



## Session 5E: De-Escalation – Defusing Difficult Situations

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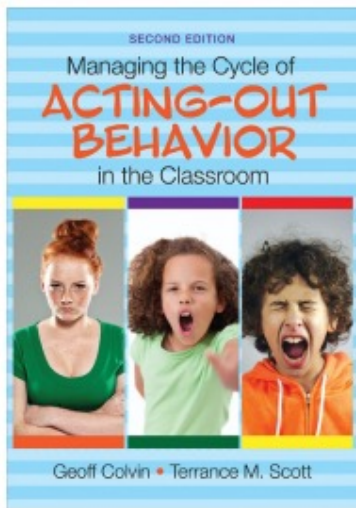
After July 1: [DRECTOR@FULTON58.ORG](mailto:DRECTOR@FULTON58.ORG)



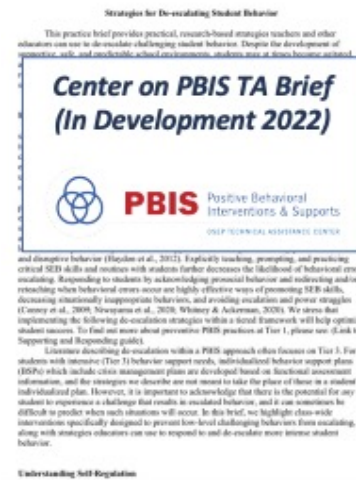


# Today's Outcomes & Acknowledgment

- Understand the Acting-Out Cycle.
- Apply the components of the Acting-Out Cycle in your classroom.



Colvin, G., & Scott, T. M. (2015). *Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior in the Classroom*, Second Edition. Thousand Oaks: Corwin A SAGE Company.



Center on PBIS (Date TBD). *Katherine Strickland-Cohen (UO), Katherine Meyer (UConn), Bob Putnam (May Institute), Laura Kern (USF), Brian Meyer (MWPBIS), Ami Flammini (MWPBIS)*



**On this scale of otters  
where are you today?**



# Big Assumptions

*about what we know & understand*

# Assumptions

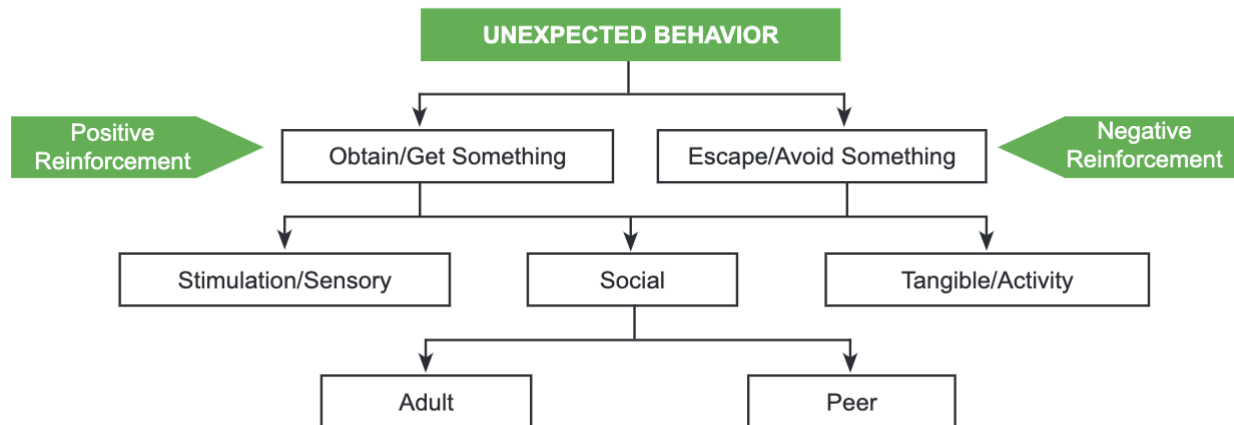
- Behavior can be complex and specific to the individual
  - There is NO magic wand
  - Prevention is the best approach... but sometimes students will NOT respond to our prevention steps.



# Assumptions

## Function-Based Thinking

- Understanding function-based thinking starts at the universal level.
- It needs to drive teacher decision-making, even in challenging situations.

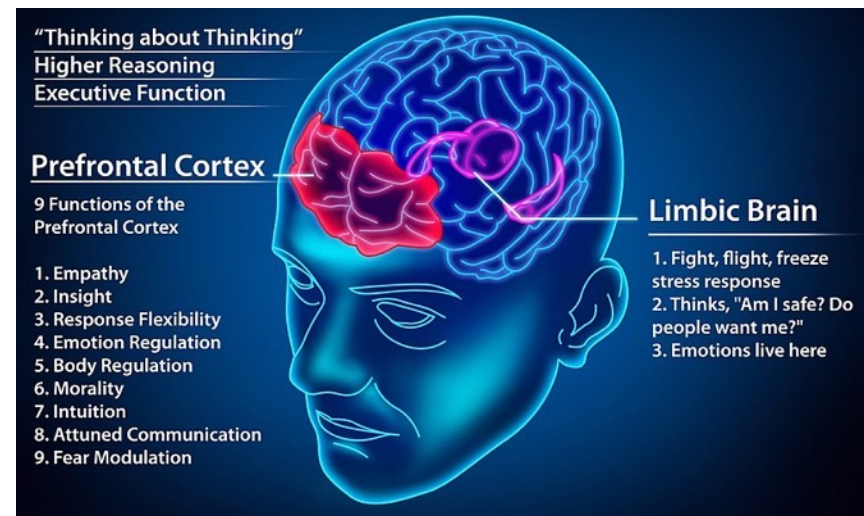




# Assumptions

## Trauma

- Adversity and trauma are defined in the eye of the beholder.
- Need to understand the impact of fight, flight, and freeze responses.
- Adverse experiences and trauma can impact a youth's learning.
- There is a need to install a culture of staff self-care.





# Assumptions

## MO SW-PBS As Prevention

- Consistency & predictability are key in supporting student regulation and trauma-informed ANYTHING.
- MO SW-PBS/ETLPs can support dysregulation prevention when implemented with fidelity, consistency, and equity.
- Framework supports data collection/documentation to drive decision-making.
- MO SW-PBS framework can be integrated with other school efforts to develop a comprehensive MTSS framework that promotes social, emotional, behavioral health and equity.

**MTSS** FOR **S**OCIAL  
**E**MOTIONAL  
**B**EHAVIORAL  
**H**EALTH



# Key Messages

- Student and adult regulation are intricately connected to de-escalation.
- It's the job of the educator to stay calm and regulated when a youth is dysregulated.
- Vulnerable decision points are always present during a cycle of escalation/de-escalation.
- Directly linked to Tier 1.
- De-escalation is about systems work

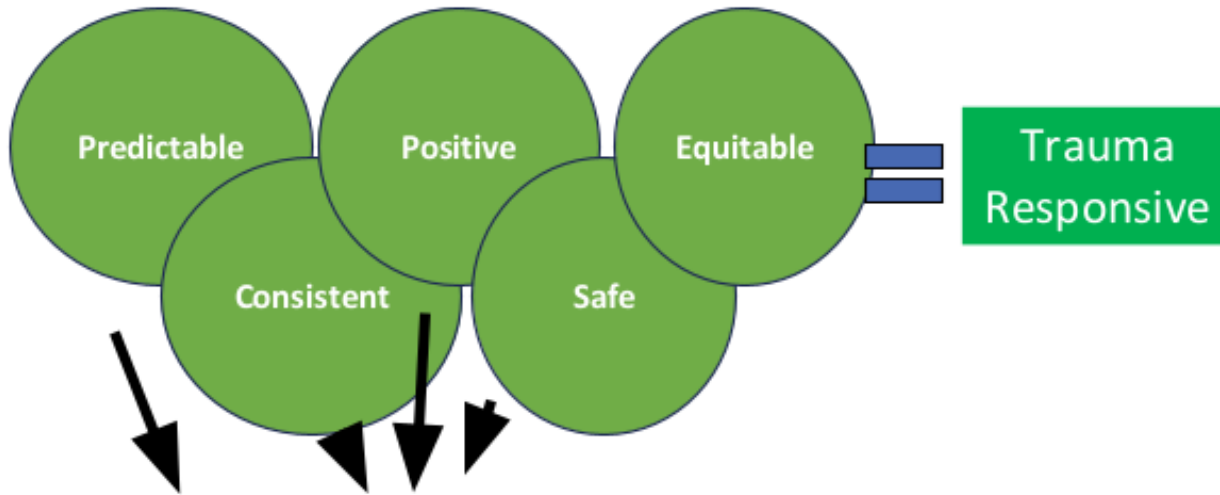


# Regulation & Dysregulation

*How does it fit?*

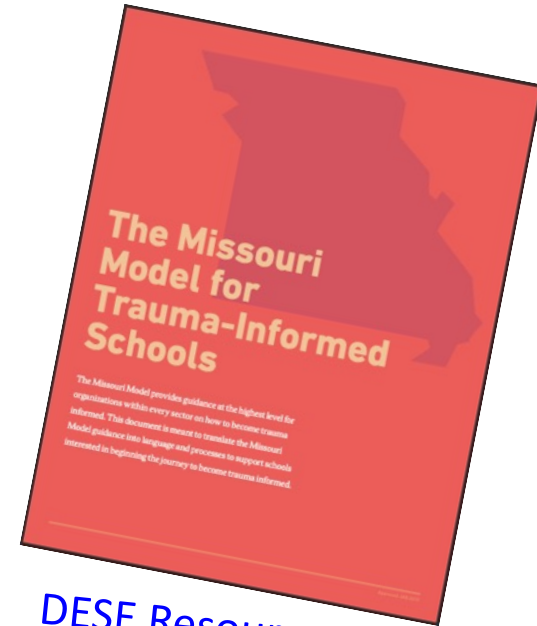


# Framework for Student Supports



The school addresses students needs in holistic ways, taking into account their relationships, self-regulation, academic competence, and physical and emotional well-being

[www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)



[DESE Resource](#)



# Promoting Social-Emotional-Behavioral Health

MO SW-PBS is a start, but usually needs to be incorporated into a broader curriculum that **TEACHES** feelings, emotions, and regulation.

This teaching needs to be coupled with systems that promote routines, encouragement, and error correction.

**Feelings and emotions** are like rumble strips on the side of the road – a warning system to indicate attention is needed.



The rumble strips (mood/feelings) warn us of the guard rail and edge (danger).



There is space between the rumble strip and edge so that we can respond vs. react.



Warning strips (emotions/feelings) provide are a mechanism to provide us with constant feedback.

# Promoting Social-Emotional-Behavioral Health

Needs to encompass both students AND adults.

The adult can only help a student become regulated when they are regulated.



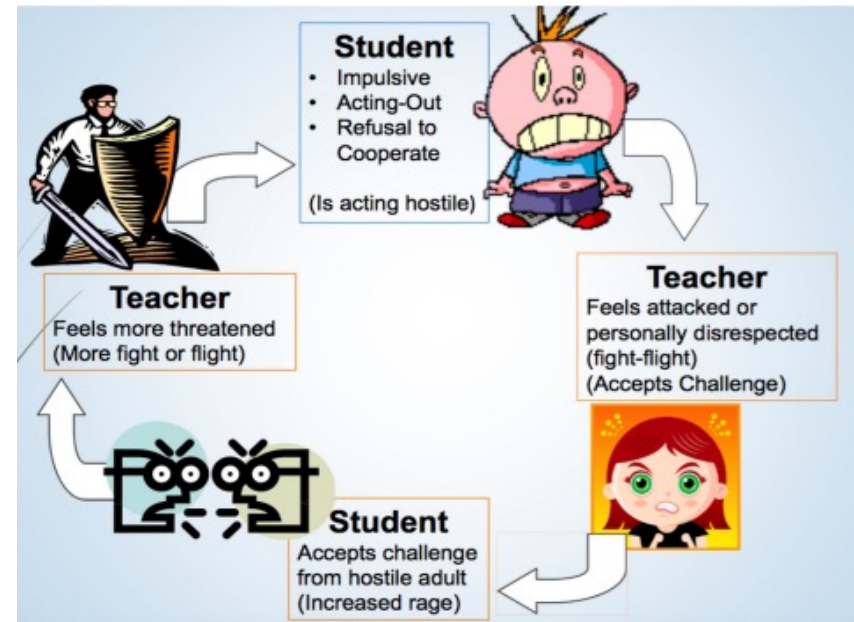
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# Promoting Social-Emotional-Behavioral Health

Needs to encompass both students AND adults.

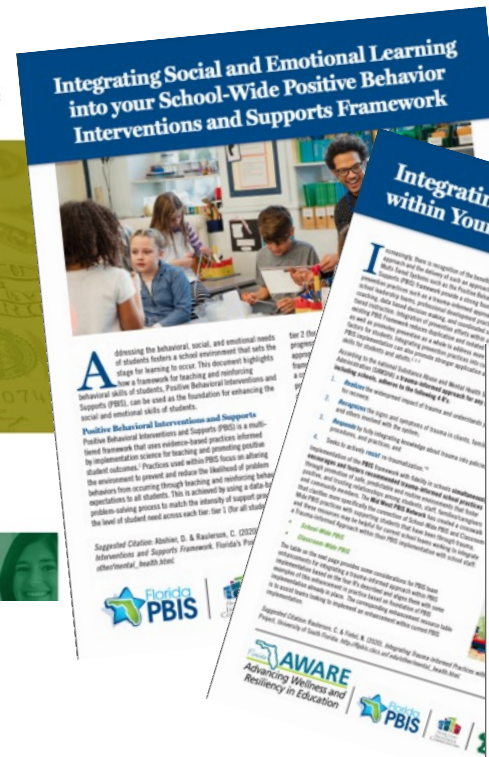
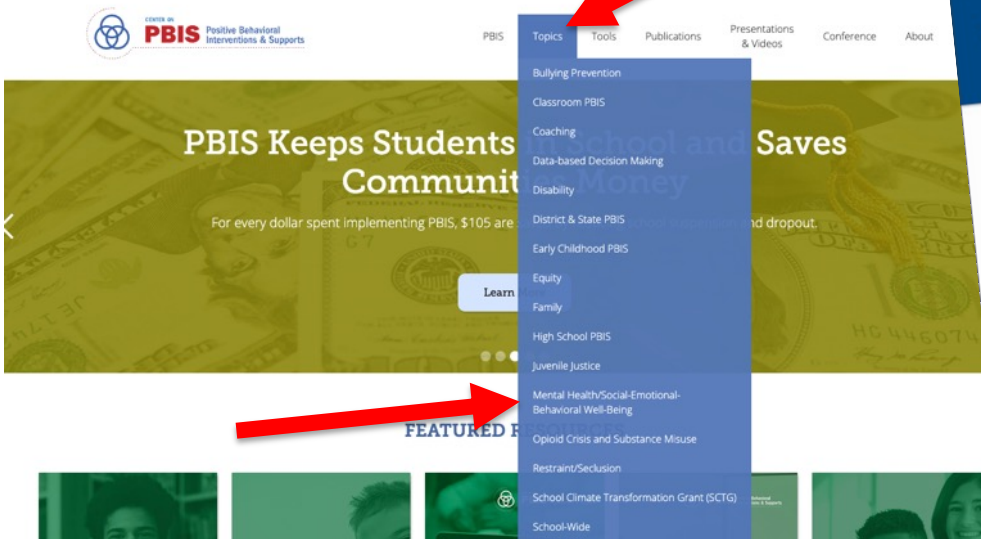
The adult can only help a student become regulated when they are regulated.



Have all students and staff been taught and regularly practice what it means to be regulated?

# Promoting Social-Emotional-Behavioral Health

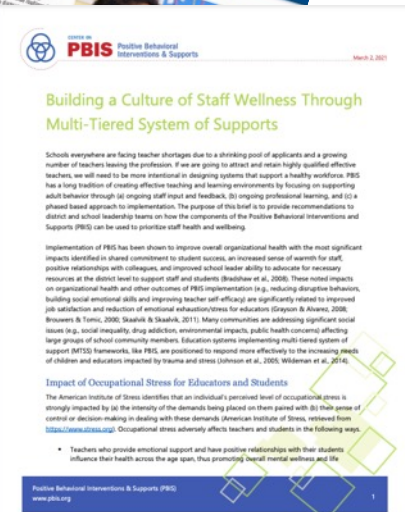
[PBIS National Center](https://www.pbis.org/)

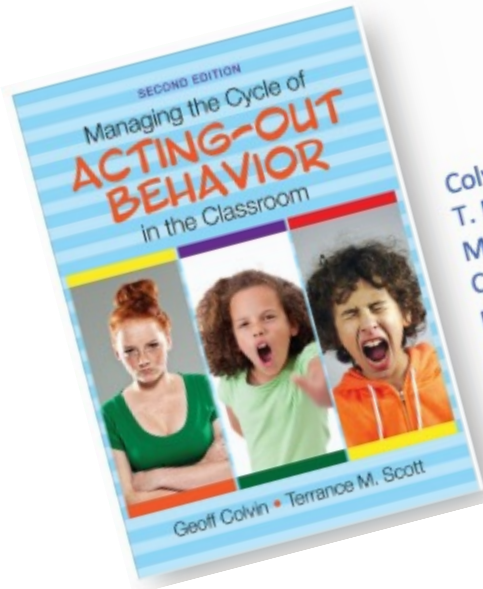


[Integrating SEL & PBIS](#)

[Integrating TI & PBIS](#)

[Building a Culture of Staff Wellness Through MTSS](#)





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IRIS CENTER COVID-19 RESOURCES Careers at IRIS

Resources PD Options Articles & Reports About Help

MODULE CHALLENGE INITIAL THOUGHTS PERSPECTIVES & RESOURCES WRAP UP ASSESSMENT

### Addressing Disruptive and Noncompliant Behaviors (Part 1): Understanding the Acting-Out Cycle

**Challenge**

View the movie below and then proceed to the Initial Thoughts section (time: 2:28).

We want to hear from you. Please complete our brief Module Feedback Form.

Behavior Support Framework | moswpbs@missouri.edu

MO SW-PBS Missouri School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

Tier 1 Courses

**COURSE COMING SOON**

# The Acting-Out Cycle

## Connections & Strategies

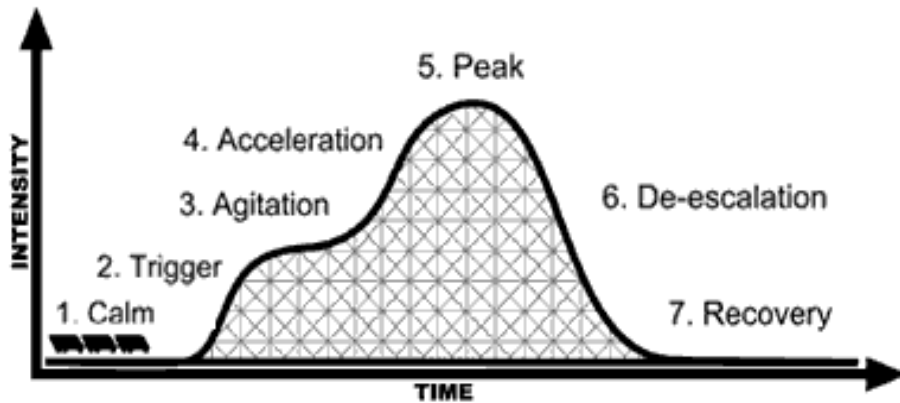


# The Acting-Out Cycle

- The acting out cycle is a way to think about patterns of behavior.
- Behavior has a pattern, cycle, or chain of events which is predictable and therefore preventable.
- This conceptual model allows staff to be proactive in breaking the chain as well as match responses to student's function of behavior.
- Getting to students to recognize the chain and respond accordingly will increase effectiveness.

Applicable to students and adults

# The Acting-Out Cycle



There are 7 phases:

- Calm
  - Trigger(ed)
  - Agitation
  - Acceleration
  - Peak (Crisis)
  - De-escalation
  - Recovery
- Regulated
- Continuum of Dysregulation
- Regulated

# Calm/Regulated

## Description

- Calm/settled
- Life is coming at us in a rhythmic, easy way
- Help is available if needed
- Feel connected
- Feeling present/in the moment
- Exhibiting appropriate, cooperative behavior
- Responsive to directions

## Response

- Focus on prevention
  - Communicate positive expectations
  - Teach social and regulation skills/routines
  - Arrange for high rates of academic and social engagement and opportunities to respond
  - Use positive reinforcement
  - Provide active supervision

***Implement ETLPs w/ fidelity***





# Calm/Regulated



[Practice Brief: Cultivating Positive Student-Teacher Relationships](#)

## Prevention Strategies

- Greet & welcome students at the door upon arrival
- Checking in with students and families
- Identifying individual student interests and strengths
- Creating space for activities that foster authentic peer relationships
- Utilizing predictable routines
- Teach (tell, show/do, practice w/ feedback) regulation strategies & routines
- Engage in stress reduction and staff wellness strategies



Are these strategies new?

Are they being implemented with fidelity?

Are they working?



How do you know?

Initially teach when calm and relaxed, gradually work toward practicing in situations that can lead to dysregulation

System to support staff wellness are more than this, it should be a system that couples this along with DBDM to decrease systemic triggers

|   | Prevention  |
|---|---|
| Youth Behavior/<br>Acting-Out<br>Cycle<br>Phase               | Calm  |
| The Brain   | Regulated   |
| Teacher Practices   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate Positive Expectations</li> <li>- Teach skills/routines</li> <li>- Encouragement</li> <li>- Engagement</li> <li>- Active Supervision</li> </ul> |
| Routines<br>(that can be utilized)<br><i>Adult/<br/>Youth</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulation Routines</li> <li>Relationship Routines</li> <li>Self-Awareness Routines</li> </ul>   |
| Systems of Support  | Implementation of ETLPs   |

## Preventing low level behaviors from escalating

→ Students are regulated, while occasionally engaging in minor challenging behavior.

### What teachers can do...

→ Use the ETLPs

### What PBIS Teams can do

# Trigger(ed) – Agitation - Acceleration

A trigger is something that move an individual from regulated to dysregulated (possible setting/antecedent events: repeated failure, frequent correction, low rates of positive reinforcement, interpersonal conflicts, timelines).

## Triggered

- Grumpy
- Bad mood
- Irritable
- Defensive
- Whining
- Crying

## Agitation

- Darting eyes
- Busy hands
- Moving in and out of groups
- Act like they don't know what they want
- Off-task, on-task, off-task
- Staring into space
- Veiled eyes
- Non-conversational language
- Group withdrawal

## Acceleration

- Questioning
- Arguing
- Non-compliance
- Refusal to cooperate
- Defiance
- Off-task
- Provocation
- Rule violations
- Whining and crying
- Avoidance and escape
- Threats and intimidation
- Verbal abuse
- Destruction of property

**IT'S A CONTINUUM**

# Key Focus

- Identify how to intervene **early**.
- Identify **function** to determine response.
- Identify **environmental factors** that can be manipulated.
- Identify ***replacement behaviors*** that can be taught

*Some of this might occur in the moment, some of it needs to occur in reflection after. The goal is to interrupt the cycle as well as PREVENT the cycle from happening in the future.*



# Trigger(ed) – Agitation – Acceleration Adult Strategies

## Triggered

- Consider function to adjust environment/response to increase opportunities for success (modify instructions, task/activity, schedule, seating arrangement)\*.
- Reinforce what has been taught
- Increase rates of positive specific feedback
- Pre-correction/ reminders
- Provide choice

\*keep to a minimum and normalize changes

## Agitation

- Consider function to adjust environment/response to increase opportunities for success
- Choice
- Redirection
- Co-regulation
- Regulation Routine
- Consider additional adults to support and intervene
- Deflection activity\*
- Preferred activity\*

\*set parameters

## Acceleration

- Move slower, deliberately, non-threateningly
- Use brief words
- Reminders of regulation
- Provide space
- Co-regulation with limited words
- Remove unsafe items
- More directive

## IT'S A CONTINUUM

Think functionally to inform your responses; think least to most restriction (don't lead with a heavy response when a smaller response could be used first).

# Know What Triggers You (it takes two to argue)

## What is It?

*Efforts by students following an error correction, to avoid or get something. May also be a flight-fight-freeze response.*

## Why does it work?

*These behaviors push the buttons of adults; adults become dysregulated. Adults take the behavior personally. Students learn to keep doing the behaviors when they are successful because it gets them access to their function*

## Student Behaviors:

- Badgering  
“please, please, please, please?”
- Intimidation  
temper tantrums, aggression, threats
- Threat  
“I’m going to run away”
- Martyrdom  
“Why do you hate me?”
- Buttering Up  
“You are my favorite teacher”
- Physical  
fighting, property damage

## Response Strategies:

- Ignore the “content” of the behavior
  - Do not respond to the tactic
- Prompt original behavior/stay on topic
  - Specific error correction
  - Reminder of regulation routine
  - Offer space and/or time
- As needed, use your own previously practiced self-regulation routine(s)

**Always ensure safety when responding to behavior**

|   | Prevention  | Behavior Escalation  |
|---|---|--|
| Youth Behavior/ Acting-Out Cycle Phase              | Calm  | Tigger(ed)<br>Agitation<br>Acceleration  |
| The Brain   | Regulated   | Regulated to Dysregulated  |
| Teacher Practices                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate Positive Expectations</li> <li>- Teach skills/routines</li> <li>- Encouragement</li> <li>- Engagement</li> <li>- Active Supervision</li> </ul> | Continuum of Strategies to respond to Unexpected Behavior.<br><br>Think of function.   |
| Routines (that can be utilized) <i>Adult/ Youth</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regulation Routines</li> <li>- Relationship Routines</li> <li>- Self-Awareness Routines</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accept Feedback Routine</li> <li>- Regulation Routines (student)</li> <li>- Self-Regulation Routines (adult)</li> </ul> |
| Systems of Support                                  | Implementation of ETLPs   | Implementation of ETLPs; Staff Self-Care   |

## Continuum of Dysregulation

→ Student displays low level (triggered/agitation) or high level (acceleration) of behavior

→ **What teachers can do...**  
Rely on continuum of research validated response strategies:

- Redirection strategies
- Choice-making opportunities
- Prompts for mastered regulation routines
- Co-regulation
- Provide space

→ **What PBIS Teams can do**

# Peak/Crisis

## Description

- Highest point of escalation
- Disruption is so serious class cannot continue
- Student is in rage and out of control
- Represents a threat to the safety of self or others
  - Serious destruction of property
  - Physical attacks
  - Self-abuse
  - Severe tantrums
  - Running away

## Adult Response

- Follow district protocol and guidance!
- Maintain safety
- Call for support
- Use minimal words and demands – do not address consequences
- Stay clam
- Crisis Support Routine



# Crisis Support Routine

## What is it?

*An adult routine to help staff stay regulated, maintain patience, ensure consistent adult implementation, and support students in behavioral crisis/dysregulation to regain self-control.*

Midwest PBIS Network 4/1/22

## Example Crisis Support Routine

### Step 1: Regulate [choose one]:

- Praise approximations -or-  
*i.e. Praise any component of behavior*
- Non-Verbal prompt of regulation routine -or-  
*Previously taught and practiced*
- Offer time and space

### Step 2: Relate to Student [choose one]:

- Sincere words of empathy (brief) -or-
- Express concern (brief)  
*Focus on overall SW expectations (e.g. Be Safe);  
Limit attention to inappropriate behavior*

### Step 3: Simple Instruction

- One simple instruction to assess regulation  
*Focus on what student should do, rather than stop doing*



## Crisis Support Routine What does it look or sound like?

Midwest PBIS Network 4/1/22

1. "Good job lowering your voice"
  2. "I know this can be hard"
  3. "A good decision is to put your hands at your side"
- 
1. Non-Verbal [Staff demonstrate filling lungs and slow exhale to a count of four]
  2. I want to help you *Be Safe*"
  3. "Show me you understand and step down from the table"
- 
1. Offer time and space [Non-Verbal or Verbal]
  2. "You are staring out the window and seem frustrated"
  3. "Can you show me the square breathing routine we use?"



# Peak/Crisis

## Big Ideas to Ponder:

- Follow district safety routines/protocols.
- Utilize a **SIMPLE** Crisis Support Routine for adults to follow (increase consistency in adult response).
- Practice!!!!!!!!!!
- Decision rules needed:
  - When is a student considered in crisis/protocols activated?
  - When is a student considered exiting crisis/protocols faded?

|  | Prevention  | Behavior Escalation  | Crisis  |
|--|---|--|---|
| Youth Behavior/ Acting-Out Cycle Phase                 | Calm  | Tigger(ed)<br>Agitation<br>Acceleration  | Peak  |
| The Brain  | Regulated   | Regulated to Dysregulated  | Dysregulated  |
| Teacher Practices                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate Positive Expectations</li> <li>- Teach skills/routines</li> <li>- Encouragement</li> <li>- Engagement</li> <li>- Active Supervision</li> </ul> | Continuum of Strategies to respond to Unexpected Behavior.<br><br>Think of function.   | Safety Routine<br><br>Crisis Support Routine  |
| Routines (that can be utilized)<br><i>Adult/ Youth</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regulation Routines</li> <li>- Relationship Routines</li> <li>- Self-Awareness Routines</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accept Feedback Routine</li> <li>- Regulation Routines (student)</li> <li>- Self-Regulation Routines (adult)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety Routine</li> <li>- Crisis Support Routine</li> <li>- Regulation Routine</li> <li>- Self-Regulation Routine (adult)</li> </ul> |
| Systems of Support                                     | Implementation of ETLPs   | Implementation of ETLPs;<br>Staff Self-Care  | Safety Procedures   |

## Peak/Crisis

Students displays as harm to self or others

**What teachers can do...**

**What PBIS Teams can do**

# De-Escalation/Recovery (reconnection)

## Description

- “Coming down” and return to regulation
- Social withdrawal
- Shame/Crying
- Remorse
- Denial
- Projection of blame
- Minimization of behavior
- Lethargy/Tiredness

## Adult Response

- Be welcoming to students.
- Help address immediate needs.
- Focus on present
- Reduce stimuli
- Assign low level tasks (match to cognitive age, not necessarily physical age)
- Reintegrate (restoration strategies); avoid blame; don't force apology
- Connection, caring, co-investment
- Re-establish routines - reminders/re-teaching of regulation routine(s)
- Problem-solving
- Debrief, reflection & planning



# Post-Event Analysis & Reflection

## Why?

- Requires adults to stand back and examine normal routines and behaviors.
- It's the only way to learn and to implement change.

## Strategies

- Debrief with student
- Debrief with staff/team
- Make follow-up plan to prevent future incidents
  - May involve conducting an FBA

## Teacher Self-Reflection

- What was my state of mind?
- Was I able to stay calm?
- Did I get triggered?
- Did I take student's behavior personally?

|  | Prevention  | Behavior Escalation  | Crisis  | Recovery & Restoration  |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Youth Behavior/<br>Acting-Out Cycle Phase              | Calm  | Tigger(ed)<br>Agitation<br>Acceleration  | Peak  | De-escalation<br>Recovery   |
| The Brain  | Regulated   | Regulated to<br>Dysregulated   | Dysregulated  | Dysregulated to Regulated   |
| Teacher Practices                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate Positive Expectations</li> <li>- Teach skills/routines</li> <li>- Encouragement</li> <li>- Engagement</li> <li>- Active Supervision</li> </ul> | Continuum of Strategies to respond to Unexpected Behavior.<br><br>Think of function.   | Safety Routine<br><br>Crisis Support Routine  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recovery practices</li> <li>- Regulate/Relate/Reason (use regulation routines; connect; specific praise)</li> <li>- Document; debrief with team</li> </ul> |
| Routines (that can be utilized)<br><i>Adult/ Youth</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regulation Routines</li> <li>- Relationship Routines</li> <li>- Self-Awareness Routines</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accept Feedback Routine</li> <li>- Regulation Routines (student)</li> <li>- Self-Regulation Routines (adult)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety Routine</li> <li>- Crisis Support Routine</li> <li>- Regulation Routine</li> <li>- Self-Regulation Routine (adult)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Re-integration routines</li> </ul>   |
| Systems of Support                                     | Implementation of ETLPs   | Implementation of ETLPs; Staff Self-Care   | Safety Procedures   | Data collection/ documentation; post-event analysis; FBA  |

**De-escalation & Recovery**

Student can regulate and re-integrate into classroom

**What teachers can do...**

**What PBIS Teams can do**



**MU Center for SW-PBS**  
College of Education & Human Development  
University of Missouri





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# Questions?

