



Session 5D: The De-Escalation Cycle

Dr. Daniel Rector

Executive Director of Student Services Fulton 58 Public School District

Former Science Teacher

Former MS/Jr. HS Administrator

Former RPDC School Improvement
Consultant

Former MO SW-PBS Statewide
Coach/District Facilitator

Adjunct Professor (*Classroom & Behavior
Management*)

National & State Presenter

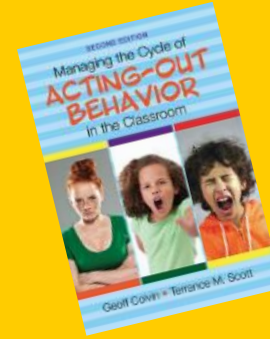
E-mail: DRECTOR@FULTON58.ORG



Today's Outcomes

- Become familiar with the acting-out cycle.
- Identify strategies to use in elementary and secondary settings that can diffuse escalating behaviors.

Acknowledgments



Colvin, G., & Scott, T. M. (2015). *Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom (2nd Edition)*. Corwin.

Strickland-Cohen, M. K., Newson, A., Meyer, K., Putnam, R., Kern, L., Meyer, B. C., & Flammini, A. (2022). *Strategies for de-escalating student behavior in the classroom*. Center on PBIS.



The IRIS Center. (2005, 2022). *Addressing Challenging Behaviors (Part 1): Understanding the Acting-Out Cycle*. Peabody College, Vanderbilt.



Assumptions

about what we know and understand



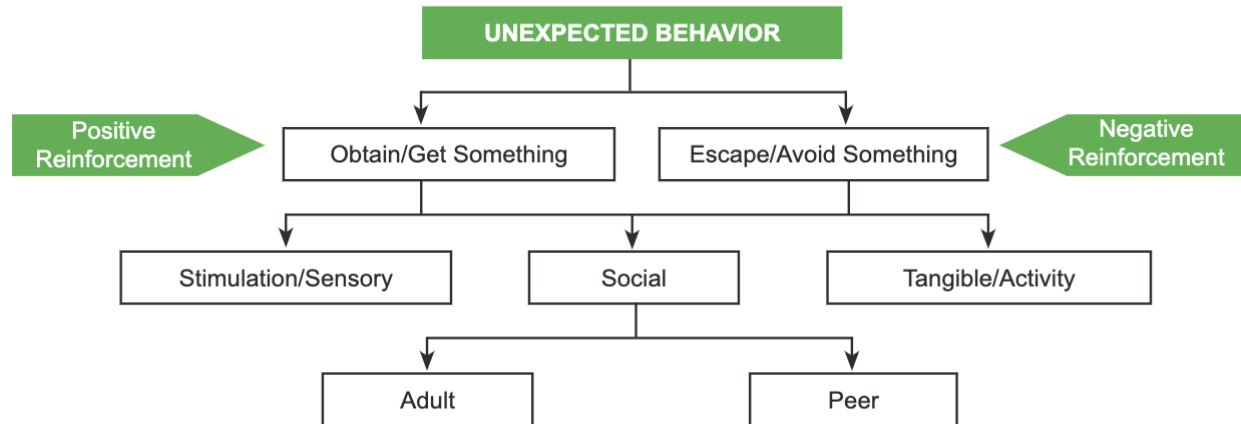
Behavior can be complex and specific to the individual...

- There is NO magic wand
- Prevention is the best approach... but
- Sometimes students will NOT respond to our prevention steps.



Function-Based Thinking...

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

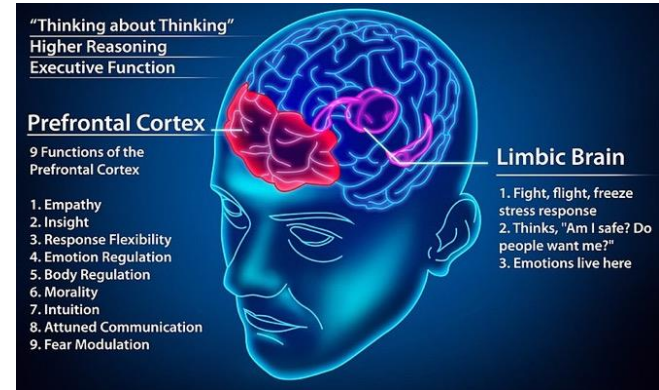


Understanding Trauma...

- Adversity and trauma are defined in the eye of the beholder – adverse experiences can impact a youth's learning.
- Need to understand the impact of fight or flight (hyperarousal) and freeze (hypoarousal).
- There is a need to install a culture of self-regulation (student and staff self-care).



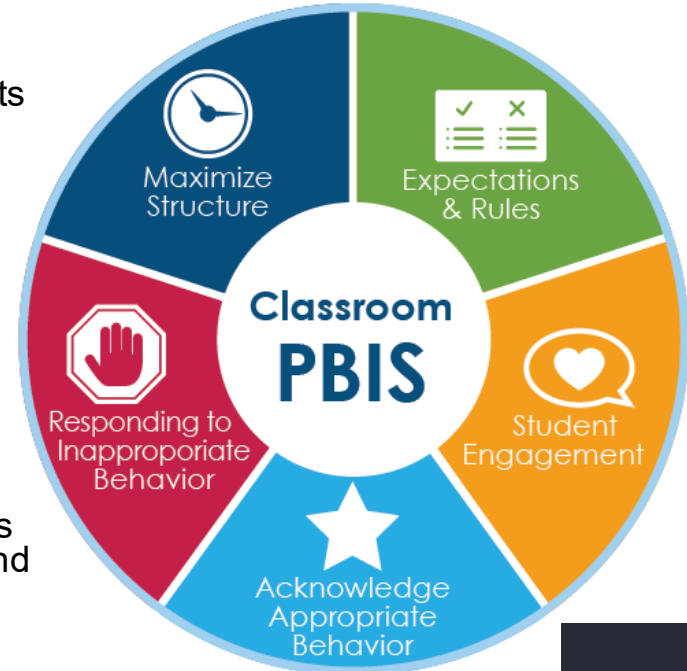
SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration



De-escalation embedded within a MTSS Behavioral Framework (MO-SWPBS)...

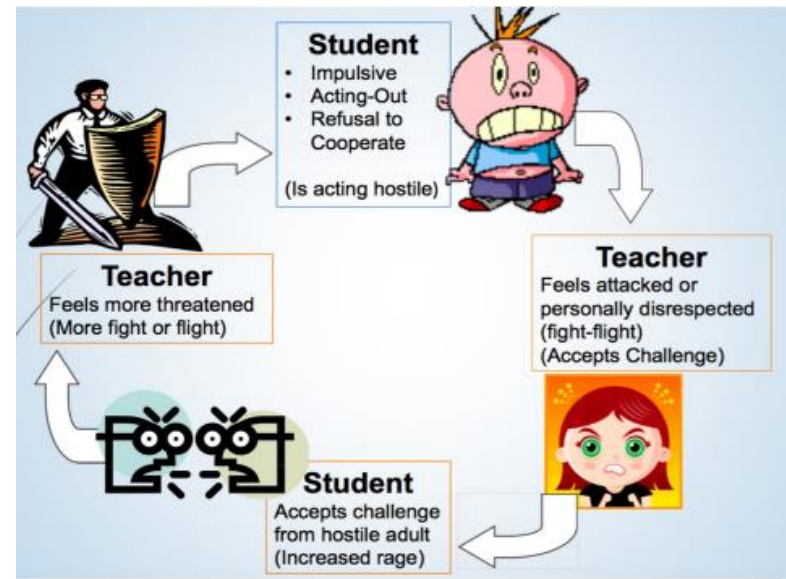
De-escalation strategies are maximized when integrated within a school-wide multi-tiered behavioral framework that focuses on creating positive, predictable, and engaging learning environments as Tier 1 preventions strategies like:

- Creating **safe and inclusive environments** where all members of the community (students, educators, and families) belong.
- Developing and explicitly teaching clear **positive behavior expectations** and critical social-emotional behavioral skills (e.g., working in groups, solving disagreements, asking for help).
- Having and explicitly teaching clear and **consistent classroom routines** (e.g., transitions, arrival, and dismissal).
- Providing **engaging academic instruction** that matches students' instructional level and incorporates frequent and varied opportunities to respond simply prevents off-task and disruptive behavior.
- Regularly **acknowledging** prosocial behavior and **redirecting and/or reteaching** when behavioral errors occur.



Adults first...

- Student and adult regulation are intricately connected.
- Vulnerable decision points are always present during a cycle of escalation/de-escalation.

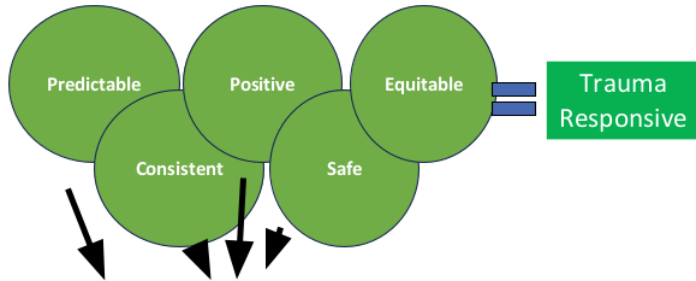


The adult can only help a student become regulated when they are regulated.



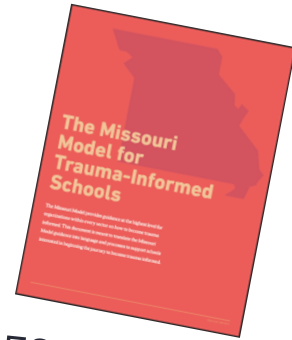
Have all students and staff been taught and regularly practice what it means to be regulated?

Its about your systems...



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

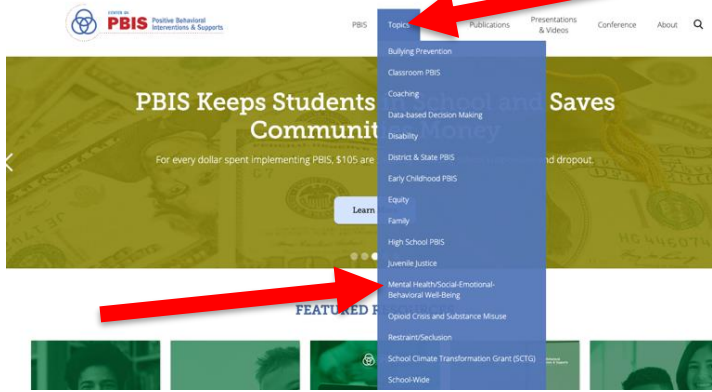
www.nctsn.org



DESE Resource

STAGE 0	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4
Pre-Trauma Aware	Trauma Aware	Trauma Sensitive	Trauma Responsive	Trauma Informed

PBIS National Center



Integrating SEL & PBIS



Integrating TI & PBIS

Building a Culture of Staff Wellness Through MTSS





The Acting-Out Cycle

what it is

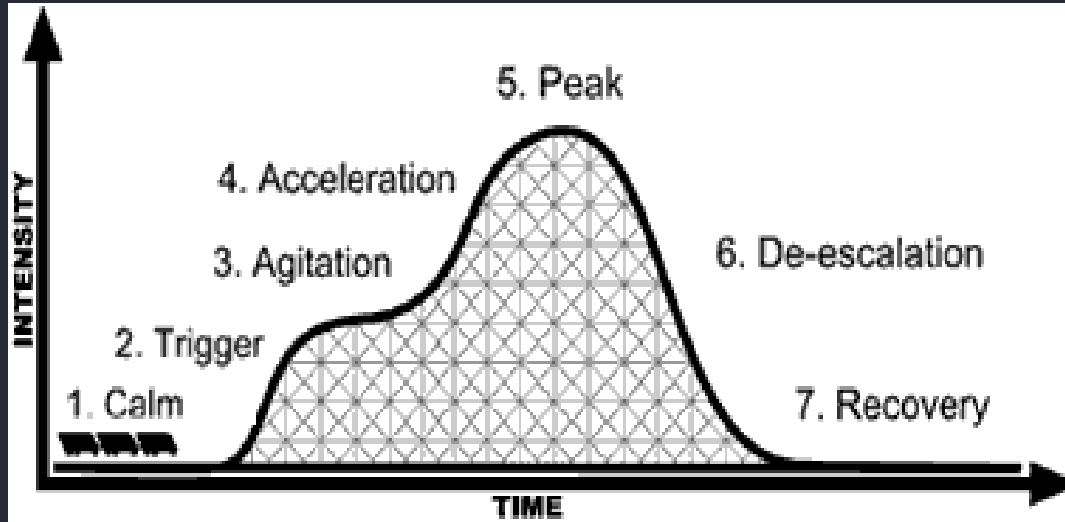


The Acting-Out Cycle

- 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





Prevention Strategies


Calm Phase





Teacher Practices



- Teach (tell-show-do-practice-feedback) positive expectations.
 - Teach (tell-show-do-practice-feedback) skills/routines.
 - Provide encouragement – non-contingent to model positive social interactions and build rapport with students; contingent attention to increase on-task behaviors or to reinforce appropriate actions or skills.
 - Provide instructional engagement - integrate high-interest topics, choose culturally relevant material, engage students in collaborative activities, allow students to express opinions on current topics or events.
 - Provide active supervision – move, scan, interact.
 - Use low-intensity strategies to support student engagement: reminders and prompts, choice, encouragement/attention.
- 

Routines – Relationship Routines

Create a welcoming and supportive classroom environment:

- Greet and welcome students at the door upon arrival
- Check-in with students and families
- Identify individual student interests and strengths
- Creating space for activities that foster authentic peer relationships



Practice Brief: Cultivating Positive Student-Teacher Relationships

Routines – Self-Awareness & Regulation

Routines

Audience	What	Example
Students	<p>Teach and regularly practice regulation strategies with all student as part of Tier 1 support. Teaching self-awareness and regulation involves teaching students to first recognize feelings of agitation/dysregulation when they first become upset and then use a practical strategy for returning to a calm state.</p> <p>Initially teach when all students are calm and relaxed, gradually working toward practicing in settings or situations that can lead to dysregulation (e.g., before quizzes and tests).</p>	<p>Regulation strategies can include deep breathing, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation, and requesting/taking a break in the classroom.</p> <p>Emotion scales can be used to teach students to rate their feelings/stress/anxiety and prompt coping and relaxation strategies.</p> <p>Resources: Regulate, Relate, Reason; Brain Breaks and Focused Attention Practices; Brain Breaks PPT</p>
Adults	<p>Model for students and regularly practice (using think aloud strategies) the regulation routines students are being taught.</p> <p>Connect to your district’s social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, when possible. For self-care, look at learning stress-reduction strategies for staff.</p>	<p>Become aware of your own triggers for dysregulation.</p> <p>Use self-prompting strategies (e.g., visual reminders, timers) to prompt regular use of regulation strategies.</p> <p>Resources: Habits of Effective Classroom Practice; Don't Discipline Hangry: 3 Steps to a Better Classroom; Self-care for Educators; Self-care Breaks PPT</p>



Prevention Strategies Worksheet

Prevention (PBIS Teams)

How are you supporting prevention?

- How are you monitoring and supporting staff with the implementation of their PBIS/teacher practices?
- Have you established universal relationship routines that staff should be using? Have you trained on what staff could be using even if not universally?
- Have you established universal self-awareness and regulation routines that staff should be using? Have you trained on what staff could be using even if not universally?

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




Escalation Strategies

Trigger(ed) – Agitation – Acceleration Phases



Teacher Practices – Trigger(ed)

- Identify trigger.
 - Use strategies to manage school-based triggers - adjust classroom environment to limit triggers; reinforce social and emotional skills to help manage triggers; role-play or practice appropriate and expected behaviors in a scenario that commonly triggers behavior; use precorrection before it occurs (non-verbal, verbal & visual reminders, increased opportunities for success); proximity; redirection/refocus through task; provide assistance; temporary alternative location (antiseptic bouncing).
 - Work to address non-school-based triggers (e.g., hunger; lack of sleep; medical problems; stressful home situations; personal conflicts) – brainstorm & collaborate.
- 

Teacher Practices – Agitation

- Show empathy/Co-regulating – use supportive language (“I see that you are fidgeting. Are you doing okay today?” “I know this is hard. Take a quick break and I’ll circle back to you in just a minute” “(Student name), you seem upset today. What can I do to help?” “I know this can be frustrating. Grab a quick drink of water, and I can help you when you get back). Develop a nonverbal communication system (write the student a note, place it on desk discretely, student responds to the note).
- Prompt regulation routines – ask the student to complete regulation routines.
- Proximity control – stand near the student when addressing the class, pause near the student to offer praise, circle back to student to provide additional support.
- Help the student with the task.
- Change the student’s environment – different location in the room, give the student a job or to run an errand to another teacher, allow the student to get a drink of water.
- Offer instructional choice – offer small number (2-3) of acceptable options for completing an activity/task.
- Provide additional time.
- Share your perspective – explain how the behavior is perceived in the classroom, offer an idea or come to an agreed upon solution that will help de-escalate the student’s behavior.

Teacher Practices – Acceleration

- Remain neutral –don't take it personally (the student is often trying to engage the teacher, often disrespectfully); avoid responding with annoyance or anger; “tap out”.
- Give the student an individual prompt or redirection – remain calm and respectful; avoid reactive or escalating prompts (e.g., arguing with the student, making sarcastic comments; getting in the student's face or personal space; touching the student).
- Reminder of regulation routine – use minimal verbal direction to prompt **mastered** regulation routine – “John, remember our deep breathing strategy”.
- Engage and then walk-away – momentarily shift your focus to a task or another student to allow the student time to process the prompt or redirection, giving time (and space) can prevent a power struggle.
- Reinforce the student for compliance or on-task behavior – if the student complied partially or fully, offer praise; if the student has not complied, continue to address calmly and respectfully. Often, after demonstrating expected behavior, request additional, limited engagement in the desired task/activity (e.g., solve the next problem or read the next sentence/paragraph).

Teacher Practices – Key Reminders

- It's not about you, it's about the student.
- You can and should respectfully address the acting-out behaviors by...
 - using the student's name when prompting or redirecting.
 - focusing on the **behavior** not the student.
 - speaking to the student discreetly or privately.
 - speaking to the student at eye-level (with appropriate to maintain boundaries and safety).

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.



Routines



- Accept Feedback Routine – in preparation for this, incorporate into your classroom the social emotional skill of accepting feedback.
 - Regulation Routine - **prompt** skill usage of those routines that students have mastered.
 - Self-Awareness & Regulation Routines – **manage** your own routines.
- 

Escalation (PBIS Teams)

How are you supporting teachers in utilizing response strategies and appropriate routines?

- Have you trained, monitored, and provided support to staff with the implementation of their response strategies?
- Have you incorporated a universal feedback acceptance routine that students should use and staff should prompt? Have you trained on what staff could be using even if not universally?
- Are you prompting staff self-care?

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).

What 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

	Behavior Escalation
Youth Behavior/ Acting-Out Cycle Phase	Tigger(ed) Agitation Acceleration
The Brain	Regulated to Dysregulated
Teacher Practices	Continuum of Strategies to respond to Unexpected Behavior. Think of function.
Routines (that can be utilized) <i>Adult/ Youth</i>	- Accept Feedback Routine - Regulation Routines (student) - Self-Regulation Routines (adult)
Systems of Support	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 (e.g., serious destruction of property, physical attacks, self-abuse, severe tantrums, running away)

Response

- Follow district protocol and guidance!
- Maintain safety
- Call for support
- Use minimal words and demands – avoid addressing consequences
- Stay calm
- Crisis Support Routine



Crisis Strategies

Peak Phase



Teacher Practices

- **FOLLOW DISTRICT PROTOCOL!!!**

Routines

- Safety Routine/Crisis Support Routine

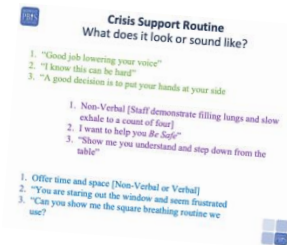
PBIS Teams

- Support teachers in implementing regulation routines for students and self as well as self-care.

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

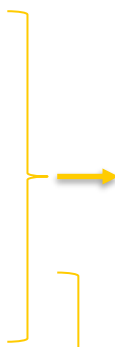
Midwest PBIS Network 4/1/22

Peak/Crisis

Big ideas to ponder:

- **FOLLOW DISTRICT SAFETY ROUTINES/PROTOCOLS!!!**
- Utilize a **SIMPLE** Crisis Support Routine for adults to follow (increases 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?

	Crisis
Youth Behavior/ Acting-Out Cycle Phase	Peak
The Brain	Dysregulated
Teacher Practices	Safety Routine Crisis Support Routine
Routines (that can be utilized) <i>Adult/ Youth</i>	- Safety Routine - Crisis Support Routine - Regulation Routine - Self-Regulation Routine (adult)
Systems of Support	Safety Procedures



Peak/Crisis

Student 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

Response

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



Reconnection

De-escalation/Recovery Phase



Teacher Practices

- Provide the student time and space to cool down (away from other students).
- Teacher should resume regular schedule.
- Provide the student with an independent activity – should be instructionally at or below the student’s level so the student can experience success; should be active; avoid trigger activities/topics; provide explicit instructions about what is expected and quality of work; modify task demand as needed; if expectations are not met, allow the student more time to comply – reintegrating the student before full cooperation has been achieved may cause the behavior to re-escalate.
- Complete a debriefing for the incident – prompt the student to think through what happened, reflect on what could have gone differently, discuss triggers, a plan of action for future triggers, what the student needs to do to reintegrate into the classroom.
- If applicable, ask the student to restore the environment (e.g., picking up papers thrown on the floor).
- If applicable, debrief with class.

Routines

- **Recovery/debrief routine** – resources: student debriefing form with visuals; student debriefing form; teacher debriefing form; staff self-reflection. Process principles: **reflection** (“Can you describe what was happening when you started to get upset? What were you feeling just before you became dysregulated? Can you show me where you were on the feelings scale?”); **co-create a plan** for how and when to prompt to use self-regulation strategies and provide instruction on regulation skills (“Let’s talk about ways that you can let me or another adult know when you’re feeling upset/nervous/scared and need a quick break” “How would you like for me to prompt you to take a break, use a regulation routine, or ask for help when I notice that you are becoming agitated?”).
- **Re-integration routine** – welcome the student, allow the student to take part in regular classroom activities (provide clear expectations and directions, acknowledge the student’s needs, and give positive praise for following expectations), focus on the present (refrain from making comments about behavioral incident or reviewing consequences right away).

Recovery & Restoration (PBIS Teams)

How are you supporting teachers in utilizing recovery and restoration strategies/routines?

- Have you trained, monitored, and provided support to staff with the implementation of how to process with a student and reintegrate the student into the class?
- Have you incorporated a universal feedback recovery/debrief and/or re-integration routine that should be used by staff? Have you trained on what staff could be using even if not universally?

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 (use data, may involve conducting an FBA)

Teacher Self-Reflection

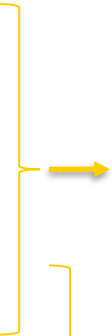
- What was my state of mind?
- Was I able to stay calm?
- Did I get triggered?
- Did I take the student's behavior personally?

	Recovery & Restoration
Youth Behavior/ Acting-Out Cycle Phase	De-escalation Recovery
The Brain	Dysregulated to Regulated
Teacher Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recovery practices - Regulate/Relate/Reason (use regulation routines; connect; specific praise) - Document; debrief with team
Routines (that can be utilized) <i>Adult/ Youth</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-integration routines
Systems of Support	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

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



Questions

