



SOS Digital - Providing Support to Students in Distress

Aggressive Behaviour

Self-Help Guide for Students



**UNIVERSITÀ
DI TRENTO**



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AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR: HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

What is aggressive behaviour?

Aggressive behaviour is behaviour that goes beyond the applicable social norms, such as: causing harm, pain, loss to people or objects. They are based on negative attitudes or emotions, for example: anger, rebellion, hostility, the desire to destroy, frustration. Aggressive student behaviour most often appears in response to failure and is a form of discharge of frustration and anger.

Manifestations of physical aggression directed at the lecturer or other students are very rare. Manifestations of verbal aggression or aggression directed at objects are the most common, such as: raise the voice, use of vulgar/offensive words and inappropriate gestures, throwing a bag on the floor, hitting a fist on a table, kicking/knocking chairs or tearing up a failed written work.

The following signs or symptoms might suggest you are behaving in an aggressive manner:

Behavioral:

- ✓ Destroying property
- ✓ Excluding others
- ✓ Having difficulty calming yourself down after exerting aggressive behavior
- ✓ Name-calling
- ✓ Pushing another person or an object
- ✓ Teasing a person or a group of people
- ✓ Yelling

Physical:

- ✓ Accelerated breathing
- ✓ Clinched fists
- ✓ Flushed skin
- ✓ Increased body temperature
- ✓ Increased heart rate
- ✓ Sweating
- ✓ Teeth grinding
- ✓ Tense muscles
- ✓ Tension headache

Cognitive:

- ✓ Feeling as if you “black out” when angry
- ✓ Inability to think clearly
- ✓ Poor decision-making
- ✓ Problems focusing
- ✓ Problems with concentration

Emotional:

- ✓ Abrupt mood changes
- ✓ Angry mood
- ✓ Feeling agitated
- ✓ Feeling irritated
- ✓ Low tolerance threshold

WAYS TO DEAL WITH AGGRESSIVE RESPONSE

In order to work through aggressive behaviour, you need to identify its underlying triggers, for example:

- ✓ Distress, psychological fatigue
- ✓ Family problems
- ✓ Difficulties in relationships with others
- ✓ Stress at work or in school
- ✓ Individual traits
- ✓ Life experiences

How to deal with your own anger and aggressive behavior?

- ✓ Talk to a loved one about experiences that make you feel aggressive and angry.
- ✓ Learn how to avoid frustrating situations by making lifestyle changes.
- ✓ Understand and learn how to manage your own emotional responses and self-control.
- ✓ If you feel you are out of control or your attitude is negatively affecting your life or relationships, consider seeking psychological help.

How to behave in a situation where you personally experience someone else's aggression?

- ✓ Stay calm and control your emotions.
- ✓ Maintain a safe physical distance from the aggressor.

- ✓ Don't make sudden movements and show your open hands.
- ✓ If you are talking to an aggressive person, speak as firmly as possible but do not raise the voice.
- ✓ Don't judge or criticize.
- ✓ Formulate short and clear statements.
- ✓ Do not attempt to attack yourself physically to neutralize the aggressive person.
- ✓ If you feel that, as a result of someone's behavior, your or someone else's health or life is endangered, immediately move away and immediately call for help.

How to behave in a situation in which you witness an act of aggression against another person?

- ✓ Address the verbally attacked person and begin to talk a neutral topic, such as activities, weather, going to a concert or science club meetings, etc. Tell the person being attacked, for example that "We have to go to class now, come with me because we will be late." Then the aggressor becomes convinced that the person he or she attacks verbally is not alone, that he or she can count on help from another person. After your words to the person under attack, move away together if possible.
- ✓ If there is physical aggression, ask for help as soon as possible.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- ✓ If you are a student from UMinho please click [here](#)
- ✓ If you are a student from UniTrento please click [here](#)
- ✓ If you are a student from USC please click [here](#)
- ✓ If you are a student from AMU please click [here](#)

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