weapons (e.g., knives, firearms, bombs, bats)
- Threaten your life or the lives of others
- Be physically aggressive (e.g., throwing things, shoving, invading personal space)
- Physically attack (e.g., hit, kick, grab, or immobilize someone)
- Destroy property
- Take hostages

Anyone can move between being a different, difficult, and dangerous person. Where you sit on the spectrum fluctuates with your mood. When you're calm, kind, and courteous, to someone else, you may still be different from them. When you're impolite or a bit aggressive, you may be being difficult with someone. If you're yelling, throwing things, slamming doors, or hitting people, then you've gone beyond difficult and are at the dangerous end of the spectrum.



De-escalate situations with difficult people, so they don't become dangerous people

Do



- Maintain your self-control
- Treat them with respect and dignity
- Be patient
- Use short sentences and simple terms that are easy to understand
- Use cooperative language instead of confrontational language
- Validate their feelings
- Summarize their experiences with empathy
- Offer help, options, or a referral
- Give choices and consequences

Don't



- Respond with hostility and anger
- Use a condescending tone or posture
- Invade a person's space
- Make the situation seem less serious than they feel it is
- Accuse the person of wrong doing
- Invalidate their experiences
- Refuse assistance

If you're dealing with a dangerous person:

- ⌚ Maintain self-control
- ⌚ Preserve your safety and the safety of others (if you can do so without compromising your own safety)
- ⌚ Call for help
- ⌚ Follow your company's procedures
- ⌚ Report the incident through your company's formal reporting procedures

Remember, you're in a dangerous situation anytime you feel threatened, no matter where or when the situation occurs.