Behavior change, such as wearing masks, can be stressful, and policies around behavior can cause agitation.

Here are some de-escalation techniques:

- **Be patient.** Just as it takes an individual time to become agitated, de-escalating from an emotional state takes time.

- **Resist the urge to ramp up to the feeling of urgency** that the individual feels.

- **De-escalate in an engaged but not personal way.** You do not have to agree with someone to de-escalate the conversation. The goal is not to prove them wrong, but to motivate them to change their behavior.

- **Start by hearing them and acknowledging what you hear.** Agitation and escalation often happen when an individual doesn’t feel heard.

- **Listen more and talk less.**

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**Ways to approach de-escalating a conversation:**

Ask open-ended questions or present open-ended statements and let them complete their answer.

*Tell me more about how you are feeling.*

*What aspects of the mask policy do you disagree with?*

Respond by clearly showing you heard them.

*I understand that you aren’t happy about policies that require mask wearing.*

*I hear that you don’t think the store is in a position to tell you that you have to wear a mask.*

Put you and them on the same page and see if they have ideas of what to do.

*We both want you to be able to (go to school, go into the store). The (school, store) requires masks, but you don’t want to wear one. With the policy, I am not able to allow you to (go into the store, participate in class) without a mask. What do you think we can do?*