

EVIDENCE BASED TRAUMA INFORMED BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT – DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES

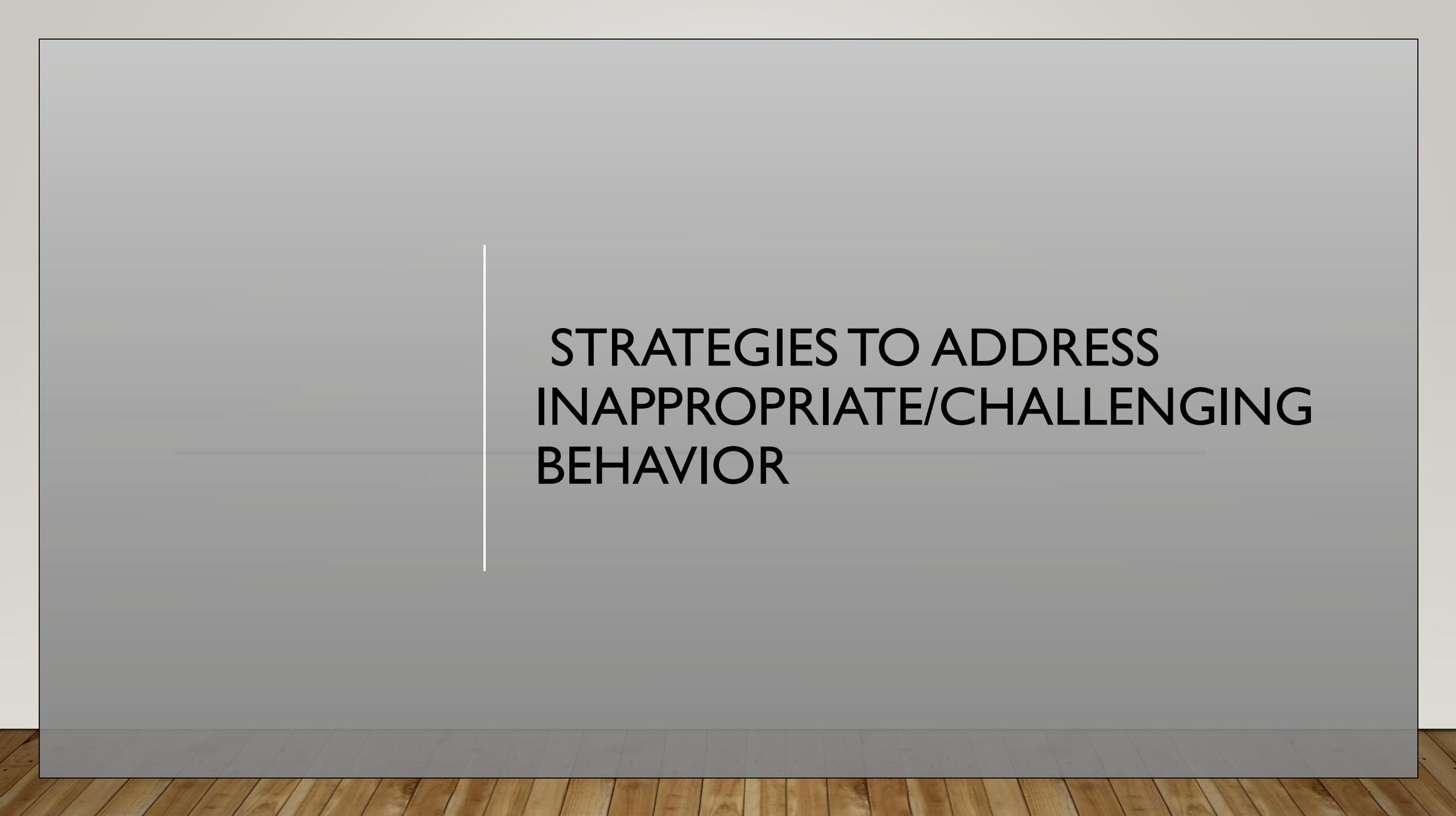
MARCH 26, 2025

EVIDENCE BASED TRAUMA
INFORMED BEHAVIOR
MANAGEMENT –
DE-ESCALATION
STRATEGIES

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Understand and apply strategies for **responding to classroom managed challenging behaviors**.
- Understand and apply strategies for **responding to risk behavior** through de-escalation strategies when a person is in crisis.



**STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS
INAPPROPRIATE/CHALLENGING
BEHAVIOR**

**Remember:
everyone in the
classroom has a
story that leads
to misbehavior
or defiance. Nine
times out of 10,
the story behind
the misbehavior
won't make you
angry. It will
break your heart.
~ Annette Breaux**



Teach JUB

TIER ONE RESPONSES TO INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Planned Ignoring

Physical Proximity

Signal/ Non-Verbal Cue

Direct Eye Contact

Praise (BSPS) the Appropriate Behavior in Others

Redirect

Support for Procedure/Routine

Re-teach

Differential Reinforcement

Specific and Contingent Error Correction

Provide Choice

Conference with Student

STEPS TO SPECIFIC AND CONTINGENT ERROR CORRECTION: *1 minute or less!*

Example: “Joe [privately and with sincere voice tone], I saw that you were talking to your neighbor during independent work time. Remember that *Doing your Best* means to focus on your own work. Start on your work again, and I’ll stop by to catch you focusing on your own work.”

Your Turn!

Give a sample Error Correction statement that includes these steps and is brief!

1. Respectfully address student

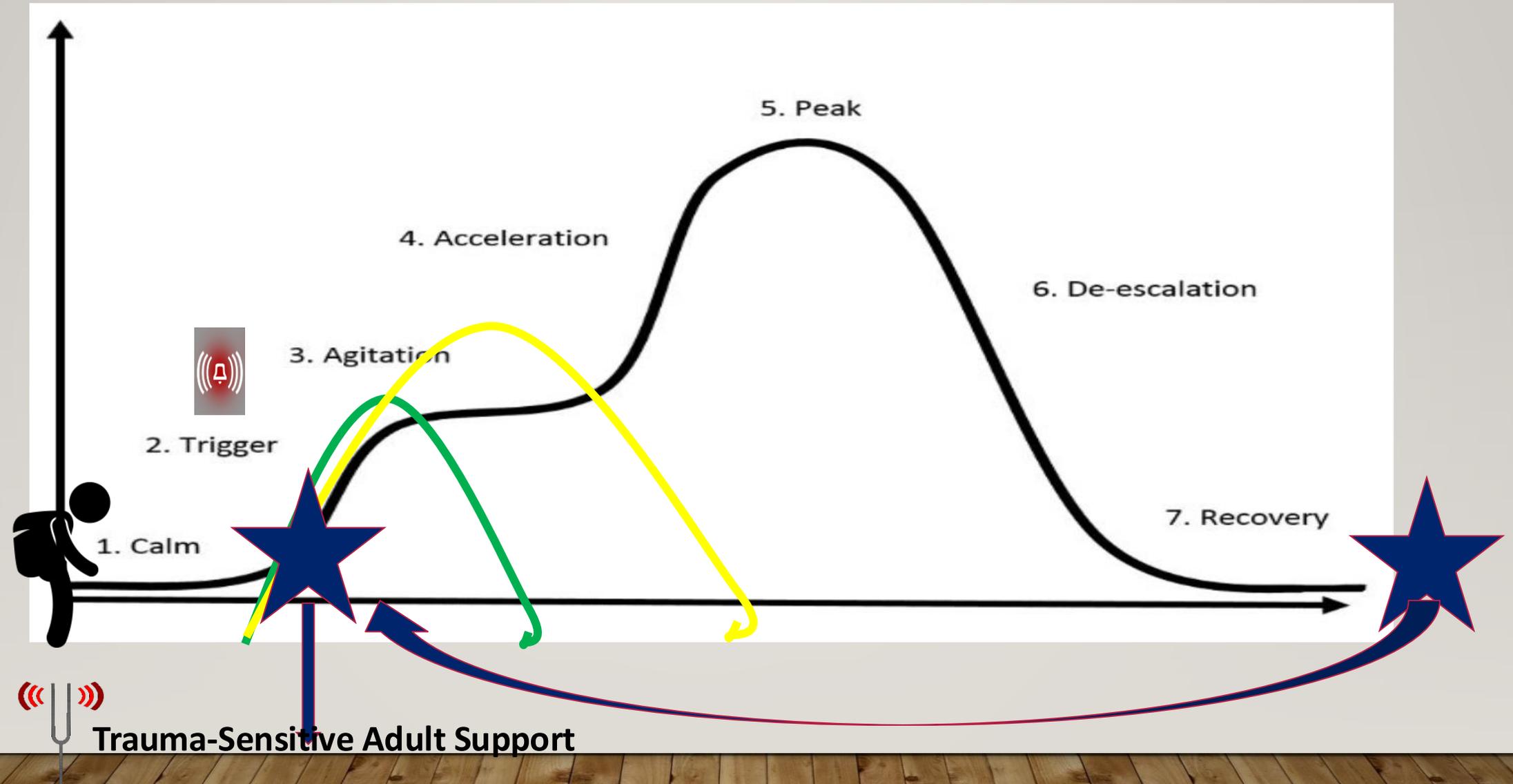
2. Describe inappropriate behavior

3. Describe expected behavior/rule

4. Link to expectation on Matrix (Best Practice)

5. Redirect back to appropriate behavior by ending with encouragement

Trauma and Behavior Escalation



Dealing with home distractions

Not feeling connected to school.

Sexual, Physical or Emotional Abuse

Death



BEHAVIOR INFLUENCES BEHAVIOR

Student's Response

My response

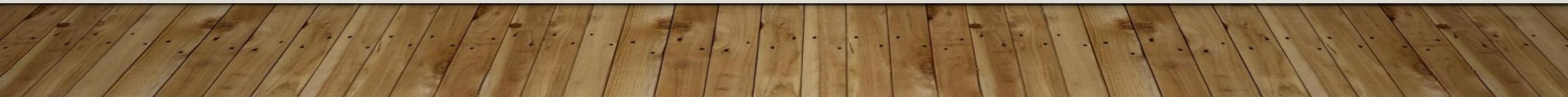


Rise in student demands and expectations.

Increase in workload

Vulnerability due to accountability

Lack of confidence



ADULT BEHAVIOR MATTERS!

- Proximity and Movement
- Active Listening and Looking
- Meaningful/Appropriate Facial Expressions
- Younger learners....bend down to eye level
- Maintain a balanced and comfortable posture
- Rational Detachment – maintaining calm
- Pleasant Tone of Voice
- Use of Student's Names

DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES

HELP – Most effective during the early stages of escalation in which student is supported to get what they need through communication.

PROMPT – Most effective when the Help strategy has not been effective and you think the person will be able to comply with a request. Cue student to engage in a simple behavior that is incompatible with the risk behavior.

WAIT – Most effective when the Help and/or Prompt strategies appear to be heightening the escalation and you would like to avoid external reinforcement of crisis behaviors. Monitor student and grant time for de-escalation.

HELP STRATEGY PROCEDURE

Used in early stages of escalation – when showing signs of initial agitation

Allow the student to tell you what he or she wants through choices.

Allow 5-10 seconds for the student to process request

Repeat the prompt as necessary

If student makes the request, then provide Behavior Specific Praise.

If the student becomes more agitated...you might have to approach with a different strategy.

Prevention

Strategy	Definition	Examples
Choice	Provide the student with a small number (2-3) acceptable options for completing the task.	"You can complete the worksheet independently or with a partner. Which would you prefer?"
Redirection	Provide a brief statement that prompts engagement in a more appropriate task or behavior. Effective statements are short, provided with neutral emotion, and may be delivered privately.	"Andy, try starting on the second section and come back to that one." "Jesse, remember to ask for help if you're feeling stuck."
Co-regulation	Assist students in regulating their emotions by expressing empathy, acknowledging and labeling their emotions, modeling desired behavior, and providing positive reinforcement for following expectations.	"Rosa, I want to make sure you are okay. I see that you are angry because your face is red, and your fists are clenched. When I feel angry, I like to take three deep breaths and count to 10. Watch me and we can do it together."
Prompt Regulation Routines	Prompt use of calming and self-regulation strategies that have been previously taught and mastered as part of a proactive preventive approach.	"Would it help to use your 4-square breathing?" "Cielo, you can grab a quick drink of water and then try again."

PROMPT STRATEGY PROCEDURES

Prompt the student to engage in a simple behavior in their repertoire that is incompatible with the risk behavior

Identify the incompatible and/or high probability behavior

Prompt the behavior in a calm and neutral tone

Allow the student to process the request- 5-10 seconds

Use Behavior Specific Praise when the student demonstrates any element of cooperation. If student continues to comply, consider moving to the Help Strategy.

If uncooperative, identify a different behavior and start over. If agitation increases, then stop and consider switching to different strategy.

PROMPT EXAMPLES

- **Prompt:** This strategy involves providing clear and concise instructions or suggestions to help the person regain control and de-escalate the situation.

Here are some examples:

- **If a person is pacing agitatedly:** Prompt them to walk with you to a different area, or to sit down instead.
- **If a person is yelling** Prompt them to take deep breaths, use calming language, or to speak quietly.
- **If a person is refusing to comply with a request:** Prompt them to choose a different activity or a different way to complete the task.
- **If a person is withdrawing** Prompt them to engage in a conversation, or to participate in a group activity.
- **If a person is having a tantrum:** Prompt them to use their words, or to take a break.
- **If a person is hitting or kicking** Prompt them to use their hands in a different way (game like), such as clapping or patting their leg
- **If a person is refusing to attend a scheduled activity:** Prompt them to choose a different activity, or to participate in a modified version of the activity.

WAIT STRATEGY PROCEDURES

Monitor the student and give them time – Remove potentially dangerous items away from the student and remove other students from the area.

Position yourself to be able to monitor the student without putting yourself at risk.

Avoid reinforcing the person's behavior through verbalizations, eye contact, verbal/non-verbal responses to provocations etc.

When the student begins to demonstrate calmer behavior, switch to the Help or Prompt Strategy.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to neutrally prompt the person to go to a calmer, less stimulating location before using the Wait Strategy.

DURING CRISIS

Strategy	Definition	Examples
<p>Maintain safety with district-approved protocol</p>	<p>Minimizing risk of harm to the student or others by following district-approved crisis protocols to request support and maintain safety. Be familiar with the teams available in the school (Crisis team, Tier 3 team, Administration, etc.) and established protocols, in order to be prepared to make that call when the time comes. Refer to individual student/school building crisis plan for details</p>	<p>Call/text for administrator assistance to support the student.</p> <p>Give the student space with supervision and/or escort other students in the classroom out of the space.</p> <p>Remove items close to the student that might pose harm (i.e., scissors, sharp objects, staplers, computers).</p>
<p>Use minimal words and demands</p>	<p>When a student is in crisis, they often struggle to listen and attend to directions due to their physiological arousal. This is not the time to present consequences for behavior, instead provide space and calm for the student, limiting words and demands.</p>	<p>"Thank you for sitting down, Piper."</p> <p>"I am here when you are ready, Eli."</p> <p>See Figure 2 for more on crisis support routines</p>
<p>Stay Calm</p>	<p>Attend to your own state of physiological arousal and practice self-regulation strategies. If you find yourself escalating and additional supports are available/it is safe to do so, take a break from the situation to regain calm. Remember, you cannot use your skills to regulate the intensity of the situation if you are experiencing behavior escalation.</p>	<p>Ask to leave the space if there are other adults in the room to supervise the student(s).</p> <p>Take 3 deep breaths before talking to student.</p> <p>Notice your heart rate and remind yourself to relax.</p>

SAFETY DURING DE-ESCALATION

- Call for assistance and maintain safety
- Stay calm. Control your verbal behavior, facial expressions, and physical behavior
- Talk quietly even if the student in crisis is loud
- Remove potentially dangerous items from the area
- Avoid Power Struggles

THE CALM DOWN

Regulate

Choose one:

1. Praise approximations
2. Nonverbal prompt of regulation routine
3. Offer time and space

Examples

- "Good job lowering your voice"
- Staff quietly models deep breathing
- "I will be here when you are ready to talk"

Relate

Choose one:

1. Brief sincere words of empathy
2. Brief expression of concern

Examples

- "I want to help you be safe"
- "I can see you are angry and upset"

Repeat REGULATE and RELATE until student appears to become more regulated

Reason

1. One simple instruction to assess regulation at a time
2. Focus on what student should do

Examples

- "Can you show me the deep breathing routine?"
- "Let's sit together in the break space"

AFTER THE CRISIS

Strategy	Definition	Examples
Welcome Student	Welcome the student back into the space in a positive manner. This can be done discretely 1:1 or in front of the entire class, depending on student preferences and needs. This signals to the student that they are accepted and valued and models to the class that the student is welcome into the classroom community.	“Leela, welcome! We are so happy to have you back in class. Take a seat at your desk.”
Reintegrate	Allow student to take part in regular classroom activities. Provide student clear expectations and directions for the activity, acknowledge the student's needs, and give positive praise for following expectations.	“Quinn, would you like to start read aloud with us? The expectation is that students will sit at their desks quietly and read along or draw while I read aloud.” “Quinn, thank you for quietly going to your seat and getting your book.”
Focus on Present	Allow students time to regain self-regulation, re-integrate into the classroom, and get back to baseline before discussing consequences or debriefing. Bringing up the crisis situation too early can re-escalate a student.	Refraining from making comments about behavioral incident or reviewing consequences right away.

SCENARIO I

WHICH STRATEGY TO YOU THINK WOULD BE MOST EFFECTIVE TO USE IN THIS SITUATION?

- After lunch a Kindergarten student, Kayla, comes to you crying. This student has had difficulties with classmates before, feeling that no one likes her or wants to be her friend. This day was especially upsetting for her because none of her classmates would talk to her at the lunch table. She can communicate, but today she is having a challenging time expressing her emotions. As she is crying she begins to wave her hands up and down and pace back and forth when she enters the classroom.

SCENARIO 2

WHICH STRATEGY TO YOU THINK WOULD BE MOST EFFECTIVE TO USE IN THIS SITUATION?

- Michael is in 6th Grade and has a history of getting into verbal altercations with adults and peers that can escalate into aggressive and destructive behaviors. Michael typically will remain calm and engaged in learning during Math class specifically due to the positive relationship he has developed with his Math Teacher, Ms. Grey. One particular day, Michael becomes upset when he enters Math class to discover that Ms. Grey is absent. He has a history of neglect and therefore becomes upset that Ms. Grey is not present. He begins to curse at the Teaching Assistant, flip chairs down to the floor, and throws papers off the shelf.



SCENARIO 3

WHICH STRATEGY DO YOU THINK WOULD BE MOST EFFECTIVE TO USE IN THIS SITUATION?

- Justin, a 2nd grader, does not want to come line up with his class when it is announced that Music Class is over. He verbally refuses to follow the directive to line up begins to run around the classroom and hide under desks.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....

- Most likely, behavior will not de-escalate to complete calm in one step. It is more useful to think about how you can make the situation a little better, one step at a time.
- Start with the strategy that you feel will be the most effective – There is not a specific sequence.
- Change if the strategy is not working
- Don't rush! De-escalation is a process. Minimize your words and keep all communication simple with pauses in between.
- Be aware of your own behavior. If you can't control your own behavior, facial expression, and physical behavior, consider asking another staff person to take over.
- After de-escalation and return to a calm/neutral state by both the student and all staff members involved, re-establish rapport with the student and de-brief regarding the incident.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF BEHAVIOR

Defiance and limit testing are part of regular developmental changes for some students who experience trauma

Inappropriate behavior is malleable and temporary—and you can help ALL your students thrive.

Classroom Management is not about having the right rules, it is about having the right relationship

"When a student believes you care, when he's convinced that he cannot push your buttons, and when he feels successful in your classroom because you challenge him and spark his creativity, you'll optimize the chances that his behavior will improve drastically!"

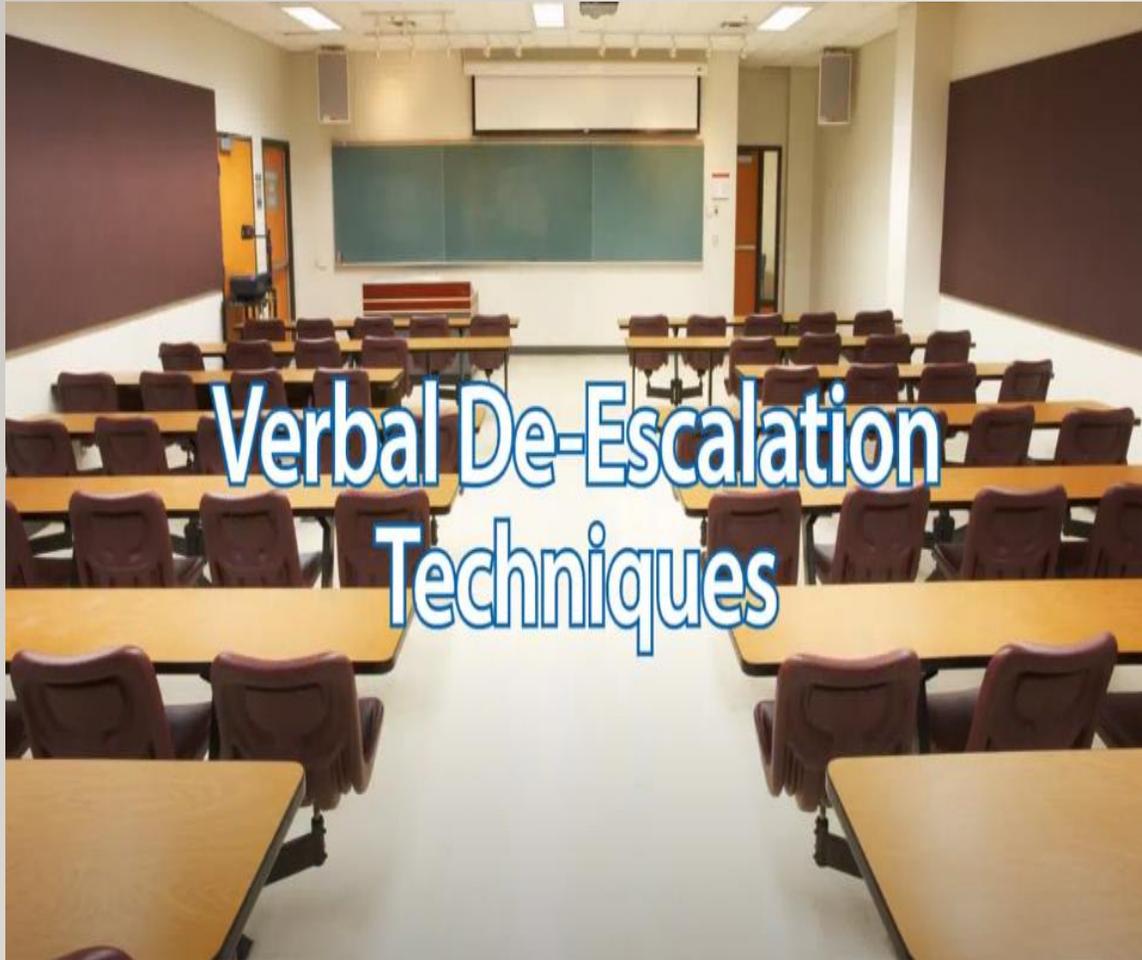
- Annette Breaux in Education Week Teacher



Thank
you

Lauren Emanuele - Behavior Interventionist
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Verbal De-Escalation Techniques

YOUR RESPONSE TO BEHAVIOR

Your Response to A Behavior Can Make It Better or Worse

Watch later Share

changing classroom BEHAVIOR

MORE VIDEOS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUNIVHwMTmw>

[Your response to behavior](#)

DE-ESCALATION

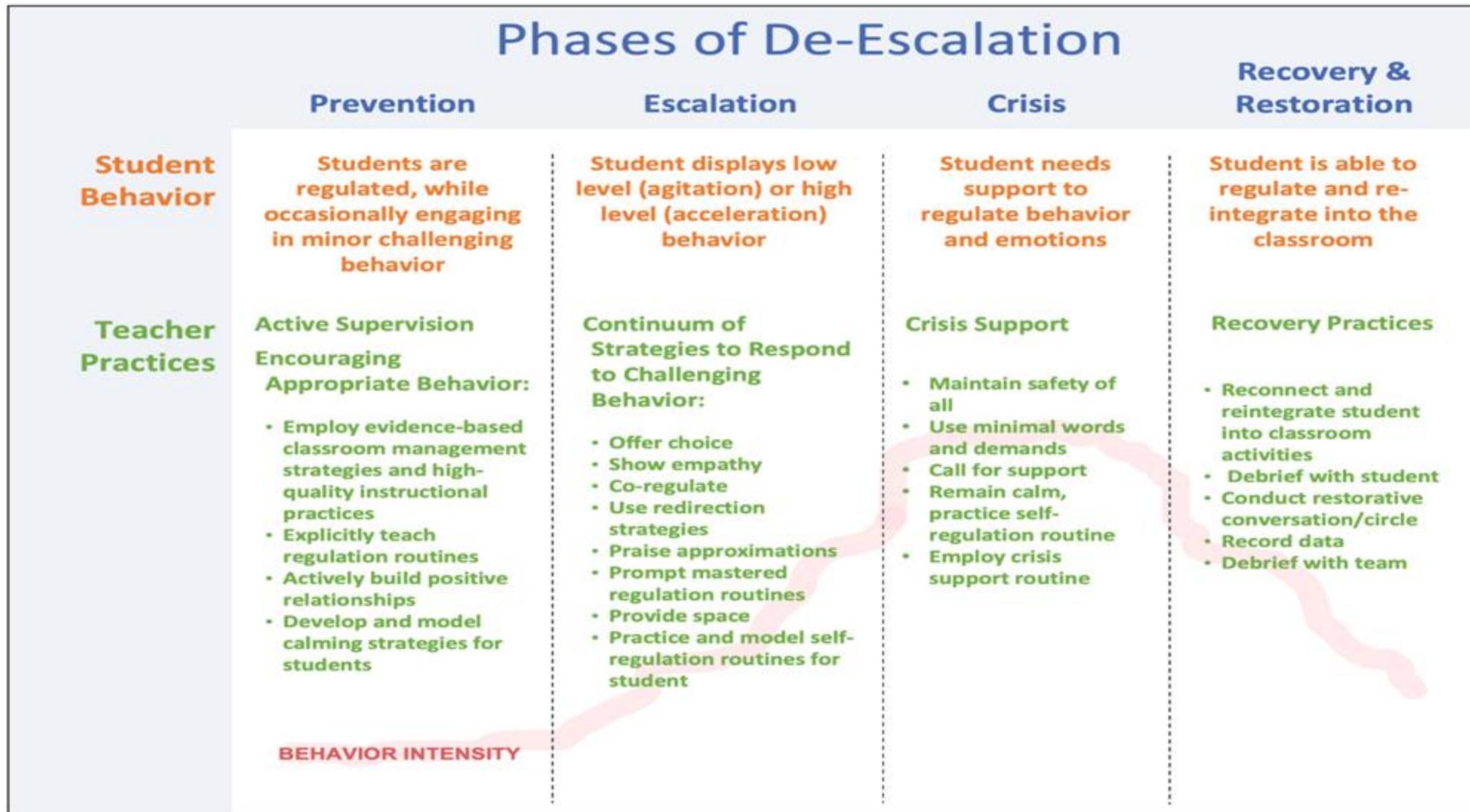


Figure 1. Phases of De-Escalation (adapted with permission from Midwest PBIS Network Phases of De-Escalation graphic)

De-escalation Strategies at a Glance

	Help	Prompt	Wait
Steps to Follow	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Approach using Safety Stance or Elbow Check. 2) Ask the person to say what he or she wants. Pick one of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Prompt the person to make a specific request. E.g., "Say, 'I want to take a walk.'" b) Give the person 2–3 acceptable choices. E.g., "Do you want take a walk or get a drink of water?" c) Ask the person to tell you what he or she wants. E.g., "What do you want?" or "How can I help you?" 3) Allow 5–10 seconds for the person to process your request. 4) Repeat the prompt if necessary. 5) If the person makes a request, then praise. If the request is one you can reasonably comply with, then do so. If you can't comply, then address some component of the request as closely as you can. 6) If the person becomes more agitated, then consider switching to a different strategy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify an incompatible or high-probability behavior. 2) Approach using Safety Stance or Elbow Check. 3) Prompt the desired behavior in a calm, neutral tone. 4) Allow 5–10 seconds for the person to process your request. 5) Repeat the prompt if necessary. 6) Praise any cooperation. Begin again with another incompatible or high-probability behavior. If the person continues to be cooperative, consider switching to the Help strategy. 7) If uncooperative, then identify a different behavior and start over. If signs of agitation increase, then stop and consider switching to a different strategy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Remove other vulnerable individuals and make sure that no one will accidentally intrude. 2) Use Safety Stance. Position yourself to be able to monitor the person without putting yourself at risk. Step back if necessary for safety. 3) Avoid reinforcing the person's behavior (don't talk, give eye contact, respond to provocations, etc.). 4) When the person behaves more calmly, switch to the Help or Prompt strategy.
When to Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the person is beginning to show signals of agitation. Avoid the Help strategy when the person's behavior is highly escalated. • When the person is likely to ask for something that is available, appropriate, and safe. If the person will probably ask for something you are not able or willing to provide, you should use a different strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Help strategy has not been effective or is not appropriate to use. • When you think the person is likely to comply your request. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Helping and Prompting appear to make the situation worse. • When you want to avoid all external reinforcement of crisis behaviors. • When nothing else is working.