

De-escalation: Strategies for defusing challenging behaviors

Hot Topics in Behavior
PaTTAN
February 20, 2013



Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network

PaTTAN's Mission

The mission of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) is to support the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau of Special Education, and to build the capacity of local educational agencies to serve students who receive special education services.

PDE's Commitment to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Our goal for each child is to ensure Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams begin with the general education setting with the use of Supplementary Aids and Services before considering a more restrictive environment.

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Act 48, Psych CEUs, and

Paraprofessional Instructional Hours

Please visit the above link by 2-22-2013 in order to receive the above mentioned credit hours.

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Webinar Outcomes



Participants will:

- Consider the range of behaviors encountered in the classroom and instructional contexts
- Examine a model that can help in recognizing signs that student behaviors may turn serious
- Consider their role in preventing challenging behaviors from occurring
- Explore effective strategies to use when challenging behaviors do occur

Topics that we will address....



- Review of basic behavior terms
- Identifying the Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors
- Specific Strategies for De-Escalation
- Wrap-up

Think back...

...to an interaction you had with a student that escalated into a confrontation or “meltdown.”

Now that you have that incident in mind consider:

- Was the outcome of that interaction what you expected?
- How did you feel about the outcome?
- If you could have a ‘do over’, would you do anything differently?

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General Principles of Behavior

Vocabulary

ABCs



Basic Behavior Terms

Antecedent

what occurs before a behavior

Behavior

an observable and measurable act of an individual

Consequence

any event that follows a behavior

Reinforcement

Punishment



General Principles of Behavior

Behavioral Events



General Principles of Behavior

B BEHAVIOR

...an observable
and
measurable
act of an
individual



General Principles of Behavior

Two components of behavior:

Form (“topography”)

- The way a behavior looks, what we observe, a precise, specific description of the behavior

Function

- The purpose that the behavior serves
 - to get something
 - to avoid, delay, or escape something

General Principles of Behavior

Observable and Measurable Behaviors

Behavior:

- running out into the hallway
- hitting desk with fist
- completing schoolwork
- yelling expletives in class
- writing and passing notes to classmates

Not:

- bad attitude
- lazy
- low self-esteem
- frustrated
- control, power
- angry
- lack of motivation
- disrespectful

General Principles of Behavior

B BEHAVIOR

1. Form is the way a behavior looks , what we observe, a description of the behavior
2. Function is the purpose that the behavior serves.

General Principles of Behavior

Behavior serves a function!

To get:

- **Attention**
- **Activities**
- **Objects**

To avoid or escape:

- **Attention**
- **Activities**
- **Objects**



Your Student

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence

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General Principles of Behavior

Antecedent*

Pay close attention to:

- The activity
- The adult(s)
- The peer(s)
- The location/environment
- The demand or request

***“Nothing”** is not an option!!!



General Principles of Behavior

“It is easier to prevent a behavior from occurring, than to deal with it after it has happened.”



General Principles of Behavior

C CONSEQUENCE

“any event that follows a behavior and influences the future rate of the behavior”

General Principles of Behavior

- **Reinforcement-** a consequence that results in increasing OR maintaining the future rate of the behavior it follows.
- **Punishment-** a consequence that results in decreasing the future rate of the behavior it follows

General Principles of Behavior

**Consequences are what
happen when rules are
broken or followed.**

General Principles of Behavior



**Reinforcing
or
Punishing?**



What “kind” of students display challenging behavior?

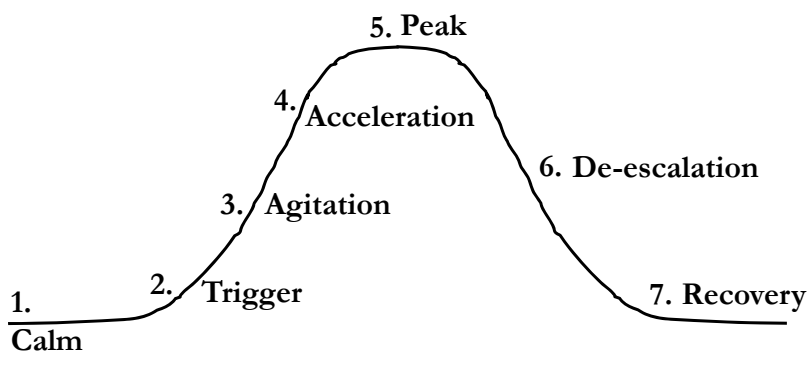
All students.

This is not a special education issue.

It is an *education* issue.

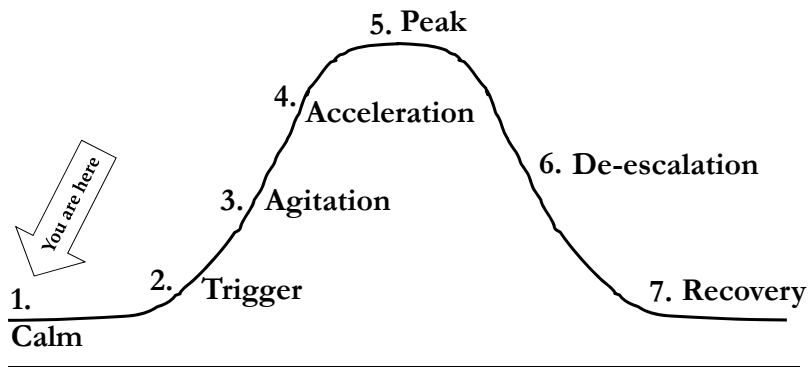


Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors



Colvin (2004): Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior in the Classroom. Behavior Associates, Eugene, Oregon

Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

I. Calm

Definition:

- Student is in typical, neutral state
- Student is cooperative and responsive to teacher and task demands



Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

I. Calm

- ***Our Goal : Keep the student productively engaged with instruction and learning in order to prevent behavioral problems or escalation of behavior.***

We know:

- When students are on-task, challenged, achieving academically and successfully, there is less likelihood of problem behaviors.
- Quality instruction is crucial factor in preventing problems.

(Colvin & Lazar, 1997, Sprague & Golly, 2004.)

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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

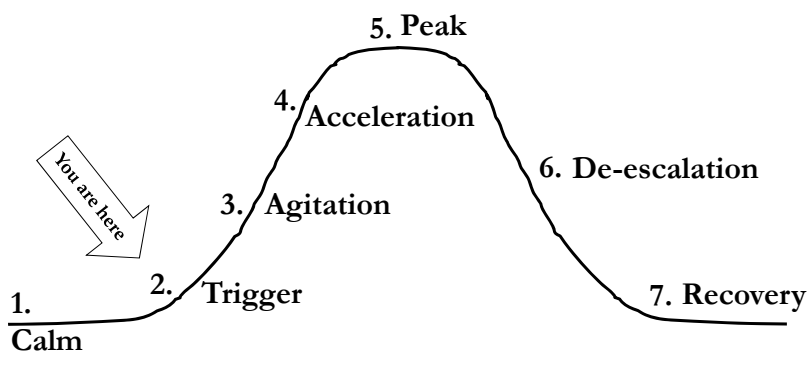
I. Calm

Proactive teacher behaviors:

- Maintain positive relationships
- Structure time and space (predictable)
- Teach for active engagement and success
- Attend to appropriate behavior (5:1 ratio)
- Provide contingent and noncontingent attention

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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

2. Trigger

Definition

- Events that set off the cycle of acting out behavior
 - School-based
 - Non-school based

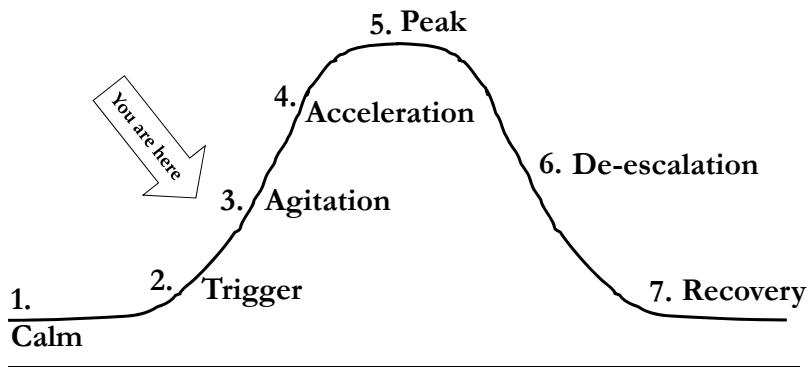


Our Goal:

To prevent a behavior problem.

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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

3. Agitation

Indicators:

- Student behavior unfocused or off-task
- Student showing indicators of anxiety
 - May involve increased behavior: darting eyes, busy hands, moving in and out of groups
 - OR, May involve decreased behavior: staring into space, withdrawal from groups, subdued language



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

3. Agitation

Calming strategies:

- Let student know you are aware there is a problem
- Communicate empathy and concern
- Help student focus on the task
- Provide space or allow student to have a short break (returning to task is expected when calm)

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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

3. Agitation

More calming strategies:

- Provide assurance and additional time
- Reduce situation demands
- Teacher proximity
- Independent activities, passive activities, movement activities
- Student self management (when previously taught)

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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

3. Agitation

Now let's look into a classroom...



VideoClip 1

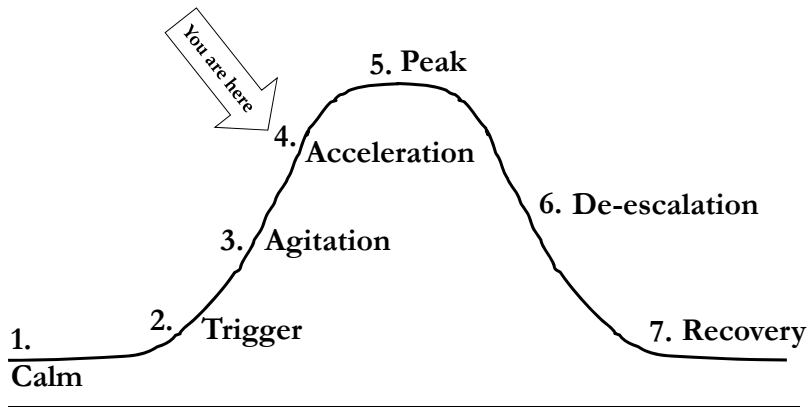
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Remember...

The only behavior we can truly control is our own!

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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

4. Acceleration

Definition

- Student actively resisting, refusing
- Verbal aggression, threats
- Violation of behavior rules
- A student screams “you can’t make me, _____”
- A student curses at you
- Behavior is provocative and designed to engage staff



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

4. Acceleration

- A. Avoid escalating prompts**
- B. Maintain calmness, respect, detachment**
- C. Approach student in a nonthreatening manner**
- D. Use non-confrontational limit setting**

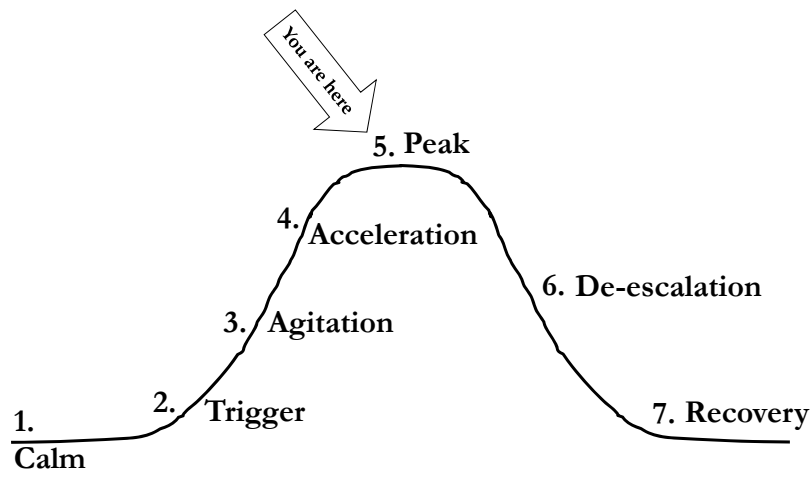
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Remember...

The only behavior we can truly control is our own!

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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

5. Peak

Definition:

- Student aggression to self, others or property
- Overall student behavior out of control
- Fighting
- Property destruction
- Assault



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

5. Peak

Our Goal:

Maintain safety

Needed:

- Prerequisites: Safe physical environment, community coordination, proactive planning, staff & student training
- Clear school/district policy
- Emergency procedures and response plan
- Follow up

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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

5. Peak

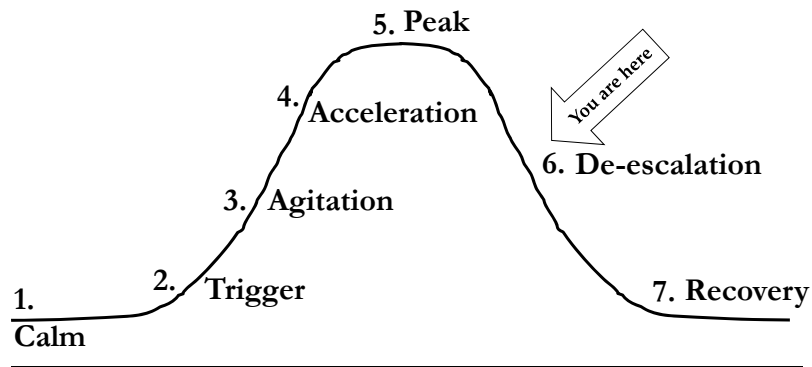
How to respond:

- Protect yourself, student and others as much as possible
- Remove student or remove others
- Pause and Assess
- Physically step away and send for help
- Block non-aggressively (if necessary)



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

6. De-escalation

Definition:

- Reduction or cessation of student aggression
- Reduced frequency or intensity of student behaviors
- Student may appear confused

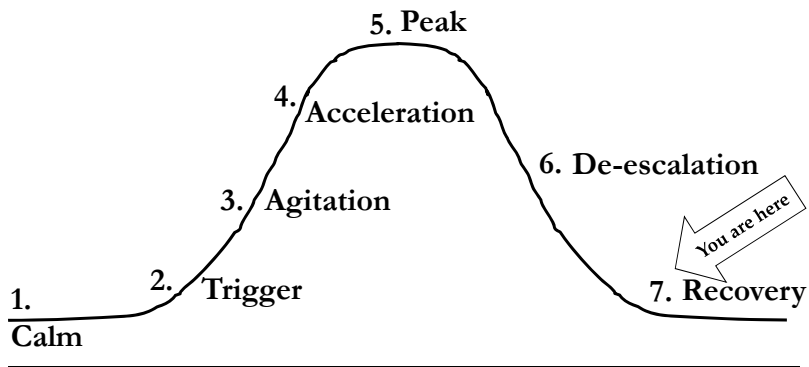
Tips for preventing challenging behaviors:

- Be cautious of your responses to student who is de-escalating!



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

7.Recovery

Definition:

- Student returns to “calm”
- Student eager to complete tasks
- Student reluctant to interact or talk
- This phase is **necessary** after a challenging behavior has occurred.



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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

7. Recovery

Transition to Class:

- Provide strong focus on normal routines
- Attend to appropriate student behaviors
- Help student focus on independent task or activity
- Communicate support and the expectation that s/he can succeed
- Do not re-negotiate assigned consequences
- Acknowledge problem solving behaviors
- Teach alternative responses at a later time

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Seven Phases of Challenging Behaviors

7. Recovery

Debriefing Session:

- A pro-active strategy designed to help the student problem solve.
- Brief meeting usually conducted after s/he has been successful in classroom for 20+ minutes
- Consider/analyze events that led to crisis
- Establish alternative responses to triggers to replace the problem behaviors.
- May use debriefing checklist or written plan
- Do not use debriefing as a consequence!

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Strategies for Incident Minimization



Safety-Care™

Behavioral Safety Training

A Quality Training Program by QBS, Inc.
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Detecting Antecedents and Predicting Behaviors

- **Environmental Antecedents-*Triggers***
 - *We want to avoid triggers whenever possible or help student cope better*
- **Behavioral Antecedents-*Signals***
 - *intervene early before the behavior escalates*



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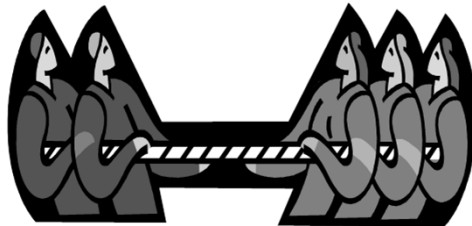
De-Escalation Safety Strategies

- Call for assistance if needed
- Move other students away
- Identify a team leader
- Have a plan, if the situation escalates, what will you do?
- Remove potential weapons/or items that could cause harm
- If possible, make sure you are dressed safely
- Make sure you have an exit
- Talk quietly, even if the person is loud
- Communicate calm and respect

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Avoid Power Struggles

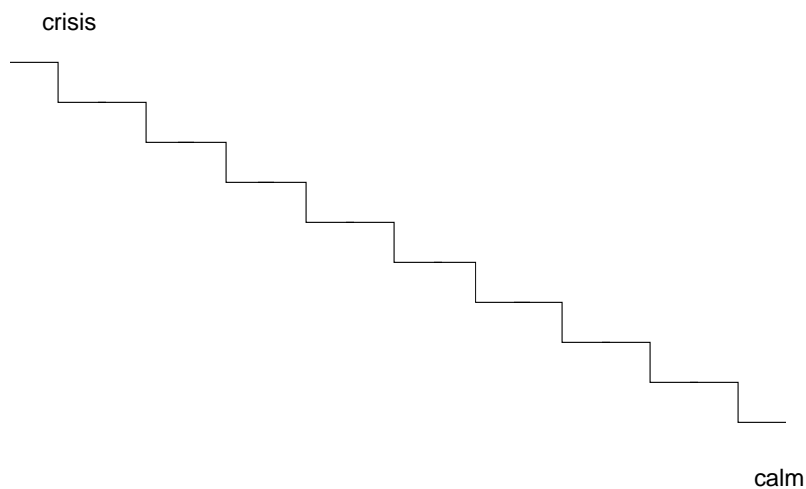


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Basics of De-Escalation

- De-escalation is a step by step process- you probably will not make a very agitated person calm in one step
- What YOU do may sometimes:
 - Work well
 - Have no effect
 - Make things worse
- If the student becomes more agitated- *stop what you are doing and try something else*

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The Help Strategy- a powerful question that can make all the difference

The students behavior may be communicating.....

- Pay attention to me.
- Listen to me.
- Go away.
- Let me take a break from this task.
- Help me do this task.
- Make that irritating noise stop.
- I have a headache. Make it stop.
- Give me that [object].
- Get that person to stop annoying me.
- Give me something to eat or drink.
- Let me go to [location].

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The Help Strategy

How to Use

1. Approach safely
2. Ask the student to communicate in an appropriate way. (In many situations, the best question to ask is, "how can I help you?") Use a calm, neutral tone.
3. Allow 5–10 seconds for the person to process your request.
4. Repeat the prompt if necessary.
5. If the student makes a request, then comply with it. Praise the student for asking appropriately.
6. If the student does not respond with an appropriate request, then stop.

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The Help Strategy

When to Use the Help Strategy

- If student has just started to exhibit mild signs of agitation. If you are going to use this strategy, it's always better to do so as early in the escalation cycle as possible.
- If the challenging behavior doesn't happen very often.

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The Prompt Strategy

How to Use Prompt Strategy

1. Identify an incompatible or high probability behavior- *What to Prompt*
2. Approach safely.
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 compliance. Begin again with another incompatible or high probability behavior.
7. If noncompliant, then identify a different behavior and start over. If signs of agitation increase, then stop and consider switching to the Wait strategy.

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The Prompt Strategy

When to Use the Prompt Strategy

- The Help strategy has not been effective or is not appropriate to use.
- The student is able to understand instructions and is likely to be compliant with simple requests.

When Not to Use the Prompt Strategy

- If you attempt to prompt and escalation increases.
- If you are concerned that the social interaction involved in complying and being praised might reinforce crisis behaviors.

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The Wait Strategy

How to use The Wait Strategy

1. Remove other students and make sure that other staff or students won't accidentally intrude.
2. Position yourself to be able to monitor the student without putting yourself at risk.
3. Avoid reinforcing the student's behavior (don't talk, give eye contact, respond to provocations, etc.).
4. When the student behaves more calmly, consider switching to the Prompt strategy.

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	Help	Prompt	Wait
Steps to Follow	1) Approach using Safety Stance. 2) Ask the student to communicate in an appropriate way. (In many situations, the best question to ask is, "how can I help you?") Use a calm, neutral tone. 3) Allow 5–10 seconds for the person to process your request. 4) Repeat the prompt if necessary. 5) If the student makes a request, then comply with it. Praise the student for asking appropriately. 6) If the student does not respond with an appropriate request, then stop.	1) Identify an incompatible or high-probability behavior. 2) Approach using Safety Stance. 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 compliance. Begin again with another incompatible or high-probability behavior. 7) If noncompliant, then identify a different behavior and start over. If signs of agitation increase, then stop and consider switching to the Wait strategy.	1) Remove other students and make sure that other staff or students won't accidentally intrude. 2) Position yourself to be able to monitor the student without putting yourself at risk. 3) Avoid reinforcing the student's behavior (don't talk, give eye contact, respond to provocations, etc.). 4) When the student behaves more calmly, consider switching to the Prompt strategy.
When to Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When student has just started to exhibit mild signs of agitation. If the challenging behavior doesn't happen very often. If it's more important to manage the dangerous behavior right now than it is to avoid reinforcing it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the Help strategy has not been effective or is not appropriate to use. When the student is able to understand instructions and is likely to be compliant with simple request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If helping and Prompting appear to make the situation worse. If you want to avoid all reinforcement of crisis behaviors. When nothing else is working.
When Not to Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After the crisis has gone on for a long time or after very dangerous behavior. If there is a pattern in which the student escalates in order to get staff to provide reinforcers. The student wants something that is not available, safe, or appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prompting increases escalation. You are concerned that the social interaction involved in complying and being praised might reinforce the crisis behaviors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student has a history of becoming more agitated when left alone.

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De-escalation does not have a time limit. You may stay in this stage for a long period of time.



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Wrap-Up

- Educators face challenges in dealing with student behavior
- Student behaviors have multiple causes and multiple solutions
- Staff behavior is a factor in the behavior chain
- Use of diffusing strategies is a sensible and safe approach to problem behavior
- We can defuse or we can escalate...

***The only behavior we can truly control
is our own.***

Resources

- Colvin, Geoff, Ph.D. (1999) Defusing Anger and Aggression: Safe Strategies for Secondary School Educators. IRIS Media, Inc., Eugene, Oregon.
- Ginger Rhode, Ph.D. William R. Jenson, Ph.D.H. Kenton Reavis, Ed.D., (1992) The Tough Kid Book Sopris West

Resources

- Mendler, Allen N., Ph.D. (2005) Just in Time: Powerful Strategies to Promote Positive Behavior. National Education Service, Bloomington, Indiana.
- Mendler, Allen N., Ph.D. (1997) Power Struggles, Successful Techniques for Educators. Discipline Associates, Rochester, New York.
- QBS Inc. retrieved February 10, 2013, from www.qbscompanies.com

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