**Scenario about Communication with Upset Individual**

**Supervisor’s Copy**

In this vignette, you are asked to find what these two staff did well to deescalate the situation and what they did that made the situation worse. Some are obvious yet look for the subtle ones as well. You will also be asked what these two staff could have done differently to respond to the residences needs.

Darnell and Jeremy were sitting in the living room of a residence for people with behavioral health issues. They hear yelling and someone crying for help. Jeremy jumps up and goes to where the yelling is coming from and sees Ann and Mary. Ann is the one calling for help and Mary is yelling profanities and saying “I did not” repeatedly. Jeremy asks Ann to go to another room. Jeremy walks up to her and says “you have to stop yelling” which makes Mary yell louder. Jeremy folds his arms over his chest and says, “I’m not kidding and if I have to, I will call the police.” This does not sway Mary and the profanities fly. Jeremy goes back to Darnell and says, “there is no stopping her, and she shouldn’t even be here”. Darnell takes a breath and walks into the room where Mary is. This type of situation makes him anxious since he never knows what will happen. He takes another breath. When Mary stops to catch air, he asks her what happened in a quiet, neutral tone. She looks at him and says, “Ann said I stole her shoes.” Darnell says, “oh, that is why you were yelling.” Darnell continues, “I see how that would make you angry.” Darnell asks her if she would like to talk more about it. He sits down yet Mary stays standing. Darnell finds out that Mary felt blamed for everything when she was a child and the consequences of that was severe. Darnell nods and says, “I can see why this upset you so much”. The more Mary talks about her childhood, Darnell can see Mary getting increasingly agitated. He thinks he needs to change the conversation. He stands up signaling he is getting ready to leave. He says, “if this happens again, and I hope it doesn’t, do you think you could seek out a staff person before yelling?” Mary say “no” and stomps off and under her breath he could hear profanities again.

1. What are reasons Jeremy was unsuccessful in his interaction with Mary?

Possible Answers:

* Jeremy walks up to Mary abruptly which may be threatening to an upset person.
* He tells her what to do “you have to stop yelling.” He was not polite and was barking back at Mary.
* Jeremy folds his arms over his chest which is a defensive stance. Although it was not said in this vignette, Jeremy may have invaded the Mary’s space.
* He threatens her “if I have to, I will call the police.” Threatening or responding to the aggressive behavior with aggression can reinforce the behavior and trigger continued high emotional responses.
* Jeremy’s attitude that she “shouldn’t even be here” existed before this encounter and influenced his response to her.
1. What are reasons Darnell was successful in his interaction with Mary?

Possible Answers:

* Darnell prepares himself to meet with Mary by taking a breath to calm himself.
* Darnell lowered his voice and responded neutrally.
* During a “breath break” he asks her what happened to give her a chance to hear him and a chance for her to process and express her own thoughts. Darnell have Mary a chance to calm a bit before engaging with her.
* In asking what happened, he gives her a chance to tell her story. If Mary was not wanting to talk or so dysregulated, Darnell might give Mary some other choices, such as talking a walk with him, getting a cup of water, taking in some fresh air, etc.
* Darnell lets her know he understands why she was yelling, validating her.
* He asks her if she wants to talk about it giving her some power and choice to decide what she wanted to do.
* He normalizes her feelings and shows respect by saying, “I can see why this would upset you”.
* Darnell after Jeremy response was a good choice. Sometimes one person will be more responsive than another and have a better relationship with a residence.
* The time between Jeremy responding and then Darnell, may have given Mary some time to calm down herself.
1. What are things that Darnell does which do not help the situation and what could he have done differently?

Possible Answers:

* He stands up which signals he is ready to leave her and the conversation. A better approach would be to tell her what he is observing and ask her if she wants to continue the conversation or give her a couple of choices of what she could do now.
* He asks her if she will seek out a staff person if it happens again. Another approach would be to ask her “what do you want to do if this happens again?” Giving a people meaningful choice and be respectful of her decisions is validating.
* Staff can look for opportunities to reinforce Mary when she engages in more positive and less charged responses to other residences. Staff at times can inadvertently reinforce behaviors and should be on the look out to praise and support more pro-social interactions and problem solving.