One way to prevent the escalation of a verbally abusive behaviour

Suggested strategy: Address the emotional glitch as soon as you feel it.

Introduction: We would readily feel hurt when we get verbally abused (e.g., "You @#$%&^* no good! .."). It can just be the tone of voice showing impatience or a tense or threatening body language from the person we interact with.

A typical Scenario: A typical scenario of how a verbally abusive behaviour is developed during the interaction between two persons is illustrated below.

1. Started as a logical and civil discussion between persons A and B.
2. Triggered by something "B" said, "A" gets impatient and shows it in a change of his/her tone of voice (and often accompanied by the corresponding change of body language) ... meanwhile, on the surface, he/she is still communicating a logical point(s).
3. "B" feels jabbed but he/she still tries to focus responding to the logical point under discussion.
4. Now, A's impatience grows and unknowingly expresses his/her impatience by coming up with stronger and more elaborate arguments for the logical point(s) made earlier ... and the tone of voice becomes more abusive.
5. "B" now starts to show his/her hurt via an aggressive tone of voice and body language .. however, strange enough, as if by choice, "B" stays on the logical level to argue with "A".
6. The exchange becomes hurtful and totally unproductive ... and the experience adds to the accumulated feeling of hurt which one day would result in an irreparable explosion.

Suggested remedy:
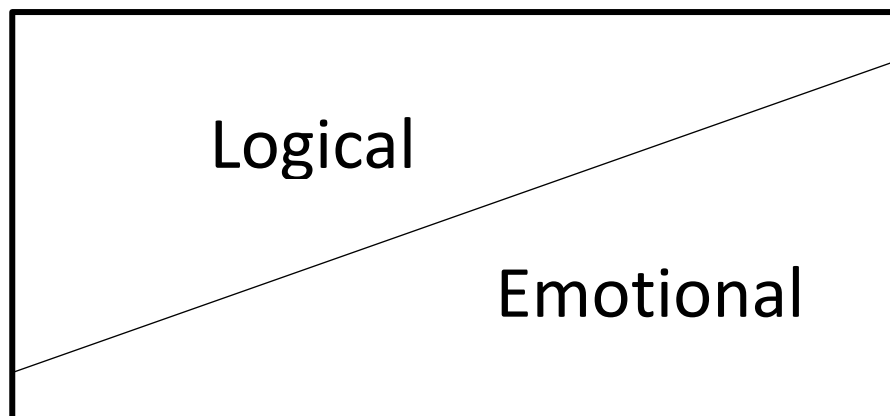
Two components of communication

There are always two components in any communication (an emotional one and a logical one - see diagram above). Their weighting varies at any moment depending on the nature of communication and the mental state of the participants.

- Whenever we sense an emotional glitch (e.g., the other person's tone of voice is getting a bit aggressive), if possible, we must suspend the logical discussion and immediately address the emotional glitch (e.g., calmly state, "You sound stressed. Do you have a tough day at work? ☺", "Do you realize that you've raised your voice? ☺").
- **Basically, resolve the emotional glitch first** (e.g., once get pointed out, the other person, once realizing his/her own inappropriate behaviour, would likely apologize and back off) **before switching back to the previously discussed subject.** If the other person insists to behave abusively and if the situation allows, such an interaction should be temporarily terminated. You can suggest the discussion to be resumed later when the other person has calmed down.
- If you don't feel comfortable to address that right at that moment, if possible, bring it up with that person afterwards.
- Seek a proper closure for every such emotional abusive incident. The lack of this kind of checks and balances partly explains why a lot of people in power knowingly or unknowingly behave abusively. They're spoiled by a corporation that tolerates such abusive behaviour.