

De-escalation Strategies

1

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

2

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.

3

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.

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 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.

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>