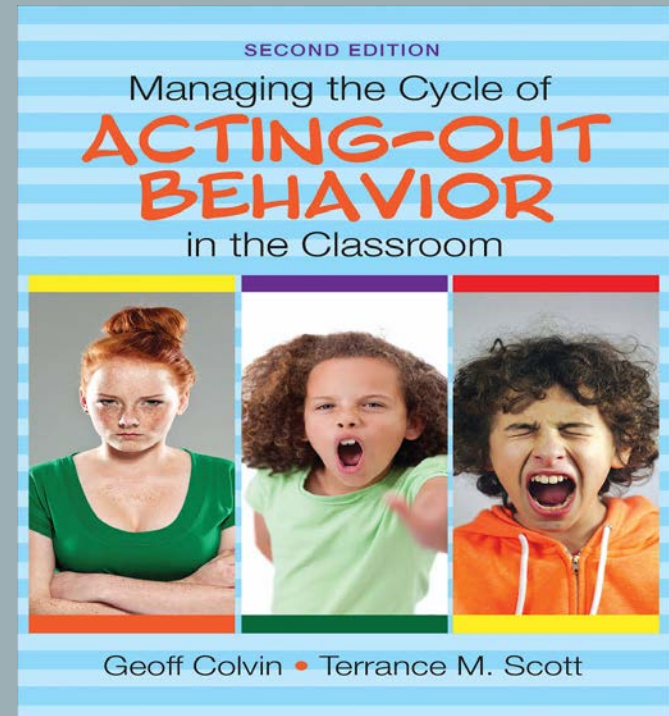


UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING THE ACTING OUT CYCLE

Presented by: Becky Boggs, Jeanie Carey and Rebecca Roberts—South Central RPDC Consultants





OUTCOMES

At the end of this session, you will be able to...

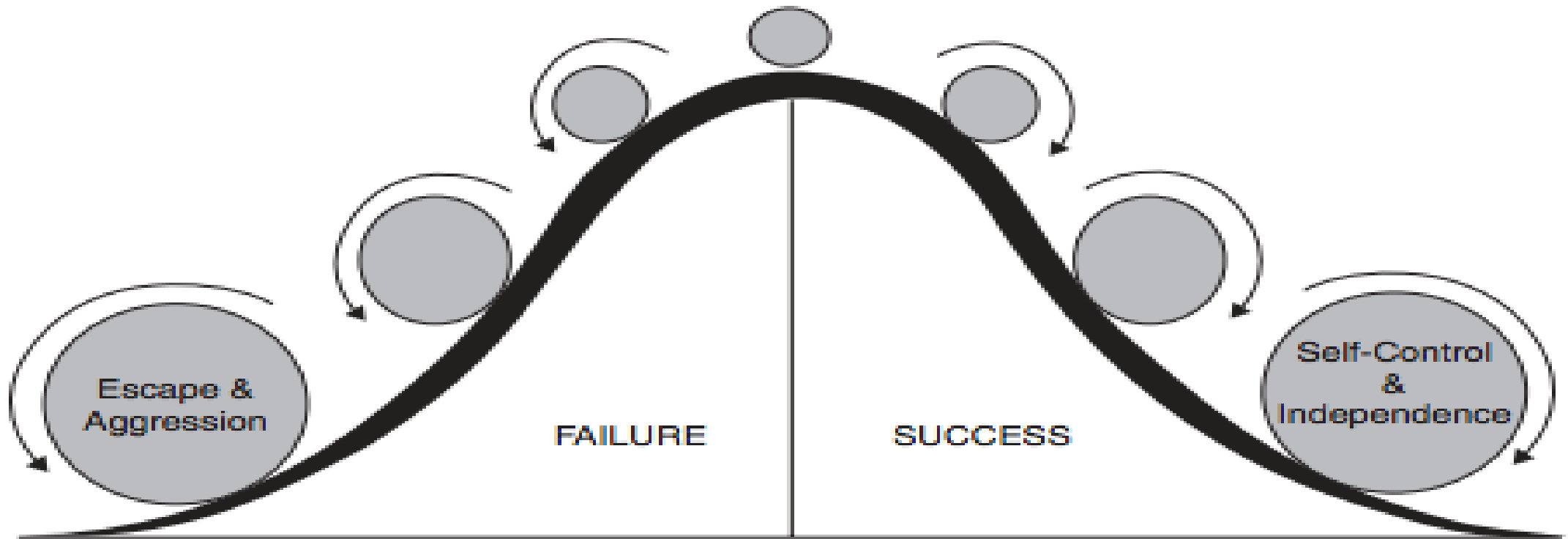
- Understand behavior is a form of communication.
- Identify the specific behaviors of the 7 phases of the Acting Out cycle.
- Identify environmental supports that can be provided to intervene early in the acting out cycle.



“General education teachers have to deal with ever increasing numbers of students who are difficult to manage and teach. In addition, teachers are discovering that the management practices that have worked so well over the years with typical students do not seem to be very effective with these more difficult students.”

Colvin, 2004

Figure 1.1 Snowball Depiction of Student Success or Failure



“THE SNOWBALL ROLLING FAST TO THE RIGHT CANNOT BE SLOWED BY THE OCCASIONAL FAILURE. LIKEWISE, THE SNOWBALL ROLLING FAST TO THE LEFT WILL NOT BE SLOWED BY THE OCCASIONAL SUCCESS.”



PRINCIPLES OF FUNCTION-BASED SUPPORT

- Human behavior is ***functional***
 - Behavior serves a purpose
 - Results/consequences of a behavior affect future occurrences of that behavior
- Human behavior is ***predictable***
 - Environmental conditions can set up, set off, or maintain appropriate or inappropriate behavior
- Human behavior is ***changeable***
 - Understanding the predictors, consequences and function of problem behavior is key for designing effective interventions.



BEHAVIOR IS FUNCTIONAL
NOT GOOD OR BAD

- Functional: It pays off for the student in some way... so he/she will do it again
- Adults may see the behavior as being “good” or “bad”, but the student does it because it is effective; it works for him/her

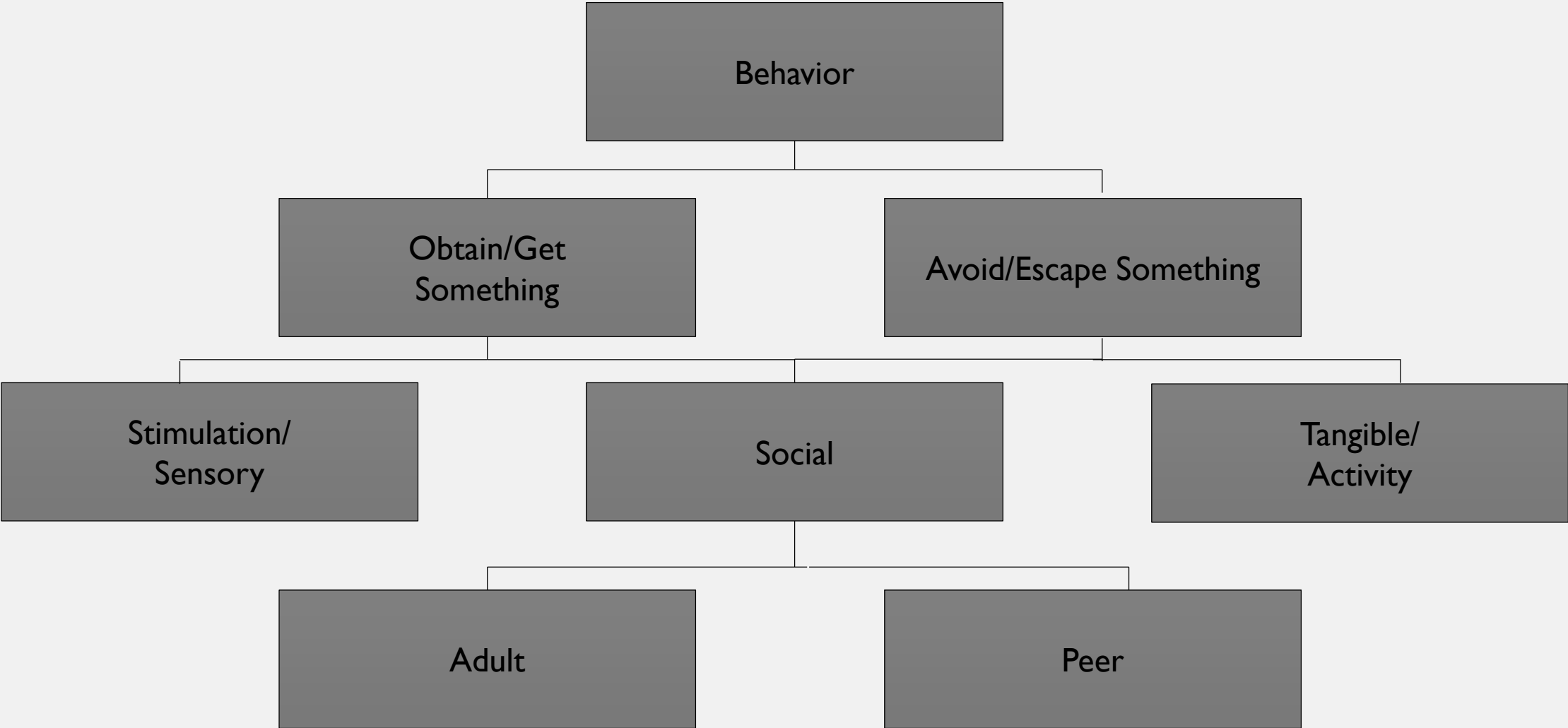


UNDERSTANDING CHRONIC CLASSROOM MANAGED PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

- Behavior is a form of communication, unfortunately some students learn that *problem behavior* is the most efficient way for them to communicate their needs.
- If a student repeatedly engages in a problem behavior, he/she is doing it because it is effectively meeting his/her needs.
- The behavior is functional or serves a purpose.



FUNCTIONS OF BEHAVIOR





LIMITED EFFECTIVENESS

“Unfortunately, most of the practical techniques used by teachers to respond to acting-out children are only of limited effectiveness and some, such as reprimands, arguing, and escalated hostile interactions, can actually strengthen the behaviors they are intended to suppress or terminate.”



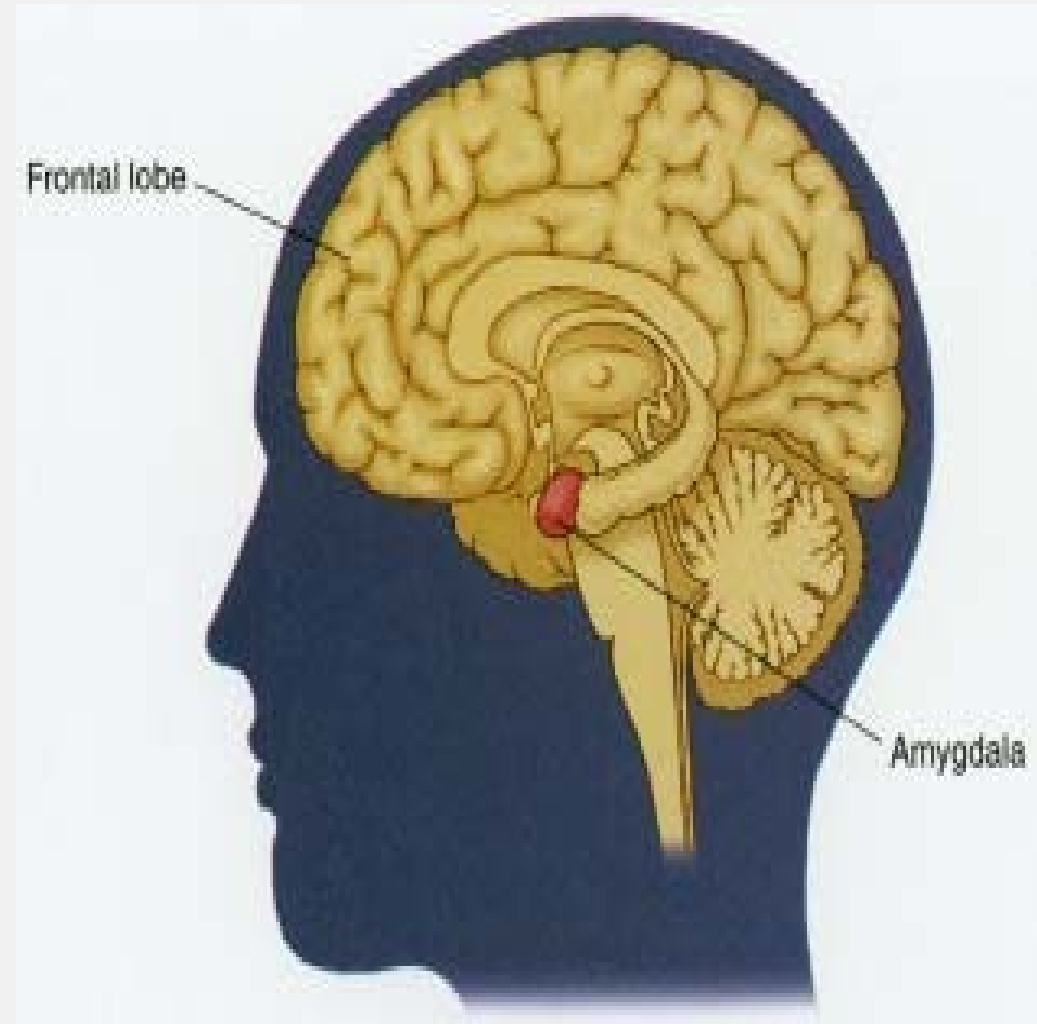
STOP AND THINK

*If you look at the **ABC's** of a specific Behavior you will better understand the **FUNCTION or Purpose** of that behavior for the student.*

- What is the child trying to **communicate**?
- What does the child see as the outcome?
(gained or avoided what?)
- What can we do to change the behavior? How can we help meet the child's need?

THE SOURCES OF EMOTIONS

- Researchers believe that the frontal lobes and the amygdala are among the most important brain structures affecting emotions.
- Feelings of happiness and pleasure are linked to the prefrontal cortex.
- Anger, fear, sadness, and other negative emotions are linked to the amygdala.



Left Brain

Right Brain

logic I know exactly who I am

A masters of words and language

Realistic

Always in control

Linear

Analytical

I am order Strategic

I love the familiar

I am logic

I am a scientist

categorize

Control

I am accurate

mathematician

I calculate equations and play with numbers

practical

I am everything I wanted to be

I am the sound of roaring laughter

A free spirit

I am movement

I sense

I am the urge to paint on empty canvas

Vivid

I feel

Art

I am creativity

Poetry

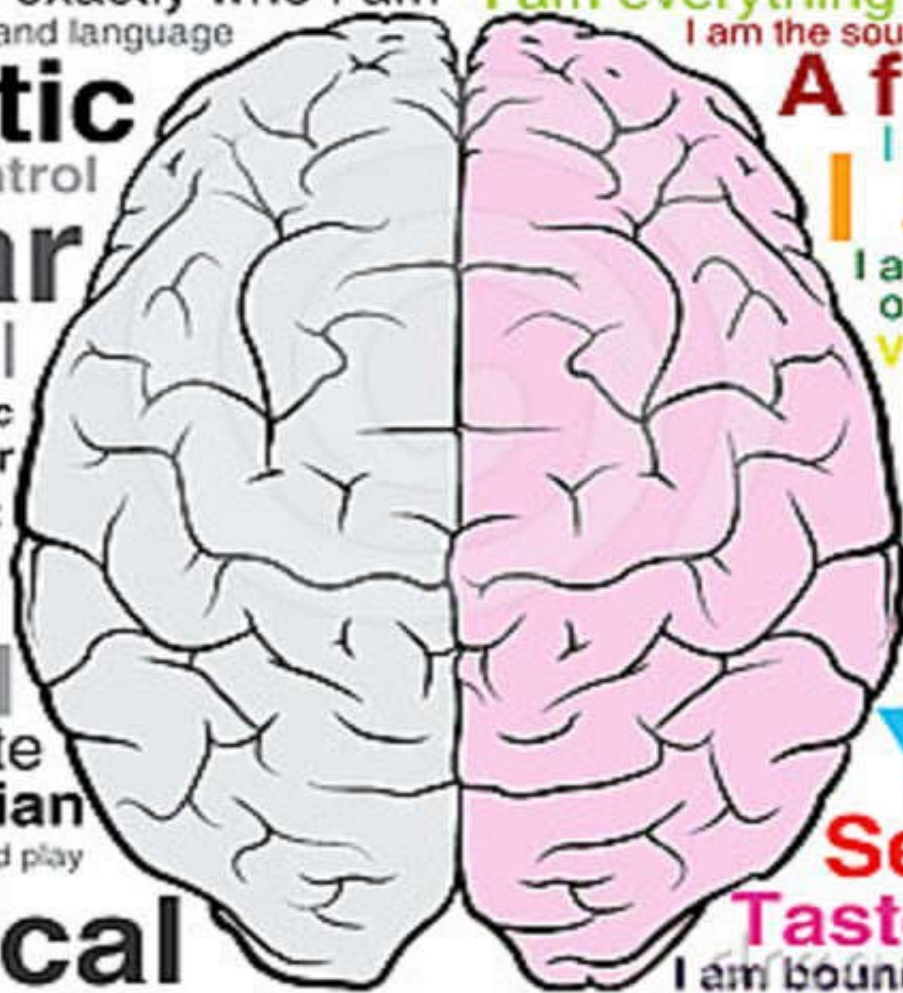
The feeling of sand beneath bare feet

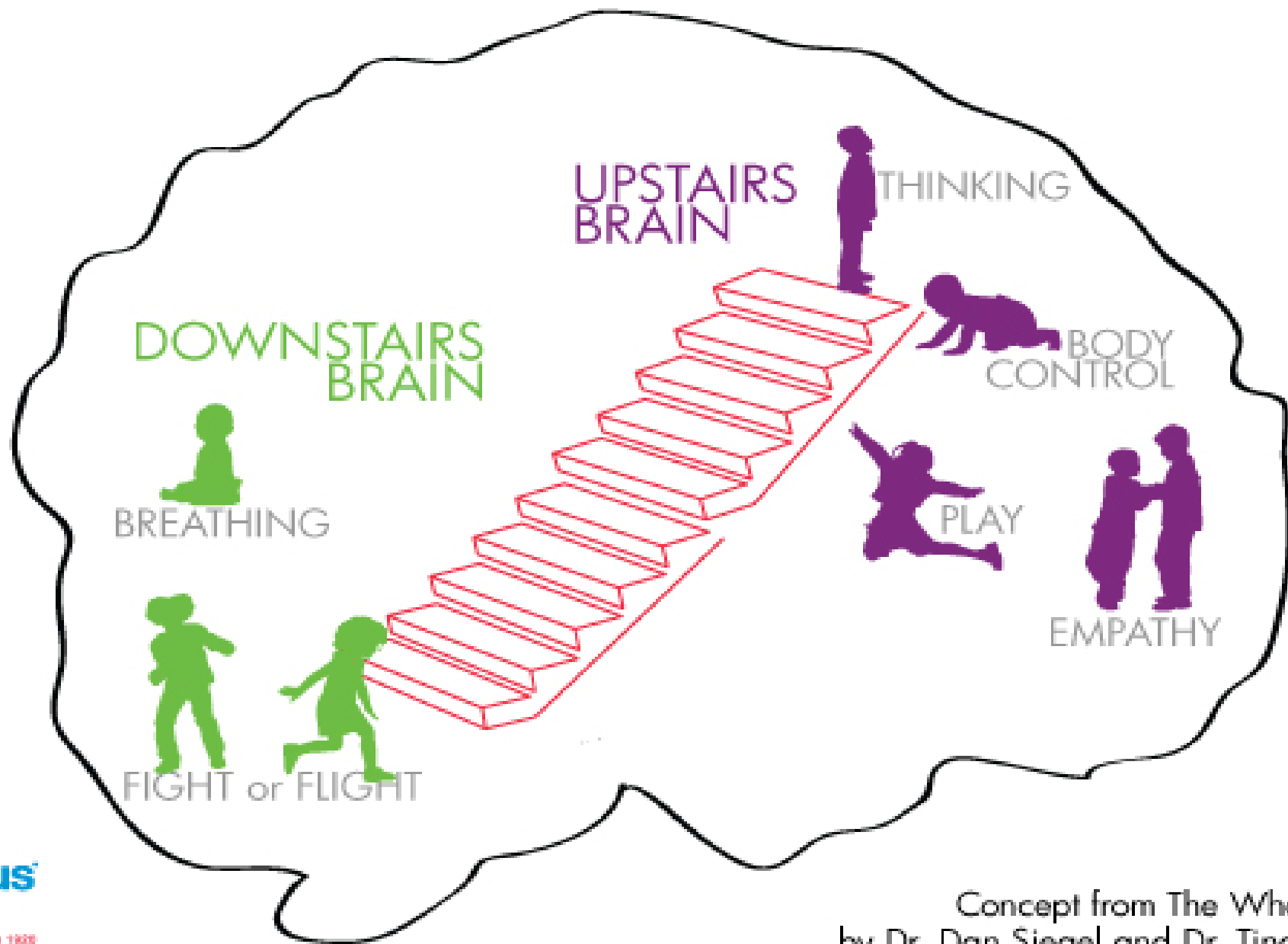
Yearn

Sensuality

Taste Passion

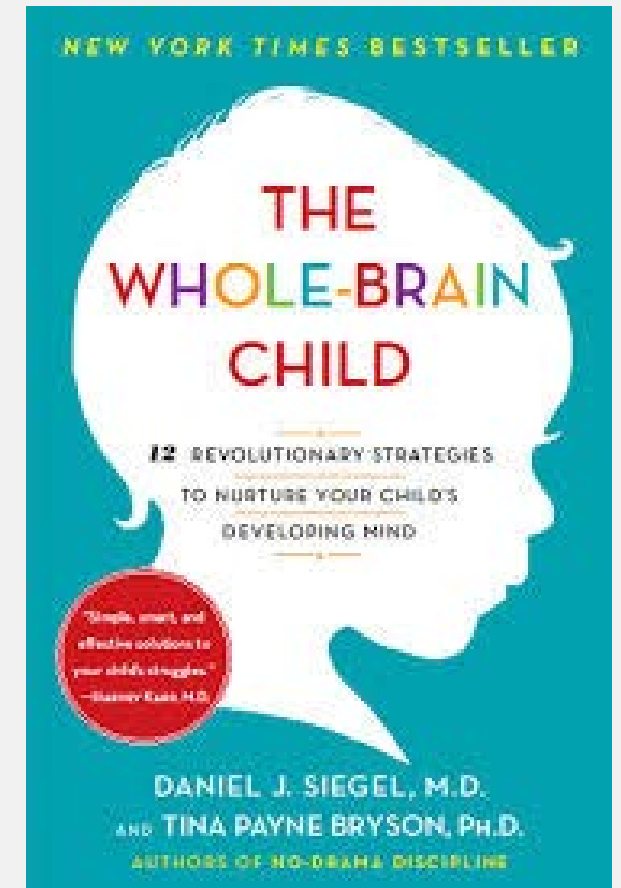
I am boundless imagination





UPSTAIRS/DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN

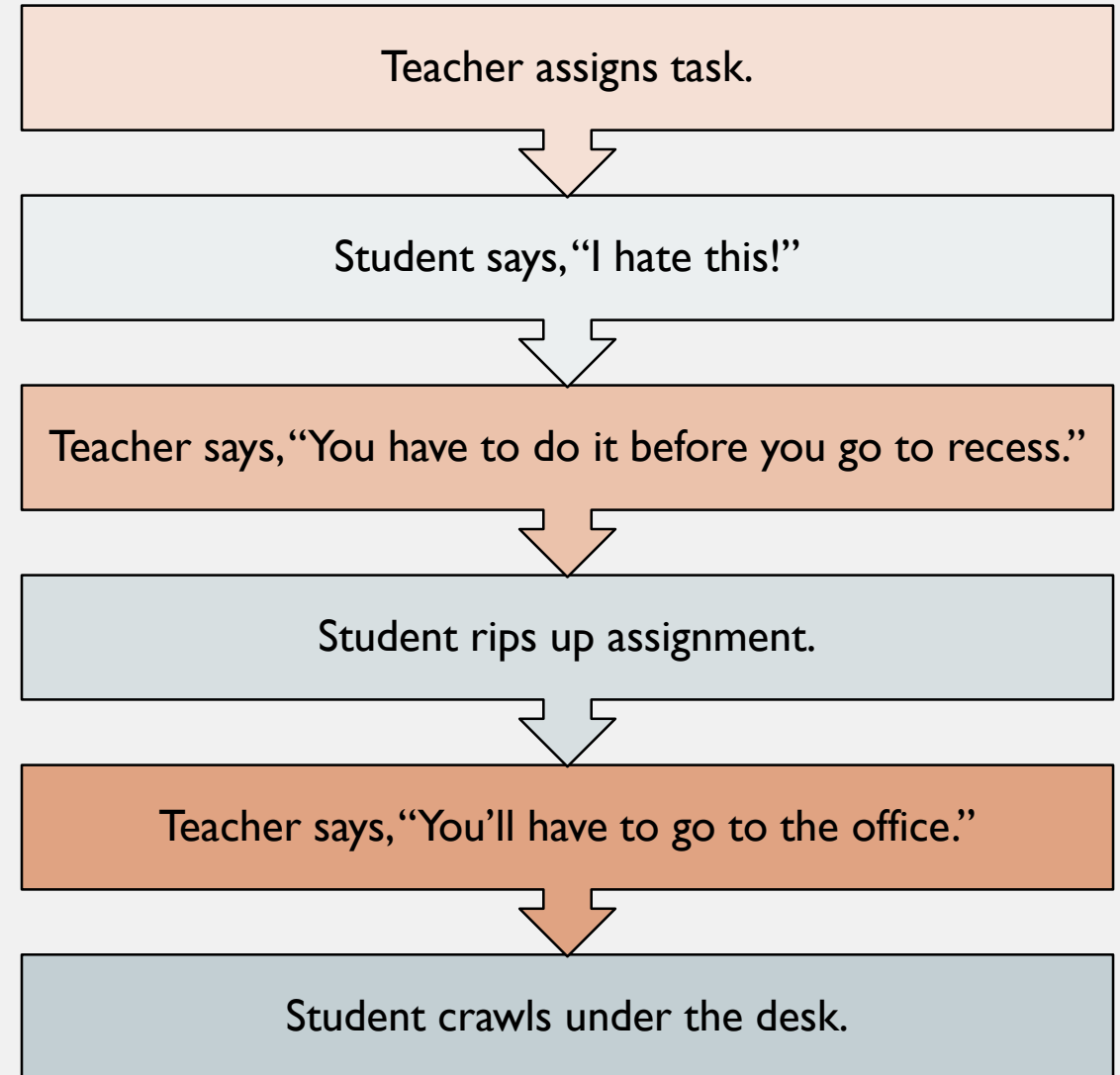
- **Downstairs Brain** (well developed at birth)
 - Responsible for basic functions (breathing/blinking), innate reactions and impulses (fight/flight), and for strong emotions (anger/fear).
- **Upstairs Brain** (fully mature by mid-twenties)
 - More intricate mental processes (thinking/imagining/planning)
 - Controls higher-order thinking and analytical thinking
 - When working well, can regulate emotions, consider consequences, think before acting, and consider how other feel.



BEHAVIORS OCCUR IN A CHAIN

- Series of stimuli/response reactions
- Effective management of behaviors during early phases will reduce the likelihood the later phases when the more serious behaviors will occur.

In order to control a behavioral chain, the links need to be identified and broken.





WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO BREAK THE
ESCALATING CHAIN OF BEHAVIOR?

- Identify how to *accurately assess* in which phase the student is operating.
- Identify *environmental supports* that can be provided to intervene *early* in the escalation.
- Identify *replacement* behaviors that can be taught & serve similar function.

THE ACTING-OUT CYCLE

- Acting out behavioral cycle is defined in seven phases.
- Specific features at each phase should allow staff some predictability in planning for students.
- Our goal is to interrupt the student's cycle.

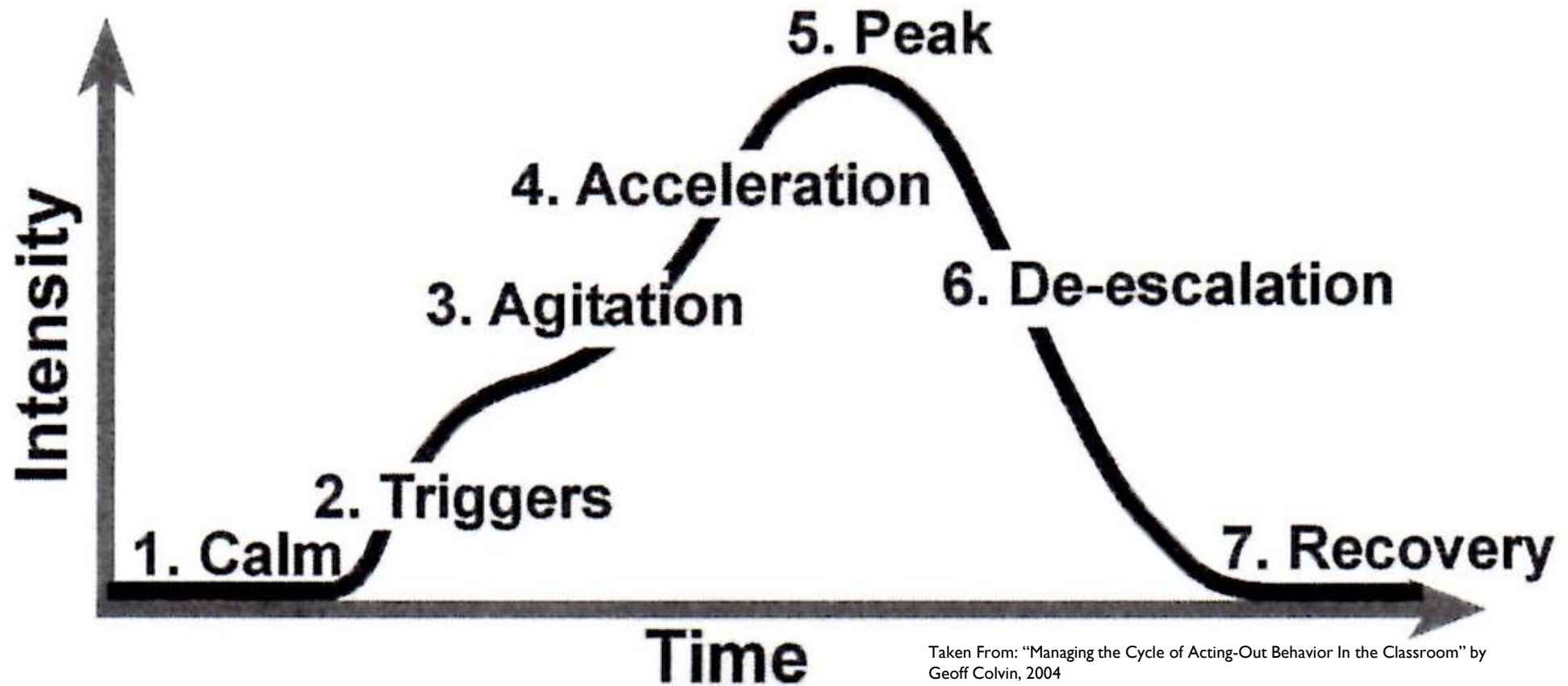


A SEVEN PHASE MODEL

1. Calm
2. Triggers
3. Agitation
4. Acceleration
5. Peak
6. De-escalation
7. Recovery

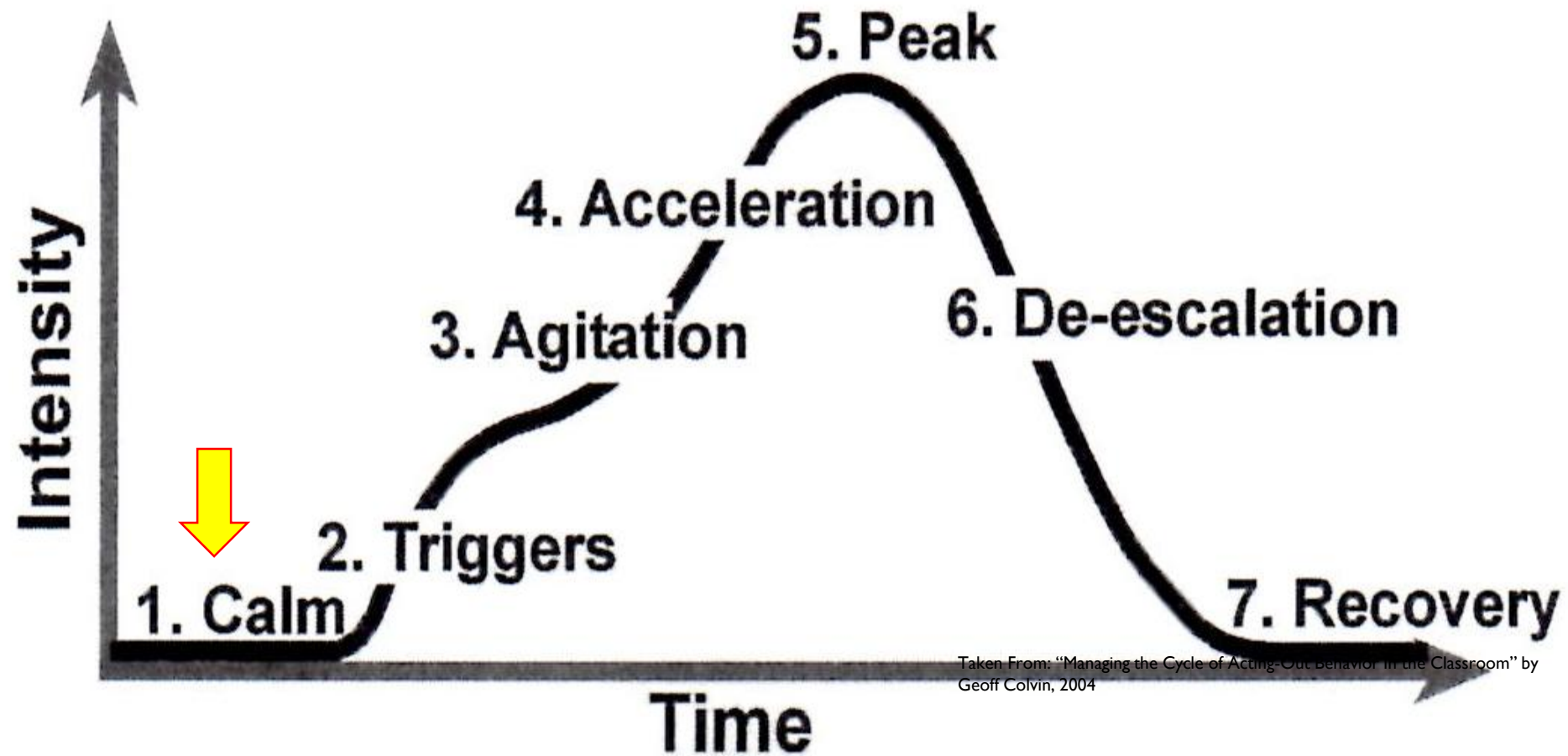


Figure 2.1: Phases of Acting-Out Behavior



Taken From: "Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior In the Classroom" by Geoff Colvin, 2004

Figure 2.1: Phases of Acting-Out Behavior





PHASE I: CALM

What is it?

- Students exhibit appropriate, cooperative behavior and are responsive to staff directions.

What does it look like?

- Student is cooperative.
 - Sets personal goals.
 - Follows directives.
 - Accepts praise.
 - Accepts corrective feedback.
 - Ignores distractions.



PHASE I: CALM

What should we do?

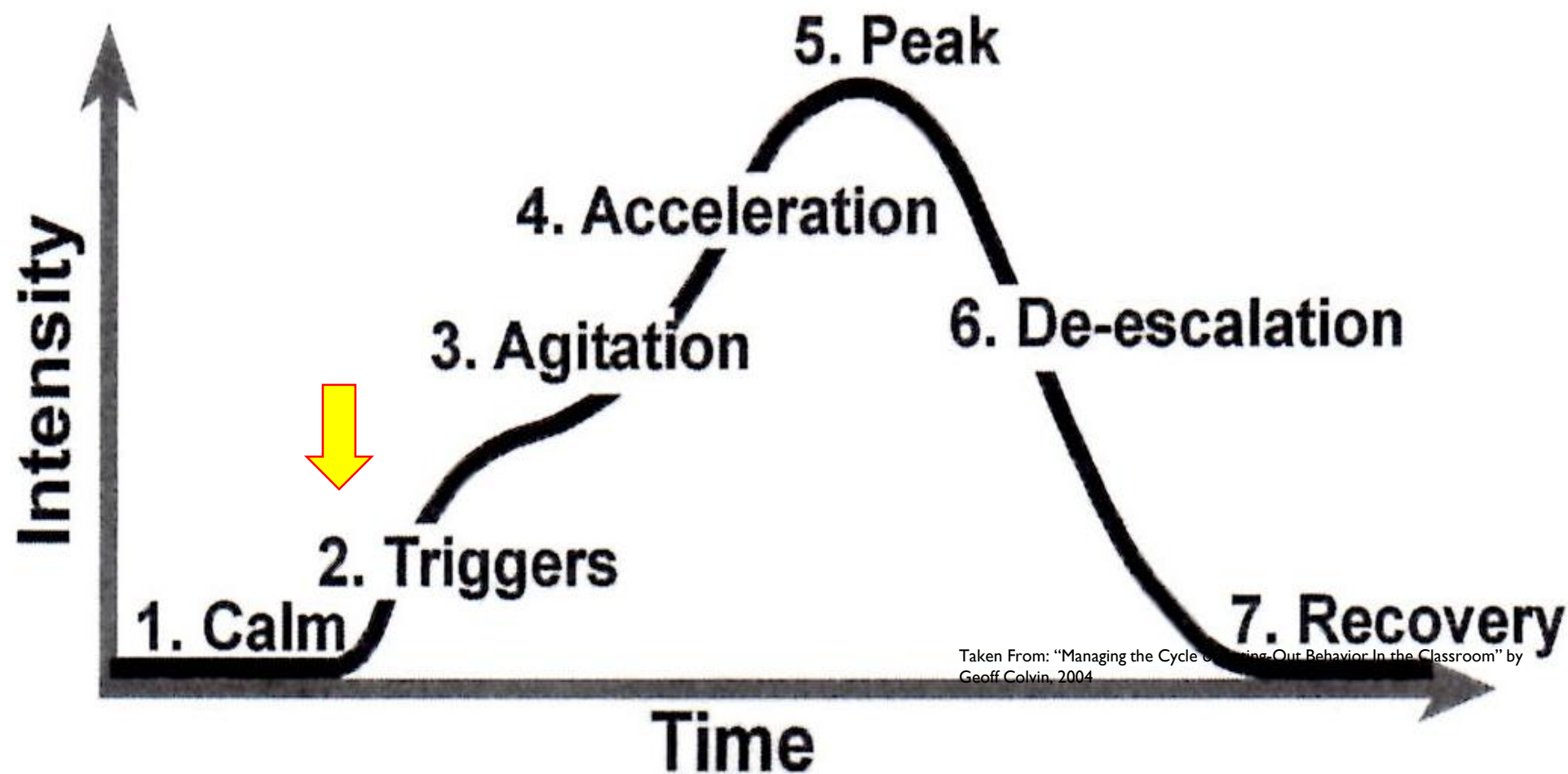
Intervention is focused on prevention.

- Create positive environment to increase appropriate behavior.
- Arrange for high rates of successful academic and social engagements.
- Teach Social Skills
 - Problem solving
 - Self-management and relaxation strategies
- Assess Problem Behavior
 - Examine academic and behavioral learning history
 - Identify triggers and the function

STRATEGIES CURRENTLY IN PLACE TO MAINTAIN A CALM ENVIRONMENT

- What classroom practices do you have in place to create a calm environment? How do you know?
- Classroom Expectations and Rules
- Classroom Procedures and Routines
- Encouraging Appropriate Behavior
- Discouraging Inappropriate Behavior

Figure 2.1: Phases of Acting-Out Behavior





PHASE 2: TRIGGERS

What is it?

- Triggers are activities, events, or behaviors that provoke anxiety and set off the cycle of problem behavior.

What do triggers look like?

- Student experiences a series of unresolved conflicts.
 - Repeated failures
 - Frequent corrections
 - Interpersonal conflicts
 - Timelines
 - Low rates of positive reinforcement



PHASE 2: TRIGGERS

- School-Based Triggers

- Conflicts
- Changes in routine
- Peer provocations
- Pressure
- Ineffective problem solving
- Facing errors during instruction
- Facing correction procedures

- Nonschool-Based Triggers

- High needs homes
- Health problems
- Nutrition needs
- Inadequate sleep
- Dual diagnoses
- Substance abuse
- Gangs and deviant peer groups



PHASE 2: TRIGGERS

What should we do?

Intervention is focused on prevention & redirection.

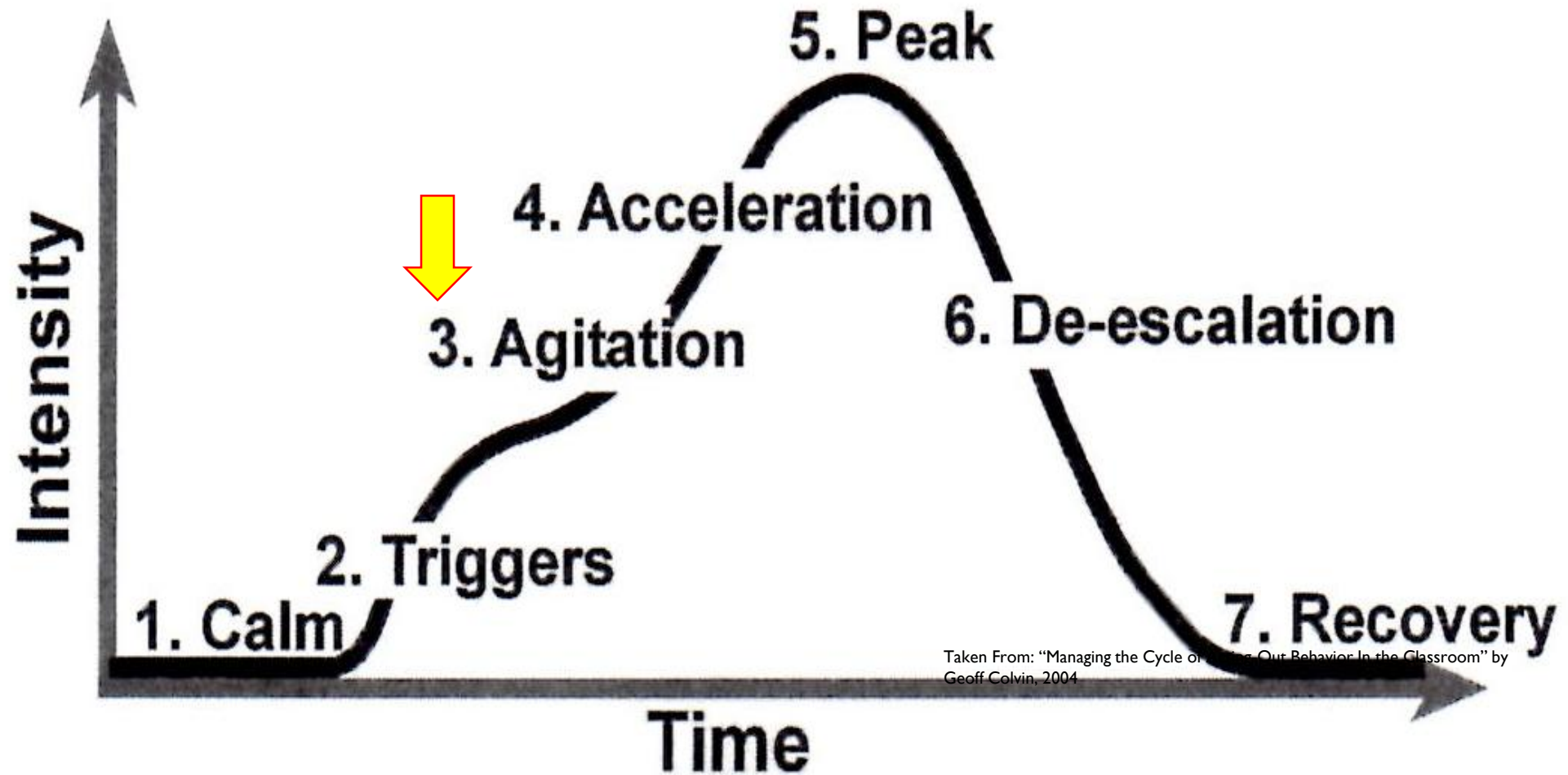
- Pre-correct before triggers are present.
- Identify the content and predictable problem behavior
- Provide Active Supervision
- Specify expected behavior
- Rehearse/practice expectations



PHASE 2: TRIGGERS

- When triggers are present, break the cycle and redirect the student back to the calm stage by:
 - Increasing opportunities for success.
 - Reinforcing what has been taught.
 - Teaching social skills for managing triggers.
 - Considering function of problem behavior in planning/implementing response.

Figure 2.1: Phases of Acting-Out Behavior





PHASE 3: AGITATION

What is it?

- Characterized by emotional responses (e.g., anger, depression, worry, anxiety, and frustration.)

What does it look like?

- Student exhibits increase in unfocused behavior.
 - Increase in movement
 - Off-task
 - Out of seat
 - Talking with others
 - Social withdrawal



PHASE 3: AGITATION

Increases in Behavior

- Darting eyes
- Busy hands
- Moving in and out of groups
- Off-task and on-task cycle

Decreases in Behavior

- Staring into space
- Avoids eye contact
- Short, terse one-word responses
- Sits on hands; hands behind the back
- Withdrawal from groups



PHASE 3: AGITATION

What should we do?

Intervention is focused on reducing anxiety.

- Teacher Proximity
- Independent Activities
- Passive Activities
- Movement Activities
- Academic lesson is not priority at this time; moving student back to calm phase is primary goal.



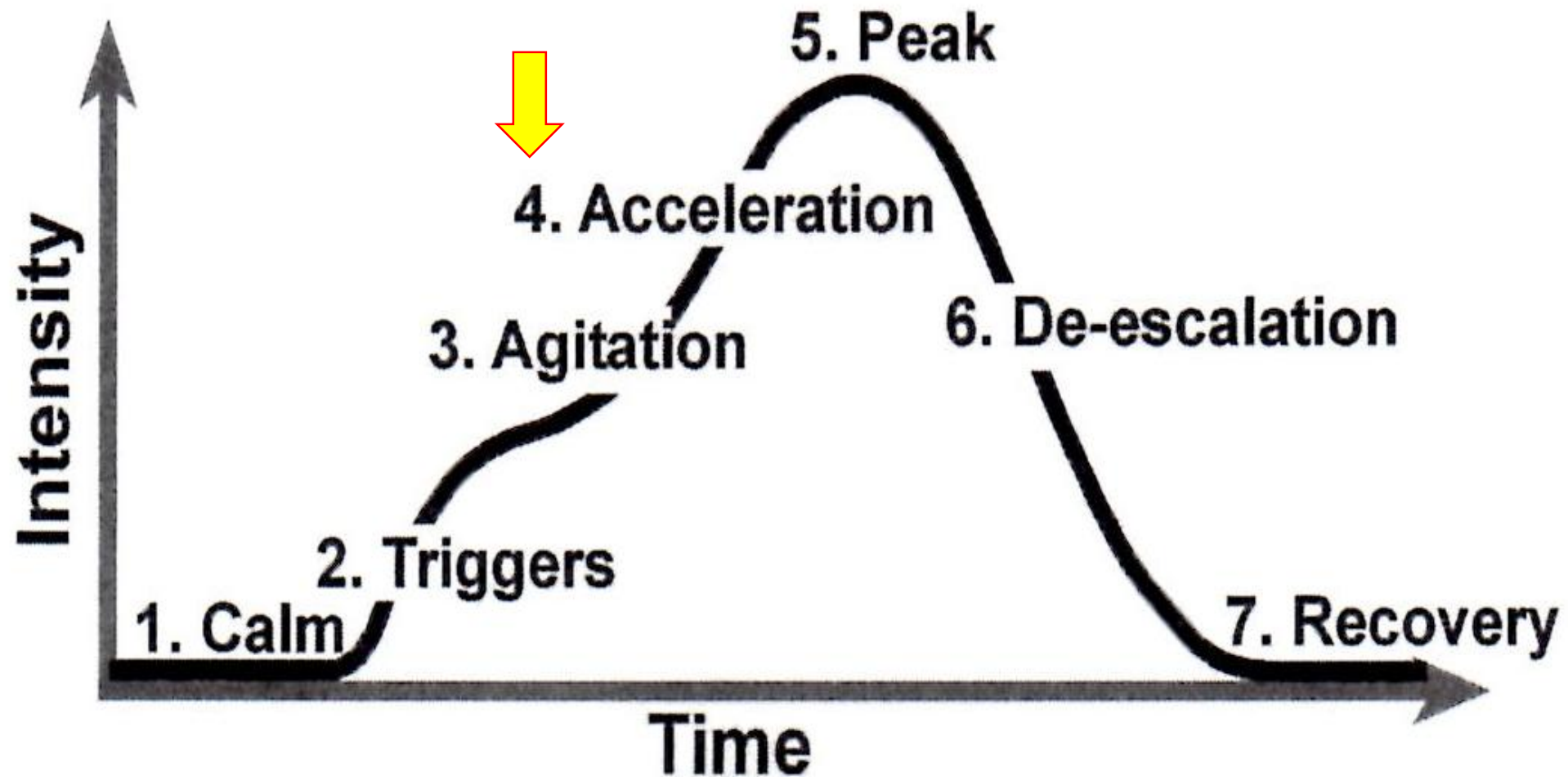
PHASE 3: AGITATION CONT.

What should we do?

Intervention is focused on reducing anxiety.

- Calming Strategies
 - Teacher Empathy
 - *“Are you ok?” “Is there something I can help you with?” “Do you need a minute to yourself?”*
 - Assist Student to work on the Task
 - Provide Space
 - Provide Assurances and Additional Time
 - Permit Preferred Activities (within set parameters)

Figure 2.1: Phases of Acting-Out Behavior





PHASE 4: ACCELERATION

What is it?

- Escalated behaviors intended to test limits. Students exhibit engaging behavior that is highly likely to obtain a response from another person – typically the teacher.

What does it look like?

- Student displays focused behavior.
 - Partial compliance with a direction
 - High intensity
 - Threatening
 - Personal



PHASE 4: ACCELERATION

Engaging behaviors that may be exhibited:

- Questioning and arguing
- Making noises
- Provocation of others
- Failure to follow directions
- Compliance with accompanying inappropriate behavior
- Whining and crying
- Avoids tasks/activities
- Threats and intimidation
- Destruction of property
- Work is partially completed or completed far below the student's usual standard



PHASE 4: ACCELERATION

What should we do?

Intervention is focused on safety.

- Move slowly and deliberately toward the problem situation.
- Speak privately if possible.
- Minimize body language.
- Keep a reasonable distance.
- Speak respectfully.
- Use non-confrontational limit-setting procedures

Withdraw if problem behavior escalates

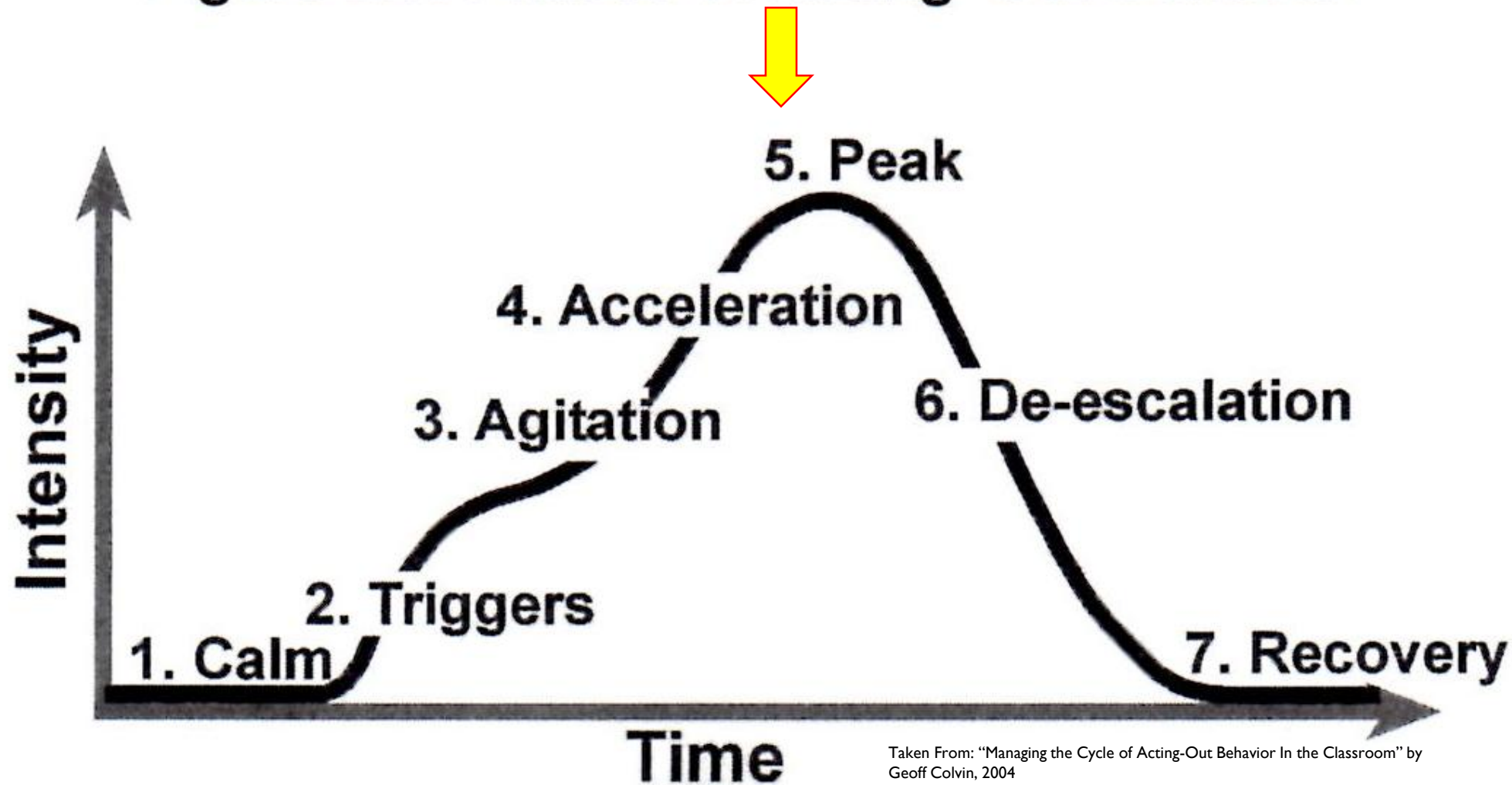


PHASE 4: ACCELERATION

What should we do?

- Non-confrontational limit-setting procedures
 - Establish Initial Setup
 - Rehearse the Steps with the Class
 - Establish a short list of Negative Consequences
 - Present the Information as a Decision
 - Follow – Through
 - Acknowledge when the student begins to engage in appropriate behavior
 - Calmly and quietly administer negative consequence when the student continues problem behavior

Figure 2.1: Phases of Acting-Out Behavior



Taken From: "Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior In the Classroom" by Geoff Colvin, 2004



PHASE 5: PEAK

What is it?

- Students with acting-out behavior may be a threat to themselves or others.

What does it look like?

- Student is out of control & displays most severe problem behavior.
 - Physical aggression
 - Property destruction
 - Self-injury
 - Escape/social



PHASE 5: PEAK

What should we do?

Implement Safety Plan

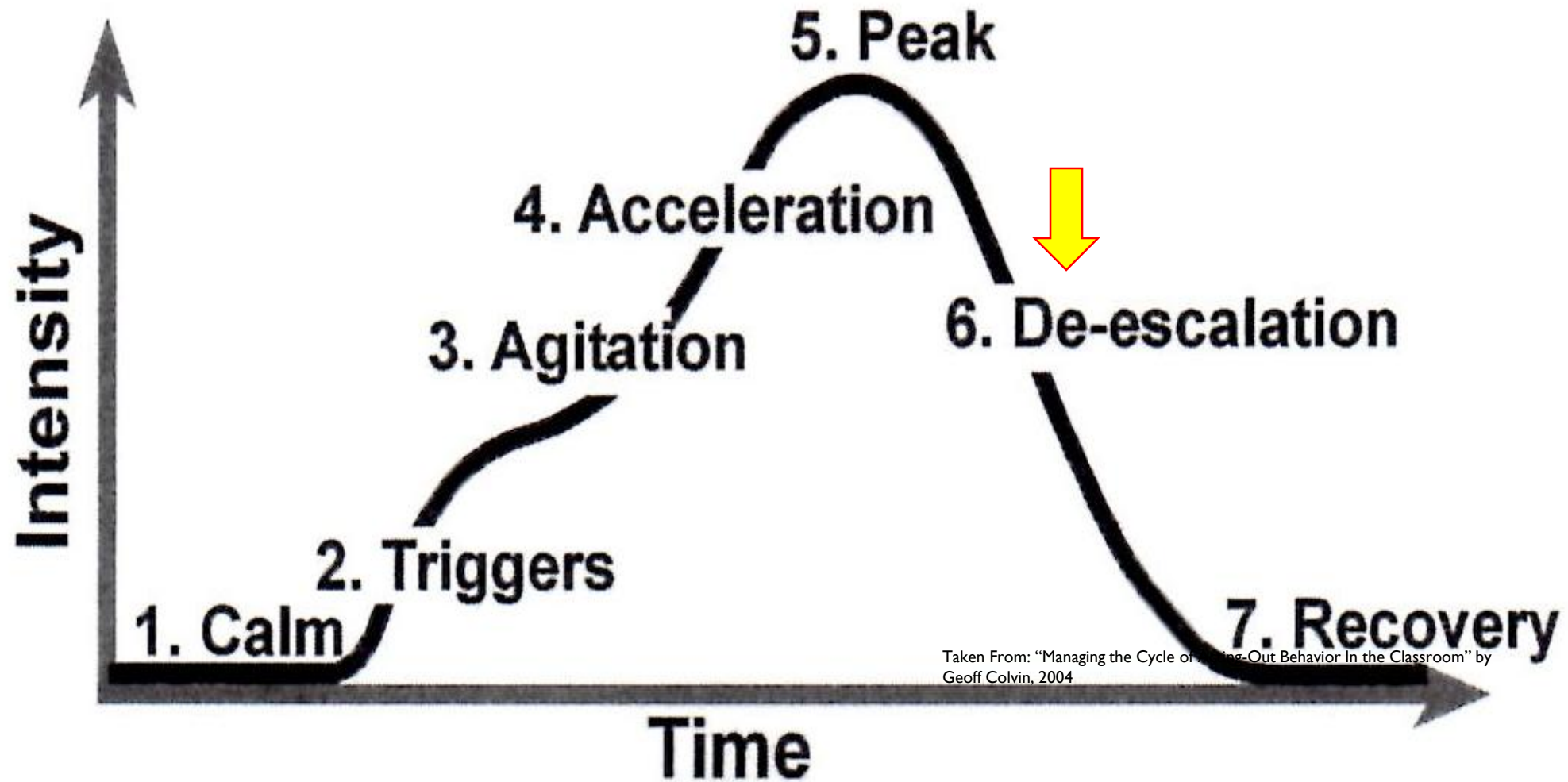
1. Identify behaviors that signal the safety strategies should be used.
2. Describe each action that must be taken to keep everyone safe.
3. Identify the personnel that will assist in implementing the plan.
4. Identify what the other children will do.
5. Have personnel (accessed through a code word over the intercom or accessed by having a responsible child go to the office) and materials (crisis bag) readily available.



SAFETY STRATEGIES

- Safety strategies are different from response interventions.
- They should be used only in situations where there is serious risk of injury to self, others, or valuable property.
- Preliminary data indicate that crisis management procedures are overused and unnecessarily used (George, 2000).

Figure 2.1: Phases of Acting-Out Behavior





PHASE 6: DE-ESCALATION

What is it?

- This phase is characterized by student disengagement and reduced acting-out behavior.

What does it look like?

- Student displays confusion but with decreases in severe behavior.
- Social withdrawal
- Denial
- Blaming others
- Minimization of problem



PHASE 6: DE-ESCALATION

What should we do?

Intervention is focused on removing excess attention.

- Reduce stimuli and interaction with other people to prevent further escalation and to provide time to calm down
- Assign low level independent task
 - Emphasize starting anew
- Avoid blaming
 - Don't force apology
- Follow up with the student at another time when the student is *perfectly calm*.



PHASE 6: DE-ESCALATION

- Teacher/Staff Procedures
 - Isolate the student
 - Decision is made to retain student at school or send home
 - Complete exit paper work as appropriate
 - Engage in independent work with clear criteria
 - Determine consequences
 - Restore the environment if appropriate
 - Resume regular schedule



PHASE 6: DE-ESCALATION

- Isolate the student
 - Choose a location
 - Provide adequate supervision
 - Cool down time
 - Length of time



PHASE 6: DE-ESCALATION

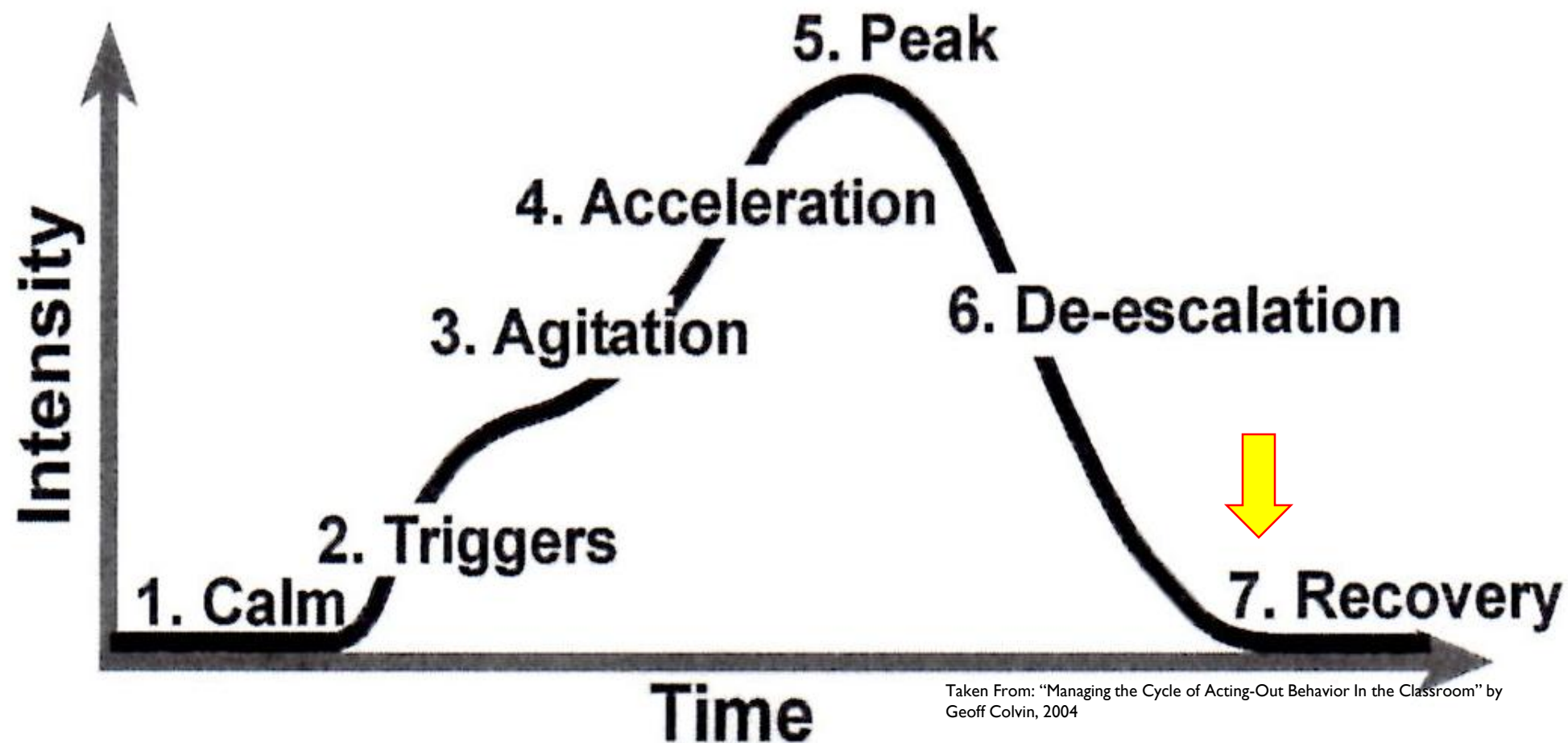
- Decision is made to retain student at school or send home
 - Send student home
 - Allow the student to calm down
 - Release student to parent or designee
 - *Set a de-briefing session upon the student's return*
 - Retain student at school
 - Use additional steps as follows



PHASE 6: DE-ESCALATION

- Engage in independent work with clear criteria
 - Probe level of cooperation
 - Insure the student has a mastery of the task
 - Choose task that require active responses
 - Set a reasonable standard for completion

Figure 2.1: Phases of Acting-Out Behavior



Taken From: "Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior In the Classroom" by Geoff Colvin, 2004



PHASE 7: RECOVERY

What is it?

- This is a period of regaining the equilibrium of the calm phase.

What does it look like?

- The student is likely to be relatively subdued.
 - May attempt to correct problem
 - Unwillingness to participate in group activities
 - Social withdrawal & sleep
 - Student may display eagerness to engage in non-academic activities



PHASE 7: RECOVERY

What should we do?

- Positively reinforce any displays of appropriate behavior.
- Intervention is focused on re-establishing routine activities.
- Debrief (*after student has been calm at least 20 minutes*)
 - Not an aversive consequence
 - No more than 3-5 minutes



DEBRIEFING PLAN

- Purpose of debrief is to facilitate transition back to program and to effectively problem solve, not further negative consequence
- Identify the sequence of events
- Pinpoint decision making moments during the sequence of events
- Evaluate the decisions
- Identify acceptable decision options for future situations.



DEBRIEFING PLAN

- Problem solving example:
 - *Identify triggers?*
 - *What did I do?*
 - *What new behavior will I learn to respond to triggers?*
 - *When will I practice my new behavior?*
 - *Can I do it when I begin to become upset?*



ACTING- OUT DEBRIEFING SAMPLE

1. What did you do?

I threw my math book at the wall and cussed out the teacher.

2. What, when and why did the problem occur?

I couldn't do the math. I tried to get you to help me yesterday, but you told me to try it by myself first. It doesn't do any good to try if I can't do it!

3. What will you do next time instead?

I can try one and if I can't do it, I can circle that problem. I can use some of my things from my help folder.

4. What do you need to do next after we finish our talk?

Start work on the math.

5. Do you need help to take the next step?

I'll try some by myself, then I'll use the help folder like you taught me. If I need help, I'll turn the paper over like we talked about.



FINAL THOUGHT

“It is always important to remember that “if you inadvertently assist the student to escalate, do not be concerned; you will get another chance to do it right the next time around.”

"Students who are
loved at home,
come to school to
learn, and students
who aren't, come to
school to be loved.

-Nicholas A. Ferroni



Contact Information:

Becky Boggs- boggsre@mst.edu

573.341.7722

Jeanie Carey- careyje@mst.edu

573.341.7862

Rebecca Roberts- robertsra@mst.edu

573.341.6019