

# The Resource Room



This is a space where we will share ideas and resources each month about all things Special Education.

A place centered on sharing evidence-based theory and practices for those educators that continue to seek learning, share knowledge, and reflect on growth.

by CES TAP Consultant and LEAP Coach

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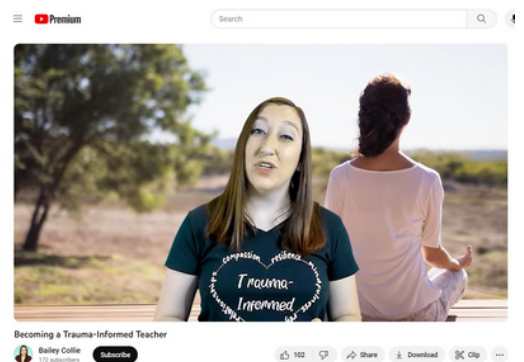
## HOW ADULTS CAN SUPPORT THE PREVENTION AND DE-ESCALATION OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

In the classroom and across the learning day, the most effective intervention for unexpected behaviors is prevention. As adults, being able to use the knowledge of our students, ourselves, and the understanding of behavior and interventions can support students towards building and maintaining skills for lifelong learning. Understanding effective ways to de-escalate a student's interfering behaviors and to promote prosocial replacement behaviors is a critical skill for educators working to foster a positive learning community

### KNOWING YOUR STUDENTS

Building relationships has become somewhat of a buzzword, but for good reason. It is key to learning about our students and creating a space of empathy and voice. The more we can take on the perspectives of our students and communicate respectfully, the more we can build trust and felt safety and belonging. We know that one of the most effective positive childhood experiences that offsets adverse childhood experiences, is a positive adult relationship. When students have a sense of connection, belonging, and voice they are more likely to be ready to learn.

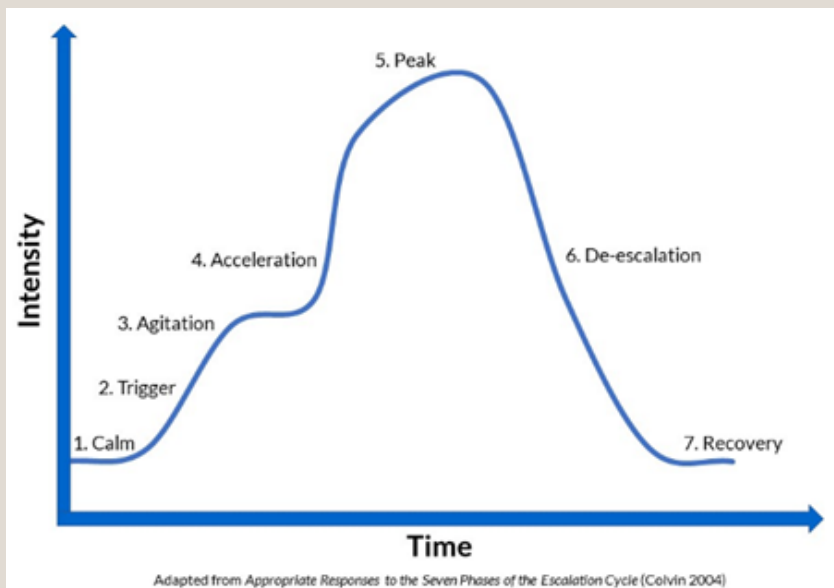
[CLICK HERE FOR A GREAT VIDEO ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN TRAUMA INFORMED SCHOOLS](#)



## THE ACTING OUT CYCLE

Most students and adults can identify with the feelings, emotions, and behaviors associated with the Acting Out Cycle when a setting event or stressor happens or felt safety is threatened.

The Acting Out Cycle (Colvin, 2004) is a tool for helping to understand the events that can lead to escalated behavior and corresponding responses. Being able to recognize and identify the indicators for an individual student at each phase of the cycle can inform and support our ability to prevent and help de-escalate that student's behavior. If we are aware of what it looks like for a student when they are calm, if we are aware of possible triggers or antecedents, and we can recognize when they are agitated, we can intentionally respond based on that information to prevent further escalation. A great strategy for students that need intensive or individualized interventions for behavior is to collaborate with relevant staff to identify and write down the observable behaviors for each phase and look for patterns across the phases.



RETRIEVED 2023 FROM:

[HTTPS://DPI.WI.GOV/SPED/EDUCATORS/BEHAVIOR-SUPPORTS/RESPONSE-CYCLE](https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/educators/behavior-supports/response-cycle)

### RESOURCES

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE ACTING OUT CYCLE AND STRATEGIES CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES

- [IRIS MODULES: ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS PART 1 ELEMENTARY](#)
- [IRIS MODULES: ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS PART 2 ELEMENTARY](#)
- [IRIS MODULES: ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS PART 1 SECONDARY](#)
- [IRIS MODULES: ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS PART 2 SECONDARY](#)
- [WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: THE RESPONSE CYCLE](#)
- [CES TAP ON DEMAND PRE-RECORDED VIDEOS ON BEHAVIOR](#)

### COMMON QUESTIONS CAN INCLUDE:

- *Are there any known setting events in this student's life or school day?*
- *What are the most common antecedents or situations that trigger or precede agitation.*
- *Is there a common activity, environmental factor, time, person involved?*
- *How do we know, observe, and recognize that this student is agitated?*

## KNOWING YOURSELF



To be able to support a student with de-escalation and regulation, we must first be regulated. It is important to do the work to reflect on our own beliefs, bias, triggers, and behavior. Using culturally responsive problem solving and practices and modeling social emotional learning are essential to being able to communicate respect, trust, and belonging. Social learning theory posits that we learn prosocial behavior through modeling and reinforcement of expected behaviors. Reflection on the behaviors, skills, and strategies that we use and model, can help to avoid power struggles and help us to stay present and regulated for our students and for ourselves. One strategy for self-reflection is to video yourself teaching and to watch it with an eye to your communication and interactions with students. What non-verbal communication is happening and what is it communicating? What is my voice level and tone? How much language am I using and what does it look like when I give demands? Do I favor or target one student over others? Do I communicate with respect and give opportunities for response and voice? Do I have triggers that I need to be aware of in situations. How do I regulate in the moment?

### HERE ARE SOME GREAT RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR EFFORTS FOR SELF-REFLECTION:

- [Mindfulness for Teachers video](#)
- [Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue](#)
- [PROQOL](#)
- [CASEL Personal SEL Reflection](#)

## KNOWING HOW TO RESPOND

Practicing empathy and empathic listening creates the space for prevention, regulation, and therefore learning. How we respond to a student's behavior can either escalate or de-escalate the situation. We know that adult responses that model calm and practice empathy are more likely to de-escalate or even prevent behavior. Corresponding our responses to phases of behavior can help us to understand how to react appropriately. When students are calm and engaged in classroom instruction and activities, we can respond with ensuring we support that through implementation of evidence-based practices such as universal design for learning, positive behavioral interventions and supports, social emotional learning, and culturally relevant instruction. During the trigger phase, adults can respond with empathic listening, seeking to understand needs, validation of feelings, and using positive supports, prompts, redirections, or regulation strategies. Often, being aware of how we are saying something is more important than the words we use. We model calm through our breath, our body-language, our posture, our proximity to the student, the amount of language we use or space we give, and the tone and volume of our voice when we do speak. If a student is demonstrating agitation, the adult can show empathy, use calming strategies, use proximity, adjust the environment or the task, offer instructional choices, provide additional space, and offer a break or help. If the student is in the acceleration phase, we want to remain neutral and avoid power struggles, ultimatums, or engaging in an argument. This is when we can provide a brief and neutral prompt or redirection. We can also use "magic statements" that support dignity of risk during the acceleration phase. Some examples include: "What can I do to make things better?", "I understand that you are upset." (Moyer, 2008). During a peak phase, a student may be engaging in very disruptive or dangerous behaviors. At this point the adult response is to be as calm as possible and to follow and implement a plan (behavior intervention plan, crisis plan). When a student is in the de-escalation phase, they may be tired, confused, disoriented, they may cry or be embarrassed, or they may attempt to blame. The adult response is to provide time and space to regulate. The student may want to discuss or may need time to process and implement regulation strategies. The student may return to an independent activity that allows for reintegration into expectations and reinforcement of expected behaviors before returning to the normal routine. During recovery is the time to debrief about the event and if applicable discuss restoration of the classroom or of relationships. Ultimately the goal is maintaining calm and relationships in the classroom between students and teachers so that learning can happen.