

Prepare Our People

Online: De-escalation Knowledge

Date: | Time: | Location: Zoom [link]

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OVERVIEW:

- **Purpose:**
 - Prepare participants to practice verbal and physical de-escalation skills by preparing them with the base knowledge of decision making and tactics
- **Outcome(s):**
 - Participants learn how to decide when they should intervene
 - Participants learn verbal de-escalation tactics and feel ready to practice at the in-person training
- **Audience:**
 - Community partners
 - TQBIPOC and allies
- **Roles**
 - Facilitators: 2+
 - *Text from Facilitator Slide Deck highlighted in purple*
 - Tech Volunteers: 2
 - *Tech instructions highlighted in pink*
 - Security Volunteer: 1
 - Access Volunteer: 1
 - Care Bears: 3-4

AGENDA:

1.	Welcome	15 mins
2.	Choosing when to (not) intervene	25 mins
3.	Break	5 mins
4.	Tactics	40 mins
5.	Closing	10 mins
	Total Time Needed	95 mins

1. Welcome (Facilitator)

15 mins

Overview:

- radically welcome participants
- give an overview of the pre-training
- set agreements of participation

Purpose: Through setting agreements, doing our radical welcome, the content of this training, and the emphasis on consent, we are already bringing in values of abolition, disability justice, and self-determination, but this can also be done explicitly. We can reiterate the purpose of this pre-training, as in, root it in abolition.

This content can be new! It requires people to lean into learning and community. In this welcome, we want to create a container in which people can leave their comfort zone to try on what we ask during the pre-training.

[Tech Needs: put on captioning]

[make Facilitators + Tech Volunteer co-hosts, and share computer sound to play music as people come into the zoom room]

[Tech Volunteer screenshares slide 1 Title page]

Welcome

Facilitator Note:

Facilitators welcome people into the space (before start time along with 5 min grace period)

- Care Bears should mark their role on their Zoom name
- Invite volunteers to radically welcome someone else into the space by verbally welcoming people over audio and in chat.

[Tech Volunteer slide 2 Welcome]

“Welcome everyone! In the chat, please share your names, pronouns, and one thing you’re hoping to learn about!”

[Tech Volunteer paste in chat: *In the chat, please share your name, pronouns, and one thing you’re hoping to learn more about today!*]

Intros and agreements

[Tech Volunteer slide 3 Facilitators & Volunteers]

“Hey y’all! We’re excited to have y’all at our de-escalation pre-training, Prepare Our People! We’ve got some familiar and some new faces out there - good to see ya! We’ve designed our training for our trans queer BIPOC community, and so we’ve built our curriculum around the wisdom we’ve received from other trans + queer BIPOC with experience keeping our folks safe.

[Introduce Facilitator name & pronouns] I’ve had the good fortune to witness the growth of these trainings as a previous facilitator for the very first one we offered. I’m honored to be here again and to facilitate this sharing of wisdom between one another. And hello to our other facilitators! May I ask y’all to share your names, pronouns, and background in de-escalation? [additional facilitators share name, pronouns, and background].

Before we go into sharing access info and our collective agreements, could I ask folks to take a second to either unmute or share in the chat if they need a refresher on Zoom? That way we can offer those folks more explicit guidance! [pause for 10ish sec] I also want to share that we have automatic closed captioning available, which can be viewed by clicking the CC icon in the toolbar. If you need any additional tech support, you can DM [Tech Volunteer] or text [X] at [phone number].”

[Tech Volunteer paste in chat: *We have closed captioning available. You can view them by clicking the CC icon in the toolbar For any additional tech support DM me ([Tech Volunteer]) or text me at [phone number].*]

“Okay, awesome – thanks y’all! We want to do a couple of introductions, just to start.

Our dedicated access volunteer today is X, who uses X pronouns – can you give us a wave real quick? [Access Volunteer] will be supporting folks in meeting our access requests, which we’ll share in a bit. And our safety volunteer today is X, who uses X pronouns – can you give us a little wave as well? [Safety Volunteer] will be monitoring our Zoom room and our chat for anyone who may be present and intentionally making other folks feel unsafe.

Our Care Bears today are X – they’ll also have their Care Bear role noted in their Zoom name. These lovely folks will be here for y’all to co-regulate and process new emotions with, and to offer folks one-on-one support in breakout rooms. Care Bears, can you give us a quick wave? If you wanna share space with one of them, please DM them and [Tech Volunteer] will get y’all into a breakout room.”

[Tech Volunteer slide 10 facilitator requests]

“In a bit, we’re gonna share more about what you can expect in our training today! But to start us off, we want to share some **facilitator requests**, to help us all stay present & engaged:

- Please minimize any distractions—other tabs, emails, texts, etc.! Setting my tech to “do not disturb” helps me a lot with this.
- Offer celebration to others – practice sharing enthusiasm, appreciation, and excitement in whatever way feels good for you!
- Speak slowly & clearly so that others can hear you!
- Take care of your needs—breaks, fidget, bathroom, water, food, etc.!

We’d really like to emphasize that we highly encourage you to take bio breaks throughout this training, as you need them. We have one dedicated 5 minute break in our program today, but it’s important to us that you take care of and check in with yourselves too!

We also want to create a space of **collective access** for this training as a part of our practice of disability justice. Here are some specific requests other participants shared with us before this training.

[Tech Volunteer slide 11 access requests]

[Tech Volunteer share access requests in the chat:

- Please mute yourself when not talking.
- Please try to eliminate or reduce background sounds.
- Please try to participate with as good an internet connection as feasible, like closing unnecessary tabs & apps if you have internet problems.
- Please try to keep your camera still, and please turn off your camera if you need to move it-- shaky cameras make many people dizzy/queasy.
- Please avoid blurred or artificial backgrounds, unless you need them for privacy, as they can make some people dizzy/queasy when the people using them move."

Training Overview

Facilitator Note: Remember to speak slowly and clearly, pause before and after key points, and repeat important points/questions/instructions.

"So let's start at the beginning - why is Lavender Phoenix holding a de-escalation training? We want to build a world in which we practice collective safety and real care, a world without the PIC."

[Tech Volunteer slide 12 PIC quote]

"Critical Resistance defines the prison industrial complex (PIC) as 'the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems.' We see this in the ever-present violence these systems enact on us. We see this in the ways we lack support with housing access, mental health care divested from non-consensual institutionalization.

We see this in California, where police budgets and state power are exponentially growing at the cost of real care. Where police forces are deployed to enact harm on peaceful protestors at encampments. Where we enter stores where armed private security and police are guarding material goods at the risk of our well-being, at sometimes, the risk of our people's lives - Banko Brown's life. And we see it globally - with the US sending billions of dollars to the Israeli military to further genocide in Gaza. The US is averting its gaze from the death of thousands, the mass destruction of homes, the relentless erasure of the Palestinian people, under the guise of defending Israel - calling it protection, calling it care.

We know very well that the incarceration and murder of our people is not care. As we escalate our organizing to dismantle and abolish prisons, policing, and militarism, our communities must continue to *actively build* safety rooted in our relationships with each other - because keeping each other safe is *real* care."

[Tech Volunteer slide 13 agenda]

"So today, we'll be covering some of the foundations of de-escalating situations of violence and harm. We hope to empower y'all to practice the skills we learn today in our physical space together on [date], and in your communities beyond us. In the first half of our training today, we'll learn how to decide if & when to intervene in a situation. We'll take a 5 minute break, and when we come back we'll add some verbal de-escalation skills to our toolbox by learning from a successful example of de-escalation at a recent action. Both of these activities will be mainly in breakout groups with smaller groups of people.

Before we move on, do folks have any questions about the purpose of this training or what we will be covering?" [pause for questions]

Lineage & Labor acknowledgement

[Tech Volunteer slide 14 shout outs]

"We want to name that the skills we will learn today come from a lineage of many Trans and Queer Black, Indigenous, People Of Color who have learned how to create safety outside of carceral systems. We want to recognize and give gratitude for their labor and teachings.

This is a training developed by Lavender Phoenix, and is rooted in their values of abolition, abundance, interdependence and self-determination. Some folks we want to shout out specifically are those whose knowledge, experience, materials, and trainings informed this training: Mamie Chow and Irma Shauf-Bajar, the For the People Safety Team here in the Bay, the folks at Vision Change Win (such as Ejeris Dixon, Che Johnson-Long, and others), and Nonviolent Peaceforce. Materials from the People's Response Team Chicago and Anti Police-Terror Project (AFTP) Oakland also informed this training.

Lastly, know that our facilitation team is still practicing de-escalation too! We invite you to draw on skills you already have from your lived experiences - we have much to learn from each other, facilitators included.

As we move into our next section, can you share in the chat: what is one skill that you already have, from your personal experiences, to de-escalate situations of violence and harm? This can be as casual as your skills in mediating a conflict between friends, or as directly related as being on a safety team at an action."

[Tech Volunteer slide 15 "what is one skill..."]

[Tech Volunteer paste in chat: *In the chat, share - what is one skill that you already have, from your personal experiences, to de-escalate situations of violence and harm?*]

Facilitator Note:

- We all already have some verbal de-escalation skills, whether we realize it or not. The question leads towards folks reflecting on this for themselves, but if some folks are resistant to this, hearing examples from their peers might help them reflect on what skills they have, and facilitators can underscore this.
- Acknowledge what's coming up for folks (read 1 or 2 reflections aloud!)

"Thank you so much for sharing y'all's reflections - I'm so excited to learn from y'all! In our next section - I'll be talking more about how to assess when and when not to intervene!"

2. Choosing when to (not) intervene (Facilitator)

25 mins

Overview:

- Break down assessment process
- facilitator story
- assessment practice in breakouts
- large-group discussion

Purpose: Teach the assessment process, emphasizing that it is ok not to intervene. The facilitator story is a way to ground heady ideas of how identity markers affect our assessments in a real-life example. Similarly, the "variables" in the practice scenarios are a way to see how shifting small but significant details about a scenario affects whether and how we choose to intervene.

[Tech Volunteer slide 16 Choosing when to (not) intervene]

[Tech Volunteer paste in chat:

For anybody who joined us late, please see the following collective access requests:

- Please mute yourself when not talking
- Please try to eliminate or reduce background sounds.
- Please try to participate with as good an internet connection as feasible, like closing unnecessary tabs & apps if you have internet problems.
- Please try to keep your camera still, and please turn off your camera if you need to move it-- shaky cameras make many people dizzy/queasy.
- Please avoid blurred or artificial backgrounds, unless you need them for privacy, as they can make some people dizzy/queasy when the people using them move.

Intro to assessment (10 mins)

“When we come across a situation--before we take *any* action--we want to assess whether or not to intervene. This means making a *risk assessment*. Y’all likely already have some intuitive skills around assessing risk, so let’s go over the specific kinds of things we’ll consider when assessing a situation.”

[Tech Volunteer slide 16 Assessing Situations]

“When we assess risk, we want to consider both personal risk and the risk of folks nearby. And when we assess situations, we want to think about what support we already have access to, and how we can offer that to people in need. So assessing risk can look like scanning for anyone at higher risk nearby, and deciding if we can safely address the intensity of the situation. And assessing a situation can look like taking note of people that we can ask for help.

In these situations, we want to take time to consider ourselves in relation to the moment. This can look like checking in with our bodies, or assessing our personal risk in conjunction with our identities. We want to ask: do we feel regulated and calm enough to handle conflict outside of ourselves right now? Do any of our overlapping identities (queerness, BIPOC identity, disabled bodies) or our size and stature put us at risk for greater harm than another potential intervener?

Getting the *consent* of those being targeted is also essential to the way we assess situations. It isn't always accurate to assume that people want help from you, or the kind of help they want, especially in already overwhelming situations. How will you know that your decision to intervene still respects their agency? When possible, check in with them first! This is a way for us to stay true to one of our core values of self-determination.

Our last section discusses impact. What is the lasting impact of the risk you might take? Potential risks can involve calls to the police, harm to physical and mental health, and accidental further escalation. It's helpful to take time now to consider your boundaries around these personal risks, so if you're in a similar situation, you don't have to assess that in the moment!

Remember that deciding not to intervene in situations involving conflict or violence is also a completely justified response. You might assess a situation and determine that the best thing for you to do is to simply not intervene."

[Tech Volunteer stop screenshare]

[Tech Volunteer prepare breakout rooms of 4 for 10 min (everyone but facilitators, randomly assigned)]

"Our identities do impact our choice to intervene, particularly when our identities directly affect our level of risk. As an example, [Facilitator] is going to share a story."

[Facilitator story time! - 3 mins]

"Thanks for sharing with us, Facilitator. Does anyone have questions about anything we've covered so far?"

[pause for questions]

"Now that we've had an overview on how to assess situations, we're going to go into breakout rooms to practice our assessment skills. In your groups, you'll be considering various scenarios and if you'd intervene in them, and why. [Tech Volunteer] will drop a google doc in the chat with our practice scenarios."

[Tech Volunteer drop Participant Workbook in the chat]

“You can open it now as we talk about our process for these self-facilitated breakout rooms. These instructions are also at the top of the doc; you can follow along with those now as I talk about this process.

Your group will pick just **one** of the scenarios in the doc to practice assessing. You’ll see a section called **Variables** below each scenario. In your breakouts, you can discuss how your risk assessment might change depending on how those variables change the dynamic of the scenario. And if you have time at the end, you can discuss instances where it would *not* be helpful to intervene, and practice considering your own identities in this process and how they might impact your decision to intervene (or not).

In the workbook you will see an Assessment Handout as well! If it’s helpful to you, please use this to guide you in making your assessments.

Are there any questions?” [Pause for questions]

“Okay, we’ll see y’all back here in about 10 minutes!”

[Tech Volunteer open 10-min breakout rooms—can be shorter if intro ran long]

Breakouts (10 mins)

Big Group Discussion (5 mins)

“Can we have a few people share out about what came up during your breakout room discussions?”

Facilitator Note:

- If no no volunteers, you can “voluntell” someone, letting them know they can pass or phone a friend
 - “Would someone else from that group be willing to share?”
- If no volunteers you can also try asking more specific questions:
 - “Did y’all get a chance to talk about the last question? What personal characteristics or identities of yours might impact how you choose to intervene?”
 - “Were any scenarios particularly hard to assess? Why do you think this was

- true? Did people in your group have differing opinions on that?"
- If someone says something not in alignment with your values, show what a different perspective on that question might look like

"Thanks for sharing y'all! Let's take a 5 minute break and come back at 7:16 [or relevant time]."

[Tech Volunteer start screenshare slide 18 Break + music - update share sound]

[Tech Volunteer paste in chat: *come back at [xx:xx]*]

3. Break	5 mins
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4. Tactics (Facilitator)	40 mins
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Overview:

- Go over verbal de-escalation tactics
- Example of verbal de-escalation skills at an action (roleplay or read through a scenario)
- Talk and learn: people will be in small groups of 3-4 people, with discussion by section guided by discussion questions
- Big group share-out: a few groups will share out highlights

Purpose: The goal of this activity is to learn about different ways to verbally de-escalate, including learning different body-language stances that will be practiced at the training.

[Tech Volunteer stop music]

[Tech Volunteer screenshare Slide 19 Verbal De-escalation Tactics]

Intro to Tactics (2, Facilitator)

"Welcome back everyone! Hope you all had a great break! In this next section, we will be covering verbal de-escalation tactics. We will be sharing tactics from the safety and security Toolkit from Vision Change Win. We will also be sharing the complete toolkit in the follow up email.

Before we start exploring verbal de-escalation tactics, we need to understand what verbal de-escalation is! Vision Change Win shares:

[Tech Volunteer slide 20 Verbal De-esc Quote]

“Verbal De-escalation uses **communication** and **physical positioning** to prevent a potentially dangerous situation from escalating into verbal abuse, physical confrontation, or injury. Verbal De-escalation is what we use during a potentially dangerous or threatening situation in an **attempt to prevent a person from causing harm** to us, themselves, or others.”

What we want to take from that quote is that verbal de-escalation is preventative and it is never violent. Verbal de-escalation is not punitive. It is a first line of defense, which tries to diffuse a situation before actual physical de-escalation is needed or self-defense becomes necessary.”

Tactics (13, Facilitator)

“The Vision Change Win Toolkit identifies 10 verbal de-escalation tactics and we will read and go through them together.”

[Tech Volunteer slide 21 verbal de-escalation tactics 1/2]

“This slide presents the first five tactics and the next slide will show the next five:

Prevent - Most conflicts have indicators – tension, voices raising, or a crowd growing around people. We can use our senses and previous experiences to anticipate conflicts or violence, to separate people, and reassure them and create the conditions for safety.

Active Listening - When people are in conflict or being aggressive, they often do not feel seen or heard. Use your body and facial expressions to fully take in and listen to the person. Acknowledge what they are feeling and saying and reflect back.

Empathize - When a person feels validated, it can reduce tension and increase their ability to listen: they might be more receptive to follow directions or it might be easier to negotiate a situation. Empathizing means focusing on speaking to a person from their perspective, saying something like: “You are right”.

What are some other examples of empathizing? Share in the chat some simple phrases or sentences that can convey empathy.

Evade/Escape - Sometimes the best way to de-escalate a situation is to evade or escape it, or to help a person who is being targeted to get away by moving them to a safer space.

Distraction/Refocus - Distraction is a tactic that can be used from afar: like making loud noises from a distance to focus someone's attention. This tactic can also be used to refocus a person or a conversation - like coming up to them to ask for directions.

Let's take a few seconds for folks to go through these five tactics again (preventing, active listening, empathizing, escaping, refocusing) and let them sink in. You can notice how each of these tactics feel in your body: have you used these before in certain situations? Are there some that you feel more drawn to?"

[Keep the slide up for 15 seconds]

[Tech Volunteer slide 22 verbal de-escalation tactics 2/2]

"Gather People or Give Space - Ask for the help of people around by drawing their attention to a situation. People also act differently when others are observing. However, sometimes people observing or commenting can also escalate a situation. Asking a crowd to give a person space or asking witnesses to support in other ways can prevent further escalation.

Use Humor - Humor can lighten a situation and create connection - especially if you can get the person who is acting aggressively or causing harm to laugh. However, using humor to condescend or belittle can escalate a situation.

Give Choices - Giving people choices is a way to allow them to feel agency, while also operating within conditions that create more safety for everyone. You can make statements like, "I need to ask you to either stop yelling, or move into the other room."

Use Your Voice - Your tone, pace and volume can all be used to convey different emotions and even respect. When a person is agitated, it can help to speak slower or quieter than them and encourage them to listen and respect the boundaries of others.

I will pause for a few seconds for folks to go through these tactics (gather people, give space, use humor, give choices, use your voice) and again, let them sink in.

As you review these tools for de-escalation, remember that these are an extension of our ancestral survival tools. These tactics are not meant to replace those survival tools, but rather build on them. Notice your body, notice your intuition - what tactics do they pull you towards? These are likely the tools you will instinctively gravitate towards in an escalated or dangerous situation.

Okay, now I will pass it to [Facilitator] to present a de-escalation intervention."

Verbal De-escalation in Action: Case Study (5, Facilitator)

[Tech Volunteer slide 23 Verbal De-esc Case Study]

Facilitator Note: Breakout group size can vary based on the number of participants and how you choose to conduct this activity. Breakouts ideally have at least 3 folks, to cover the 3 main roles in the script out loud, but can accommodate more folks, especially if some folks do not want to participate in reading out loud.

“In a few minutes, we’re going to break out into groups of 3-X folks, where you’ll read through a scenario together. In the scenario, de-escalators intervene in an escalated situation with a driver at a direct action. After reading through the scenario together, you’ll talk through discussion questions, then we’ll come back together for a brief share out.

This scenario is based on a transcript from a real encounter between a safety team and an aggressive Zionist. The aggressor curses at safety team members and uses inflammatory language and Zionist rhetoric. We’re using this case study to see verbal de-escalation tactics in action, but it can be activating to roleplay the scenario, and what’s most important is for everyone to take care of themselves. I encourage you all to consider whether you are open to reading the part of the aggressor out loud, hearing it read aloud by one of your groupmates, or if you neither want to say it nor hear it. If so, you can read the script silently, or not at all. You’ll decide together with your group how to engage this script.

Please also remember that there are carebears here for support!! You can message them at any time and they’ll give you a call.

In your breakout rooms, you’ll decide as a group how you’ll engage the script; then, as you read through it together, take note of when you notice the de-escalators use any of the verbal de-escalation tactics we just talked about, and how the situation escalates or de-escalates accordingly. Then you’ll discuss the following questions, among others:

- What verbal de-escalation tactics did you see de-escalators use? What were the effects of those tactics?
- How did it feel to use or receive those verbal de-escalation tactics? Was there a felt sense of being escalated or de-escalated?”

[Tech Volunteer prepares breakout rooms of 3-X for 16 mins (everyone but facilitators, randomly assigned)]

"We've compiled these questions and instructions together for you in your Participant Workbook, under the heading Breakout Room 2: Verbal De-escalation Tactics in Action! [Tech Volunteer] will drop the link again in the chat!"

[Tech Volunteer drops Participant Workbook in chat]

"Any questions?"

See you back here at XX:XX!"

[Tech Volunteer open breakouts]

[Tech Volunteer stop sharing slides]

[Tech Volunteer potentially assists with carebear coordination during/after breakouts]

Self-facilitated Breakout Rooms (16)

Facilitator Note: See Participant Workbook for instructions

Large Groups Discussion (5, Facilitator)

"Welcome back everyone, we have a few minutes to hear back from your breakouts. As a temperature check, can everyone send one word in the chat on how that was for you?"

I'm seeing multiple people name ___ / it looks like there's a theme of ___"

Facilitator Note: If you gauge that people are activated: "If anyone is feeling activated, I encourage you to reach out to a carebear!"
We want to take care of our folks while also centering learning, which is why they're attending.

"Can a couple people share something you learned, or uplift one of your groupmates' contributions?"

Facilitator Note: Ask folks if they will share if nobody speaks up. Remember to affirm what people say, and repeat back any important points!

“Thanks for sharing everyone! Now that you all are more familiar with these tactics, we can dive into practicing them in specific scenarios at our in-person training.”

5. Closing (Facilitator)

10 mins

Overview:

- root this training in abolitionist values
- connect it to your current work
- make any calls to action
- logistics reminder for following training

Purpose: Give participants a chance to decompress, then re-ground the training's content in its purpose and our values. As in, remind folks why we do this, connect to our values of abolition and interdependence, emphasize the community-building aspect of this pre-training, create a network of folks trained in de-escalation.

This is where we can really land how our values tie into the practice that is this pre-training! It's the note we send participants away on. It's the feeling from the training they'll remember.

[Tech Volunteer screenshare slide 20 “Closing”, switch to presenter view]

“As we close out for today I want to emphasize the context for this training. We'll start with history, move on to the current moment, and then dream of the future.

We know that the police as a force in the U.S. began with slave patrols. Let's let that sink in for a second. What started as a system to dehumanize our black siblings has grown to oppress all of us. The slave patrol now patrols every street in this city. From Palestine to the Philippines they train, fund, and arm genocidal regimes to help them pillage our shared earth for oil and silicon. We must resist. And to resist, we must relearn the knowledge of our ancestors that has been taken from us. How do we heal when harm is done? How do we do right by all of our relations? We began to answer those questions today.

Who learned something about de-escalation, or themselves today? Please drop it in the chat!”

[Tech Volunteer paste in chat: *Share in the chat - what’s something you learned today that helps you feel more confident in your de-escalation practice?*]

“We know that abolition means building new alternatives AND dismantling existing harmful systems. As we grow our community safety network, we also commit to disrupting and dismantling the police state.” [Connect to your current work if applicable]

[Share any calls to action here]

“We hope that this pre-training will ready you to join and help build our network of trained de-escalators who address harm and danger in the bay area with support and care. We wanna take a lil selfie to commemorate this moment - if you’d like to change your name or turn off camera to remain anonymous, please do!”

[Tech Volunteer stop screenshare]

[TAKE SELFIE]

“Thanks everyone for coming out tonight, it’s been great having y’all bring your best learning selves to help prepare in community for the in person de-escalation training this weekend at [location].

Can I get a thumbs up if you will be attending our in person training? [Share details for in-person training]”

[Tech Volunteer share details for in-person training in chat]

“If folks have questions we didn’t get a chance to address tonight, please leave them in our feedback form, which we’ll drop in the chat!”

[Tech Volunteer drops feedback link in the chat]

“We’d love to hear any thoughts you have from today’s training.

We keep us safe. I hope everyone feels more prepared and ready to practice the things we learned today. With that we're going to close out this pre-training. Have a chill night y'all."