

## Implementation Procedures

# De-Escalation Strategies

Facilitators should review the De-escalation Handout and have a thorough understanding of the information prior to introducing this intervention to teachers.

### Materials

- De-escalation Handout
- Student De-escalation Plan Worksheet
- *De-escalation Treatment Integrity Form*
- *Intervention Training and Implementation Tracking Form (ITITF)*

### Procedures

1. Provide teacher with the De-escalation Teacher Handout. Discuss teacher response to escalated student behavior and Acting Out Cycle in terms of target student behavior.
2. Assist the teacher in completing the Student De-escalation Plan Worksheet.
3. Identify school personnel to teach the De-escalation Lessons to the target student. This could be the classroom teacher, school counselor, Check & Connect mentor, etc. Determine the date the lesson will be taught.
4. Follow the *Intervention Training and Implementation Form*

## Teacher Handout

# De-Escalation Intervention

### **Procedures for Teaching and Using the De-escalation Strategies to reduce distracting and/or disruptive student behaviors**

1. Read the information in this handout, and consider your student's behavior.
2. Observe student behavior to identify indicators of each of the stages in the Acting Out cycle.
3. Write a plan for your response to each stage of the cycle using the De-escalation Worksheet.
4. Implement de-escalation intervention.

*Note: Steps 5– 7 could be implemented by the Check & Connect mentor, counselor, or other staff.*

5. Determine two appropriate times to teach each lesson for the Acting Out cycle to the students or the class as a whole.
6. Follow the Part 1: Acting Out Cycle lesson plan.
7. Follow the Part 2: Using Strategies lesson plan.
8. Repeat the lesson for Part 2 as often as needed.

## De-escalation Strategies

De-escalation strategies help teachers to:

- identify the stages of behavior escalation for both internalizing and externalizing student behaviors, and
- implement techniques to reduce negative interactions with students who exhibit a variety of challenging behaviors

### Externalizing or Internalizing?

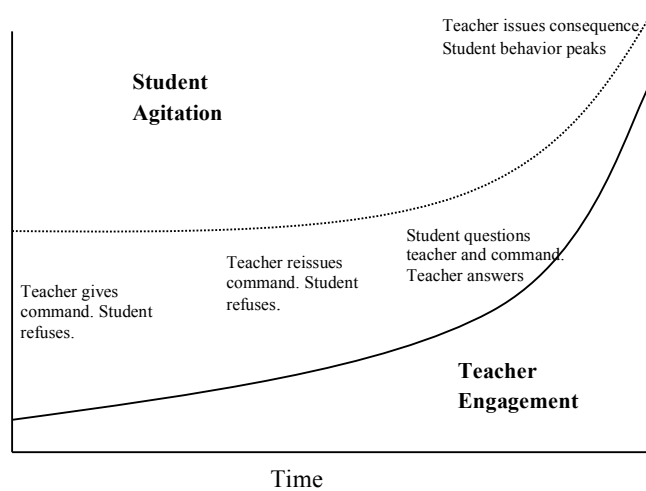
Emotional and behavioral problems may be manifested as **externalizing** or **internalizing**. Externalizing behaviors, generally easily identified by teachers, are problematic student behaviors that are externally directed. Internalizing behaviors may be more difficult to recognize in students. As the name suggests, internalizing behaviors are inward patterns of negative thinking and behavior which may stem from depression and anxiety.

INTERNALIZING	EXTERNALIZING
Withdrawn behavior Avoidance of peers and adults Refusal to speak Separation anxiety “Shutting down” and/or crying Hiding face, head down	Anti-social behavior Verbal aggression Physical aggression Arguing and non-compliance
ACROSS TYPES	
Substance misuse or abuse, anxiety disorders and depression, suicidal thoughts or attempts, dropout of school, poor post-school outcomes	

Student behaviors can also be characterized as distracting (e.g., calling out, tapping pencils, side-talking with peers) and disruptive (e.g., arguing, non-compliance, cursing) to the instructional environment.

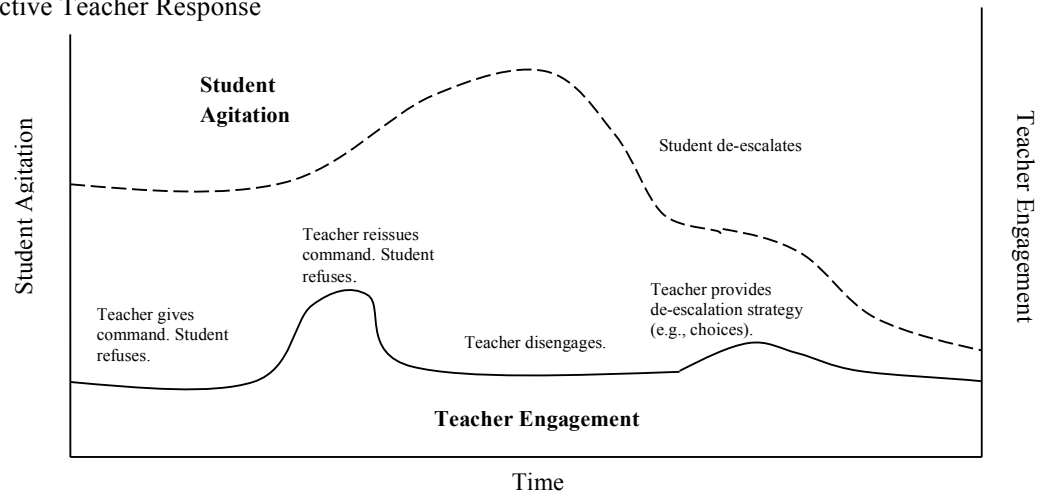
**Teacher Responses to Escalated Student Behavior.** The figures below illustrate the relationship of student agitation to teacher engagement (Walker & Walker, 1991).

Figure 1. Ineffective Teacher Response



In Figure 1, the teacher responds to student disruption by engaging with the student (i.e., issuing command). When the student refuses to comply, the teacher continues to engage (e.g., reissuing a command, asking questions, arguing with the student) which may be perceived by the student as “nagging.” Both student agitation and teacher engagement accelerate until the student behavior peaks and/or the teacher issues a consequence for the refusal to comply (e.g., directs student to leave). Patterns of interaction such as these interrupt instruction and may leave both teacher and student feeling frustrated and angry, damaging student-teacher relationships.

Figure 2. Effective Teacher Response

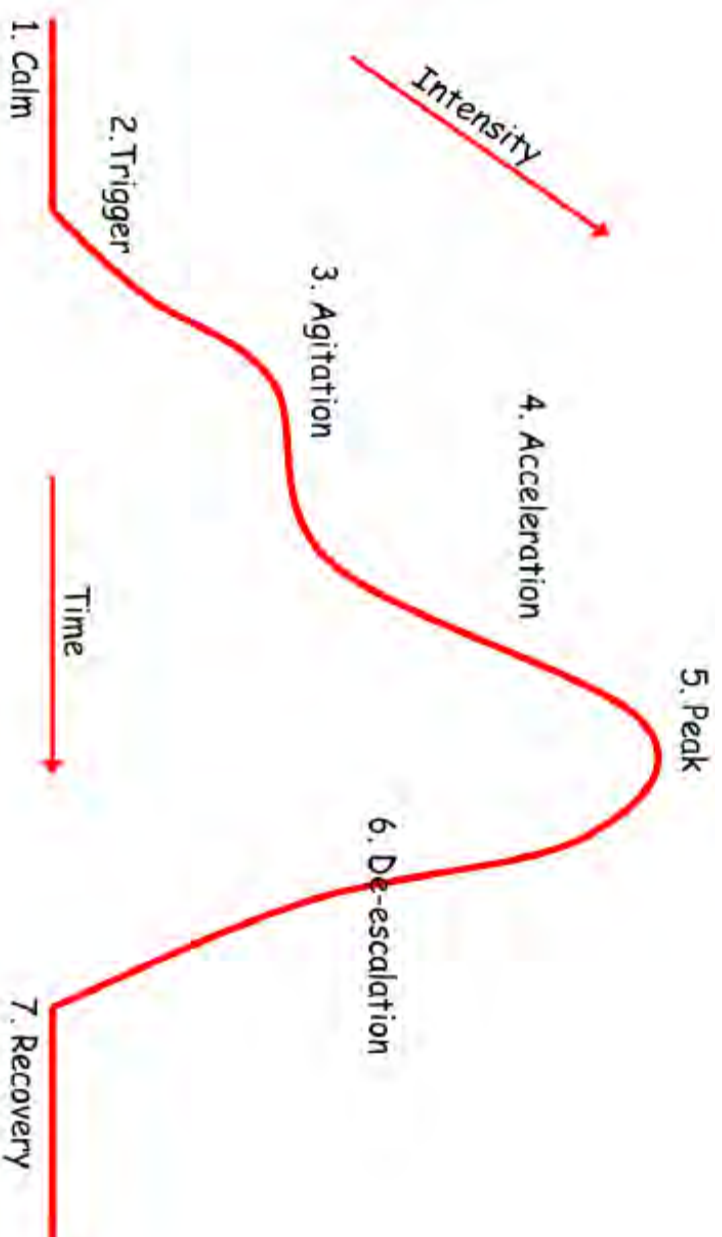


In Figure 2, when the student refuses to comply with the teacher's initial and reissued commands to the disruptive behavior, the teacher disengages temporarily. The strategic re-engagement by the teacher to offer a de-escalation strategy (e.g., choice, use of a calming strategy) results in decreased student agitation. This interaction pattern minimizes interruption and preserves valuable student-teacher rapport. Furthermore, teacher frustration may be reduced.

### The Acting Out Cycle

Problem behavior often follows a fairly predictable pattern called the Acting Out Cycle. The teacher's response to student behavior at each stage of the Acting Out Cycle can prevent problem behaviors from occurring or reduce the intensity of the student's behavior.

Figure 3. The Acting Out Cycle



Step	Phase	Characteristics of Student Behavior		Teacher Response
		INTERNALIZING	EXTERNALIZING	
1	<b>Calm</b>	Cooperative, follows directions, able to receive corrections		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positively reinforce for following expectations and routines (e.g., praise)</b></li> <li>• <b>Plan engaging instruction with multiple opportunities to respond</b></li> </ul>
2	<b>Trigger</b>	Student experiences an unresolved internal or external conflict: School-based triggers: Conflicts with teachers or peers, changes in routine, transitions, provocation from peers, academic pressure, continued errors, ineffective problem-solving, teacher corrections. <i>Other triggers: Conflicts at home, health problems, irregular sleeping patterns, substance use, gang activity.</i>		<p>NOTE: Student trigger(s) may not always be observable. The trigger(s) may have occurred in another class or outside of school. If you observe a trigger, then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem-solve privately with student</li> <li>• Engage student in lesson or activity</li> </ul>
3	<b>Agitation</b>	Withdraws emotionally and physically; stares off; makes limited eye contact; short responses; complains of stomach ache or headache; mopes	Easily distracted; taps/drums hands or feet; hums, talks to peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage student in lesson or activity</li> <li>• Maintain calmness, respect, and detachment</li> <li>• Remind student of expectations; then disengage temporarily to allow student time to comply</li> <li>• Provide de-escalation strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer choice of activity, seating</li> <li>• Prompt a short break</li> <li>• Suggest relaxation activity (e.g., deep breaths)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide positive reinforcement (e.g., praise) when student is back on task</li> </ul>
4	<b>Acceleration</b>	Avoids eye contact; puts head down; does not respond to teacher prompts or questions or prompts	Argues, questions; uses verbal abuse to intimidate; attempts to escape; may rip or throw objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain calmness, respect, and detachment</li> <li>• Provide short, clear direction; then disengage temporarily to allow student time to comply</li> <li>• Provide positive reinforcement (e.g., praise) when student is back on task OR</li> <li>• Follow hierarchy of response if student does not comply</li> </ul>

5	<b>Peak</b>	Shutting down; crying; curling up on the floor or in a corner; Does not respond to directions	Out of control behavior; Physical abuse toward objects or people; Does not respond to directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain safety of other students (e.g., room clear)</li> <li>Follow school procedures</li> <li>Call counselor or school mental health professional</li> </ul>
6	<b>De-escalation</b>	Will respond to concrete directions; Attempts to reconcile; withdraws; Denies serious behaviors; Blames others; Attempts to justify behavior; Complaints of body pain		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete paperwork required by school</li> <li>Allow student time to cool down</li> </ul>
7	<b>Recovery</b>	Engages in non-interactive activities; Reluctance to address the peak behaviors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prompt student to restore environment providing support if necessary</li> <li>De-brief incident with student and plan alternative student responses</li> <li>Return to original activity or next class</li> <li>Use high rates of reinforcement for appropriate behavior</li> </ul>

### Strategies for Teachers to Enhance Implementation

- Plan engaging lessons with frequent opportunities for student responses (see “Opportunities to Respond” intervention).
- Provide more positive feedback than negative feedback (see Positive Student-Teacher Interactions intervention).
- Follow your response hierarchy consistently (see Expectations intervention).
- Manage your own emotional responses to student behavior by taking a break or using a relaxation strategy. Challenging behavior may seem personal, but it is not.



### **Student De-escalation Worksheet**

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Think about the behavior of the target student at each phase of the Acting Out Cycle. Fill in the behavior on the left side of the chart. Then write in the teacher strategies that could be used during de-escalation.

<b>Student Behavior</b>	<b>Teacher Strategies</b>
Calm	Calm
Triggers	Triggers
Agitation	Agitation
Acceleration	Acceleration
Peak	Peak
De-escalation	De-escalation
Recovery	Recovery

Adapted from Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995.

### **SAMPLE Student De-escalation Worksheet**

Student Reesha

Date: 3/15/14

Teacher: Miss Perkins

Class: Biology

Directions: Think about the behavior of the target student at each phase of the Acting Out Cycle. Fill in the behavior on the left side of the chart. Then write in the teacher strategies that could be used during de-escalation.

<b>Student Behavior</b>	<b>Teacher Strategies</b>
Calm Likes to pass out lab books Eager to work with a partner Enjoys collecting materials at end of class	Calm Praise; Ask him to be part of the “Lab Assistant Team” with rotating responsibilities among class; Pair him with peer; Teach him classroom expectations and how to ask for help
Triggers Making errors on lab worksheets Running late from previous class (gym) Days when there is no lab When homework is assigned	Triggers For errors, pull him aside, show him items that need correction and give him chance to fix for half credit; Running late from gym class- have an Entering Class and Agenda routine so he knows where his materials are and what we are doing; No lab days/homework- Post a calendar of lab days & homework; Allow him to get a head start on homework in class in case he has questions.
Agitation Taps fingers, eyes dart around room; Heavy breathing; provokes peers	Agitation Prompt him to ask for help if he needs it; Remind him of task expectations
Acceleration Argues, refuses to follow directions, complains about assignments, rips up materials,	Acceleration Provide choice to work independently at round table or to work with paraprofessional; Privately prompt him to problem solve outside the room
Peak Kicks garbage can, storms out of classroom Uses obscenities toward teacher and peers. Pushes materials off desk with his arm	Peak Establish room clear procedures and teach the class; Inform all students the negative consequences to breaking materials;
De-escalation Refuses to accept responsibility for his actions	De-escalation Use problem-solving sheet to de-brief; focus on using self-management strategies before exploding
Recovery Eager to move on to business-as-usual Friendly, tries to do favors for teacher	Recovery Help him get back into routine by having him work on an easy task by himself for 15 minutes; remind him that he can make positive progress if he learns to communicate his feelings before exploding.

Adapted from Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995.

## De-escalation Lesson Plan

### Part 1: Acting Out Cycle

- Who can teach- Teacher, school counselor, Check & Connect Mentor, etc.
- Set expectations for respectful language and respect for others' experiences.
- May be taught in a group or individually

#### **RATIONALE**

This lesson is important because students with emotional and behavioral difficulties may benefit from instruction in emotional self- regulation.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

The student will: (a) learn about how their behavior follows the Acting Out Cycle; and (b) create an Acting Out Cycle with teacher assistance.

#### **MATERIALS**

white paper, crayons, markers, tape, red construction paper stop sign cutouts (see example on following pages)

**\*Determine in advance which strategies (Step 9 in Teaching Sequence) will be acceptable to the teacher/ administrator.**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Teacher says “Sometimes students may have difficulty managing their emotions which can lead to problems at school. This lesson will help you understand three things: 1) what events may cause you to have strong feelings; 2) what behaviors you may demonstrate when you are very upset; and 3) what strategies you could use to help you make better choices when you do have strong feelings.”

“Let’s start off by thinking about anger. Have you / Has anyone ever been in a fight or confrontation with a peer or adult? What was the trigger? What happened? How did it make you feel physically? What happened afterward?” *Allow student(s) to share experiences. Be sure to have student reflect on their thoughts and emotions before, during, and after the confrontation, not just about the details of the fight (e.g., heroics).*

“That experience probably followed the “Acting Out Cycle” which is a picture of what happens when people get very angry or have strong feelings. The Acting Out Cycle looks a little like a roller coaster ride- and it feels that way, too! Let’s take a look at each step of the Acting Out Cycle.”

#### **KEY VOCABULARY- Teach vocabulary as the Acting Out Cycle is filled in.**

Acting Out Cycle- the path that a person’s behavior follows when he or she is upset

Trigger- an event that causes a person to feel something (could be happy, could be angry)

Acceleration- A series of behaviors that show a person is upset

Peak- The behaviors a person may engage in when they are the most upset (could be outwardly or inwardly)

Recovery- The time after a person has been very upset

## TEACHING SEQUENCE

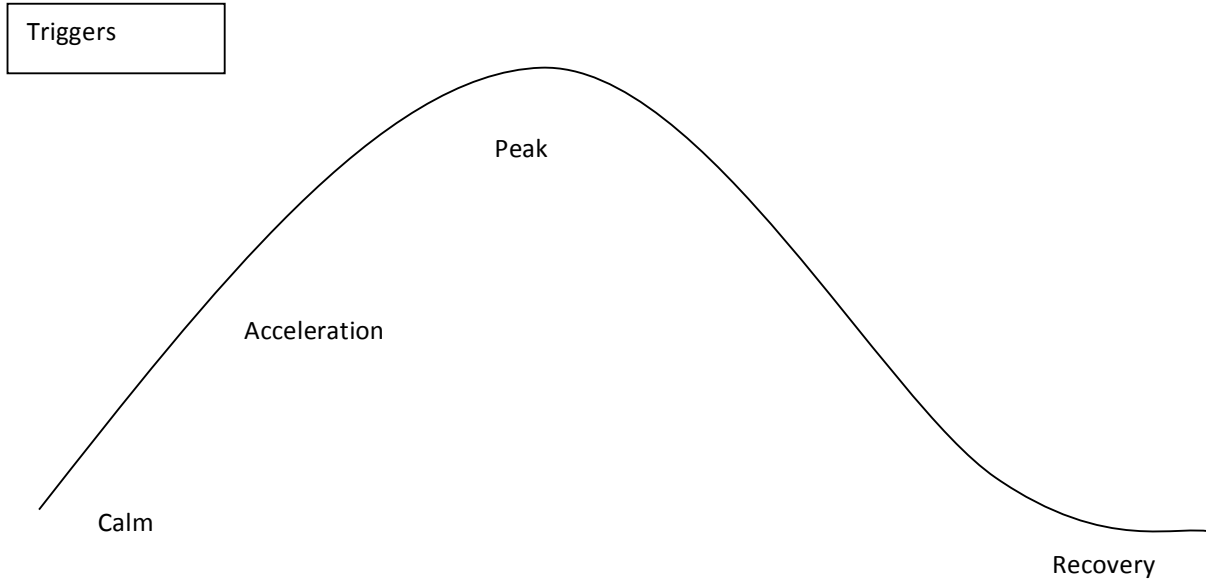
1. Give student(s) a paper with the Acting Out Cycle (normal curve, bell curve) and labels (see Figure 1). Provide students with choice of writing implement (e.g., marker, crayon, pen). Say “This is a blank Acting Out Cycle. We will fill it out together. At the end of this lesson, you will have your own picture of what happens when you get very angry or have strong feelings.” Teacher writes down examples and/or student responses on the teacher model. Student will label his or her curve according to teacher model.
2. “Calm- Ask student(s) “What does ‘calm’ look like, feel like, and sound like at school? What behaviors are you as the student demonstrating? *Student responses: On task, participating, asking questions, finishing work.* Ask students “How does ‘calm’ feel?” *Student responses: good, happy, content.* “That’s excellent! When we are in a Calm state of mind, we are in control and ready and able to learn.” Teacher writes down examples on the teacher model. Student will label his or her curve with words that describe his or her feelings.
3. Talk about “Triggers”- Ask students “What are some triggers in school?” *Student responses: hard work, forgetting assignment, failing a test, bully, arguing with a teacher;* Ask students “What are some triggers outside of school that might impact what kind of a day you have at school?” *Student responses: oversleeping, forgetting to eat breakfast, fight with family members.* Teacher writes down examples on the teacher model. Student will label his or her curve with words that describe his or her feelings.
4. Talk about Acceleration- Say to student(s) “List feelings, words, actions, behaviors that you engage in when you are frustrated, but not *really* angry, which is more like the Peak.” For example: argue with teachers, yell, refuse to do work, whine, say, “I hate this class”; “F- you!”; rip up paper, say “Get away from me”, start to hide, put your head down, sink down in your seat. Encourage student(s) to be honest without writing curse words. Teacher writes down examples on the teacher model. Student will label his or her curve with words that describe his or her feelings.
5. Peak- Say “Now think about when you are super angry. What does your behavior look like? Draw an explosion and put words inside about how you feel and what it looks like.” For example: kicking, screaming, throwing things, spitting, punching, running away, crying, curling up in a ball, hiding. Teacher writes down examples on the teacher model. Student will label his or her curve with words that describe his or her feelings.
6. Recovery- Ask student(s) “How do you feel after you have had strong feelings?” *Student responses: Tired, confused, embarrassed, lonely, worried, sorry.* Say to student(s), “Great job sharing those uncomfortable feelings. It’s probably true that during recovery, you might wish that you had acted differently.” Teacher writes down examples on the teacher model. Student will label his or her curve with words that describe his or her feelings.
7. “Wow! What a rollercoaster ride! You might think that there is nothing you can do to stop the rollercoaster ride of your emotions. But there is...”
8. “You can use strategies to help calm you down. Strategies are ways to STOP acceleration before you feel out of control. Here are some non-examples of strategies: Sleeping, punching something, breaking something, pounding your fist, screaming. Some examples of strategies students can use in school are...*provide student(s) with list of strategies the teacher and/or administrators have determined will be acceptable. Examples could be: Talking with a teacher, taking a break, getting a drink of water, asking for help from a teacher.*

9. Distribute at least 2 stop signs to each student and have student write down a strategy on each. Teacher writes down examples on the teacher model. Use tape to put the stop sign along the Acceleration curve. Teacher circulates to assist student(s) if necessary. Say “Using these strategies will help you to STOP the Acting Out Cycle before it reaches the Peak. We will practice these strategies together so you will know how to use them when you need to regain control and get back to Calm.” *Point to the Calm area of the Acting Out Cycle.* “Remember that the Calm area is where you are feeling well and in control and able to learn.”
10. Student may wish to share their behavior curves or keep them private. Students may post their behavior curves in the classroom. Provide praise for student participation in activity.
11. Move on to the Strategy Lesson or determine date and time for the Strategy Lesson. The Strategy Lesson should be taught within a week of teaching the Acting Out Cycle.

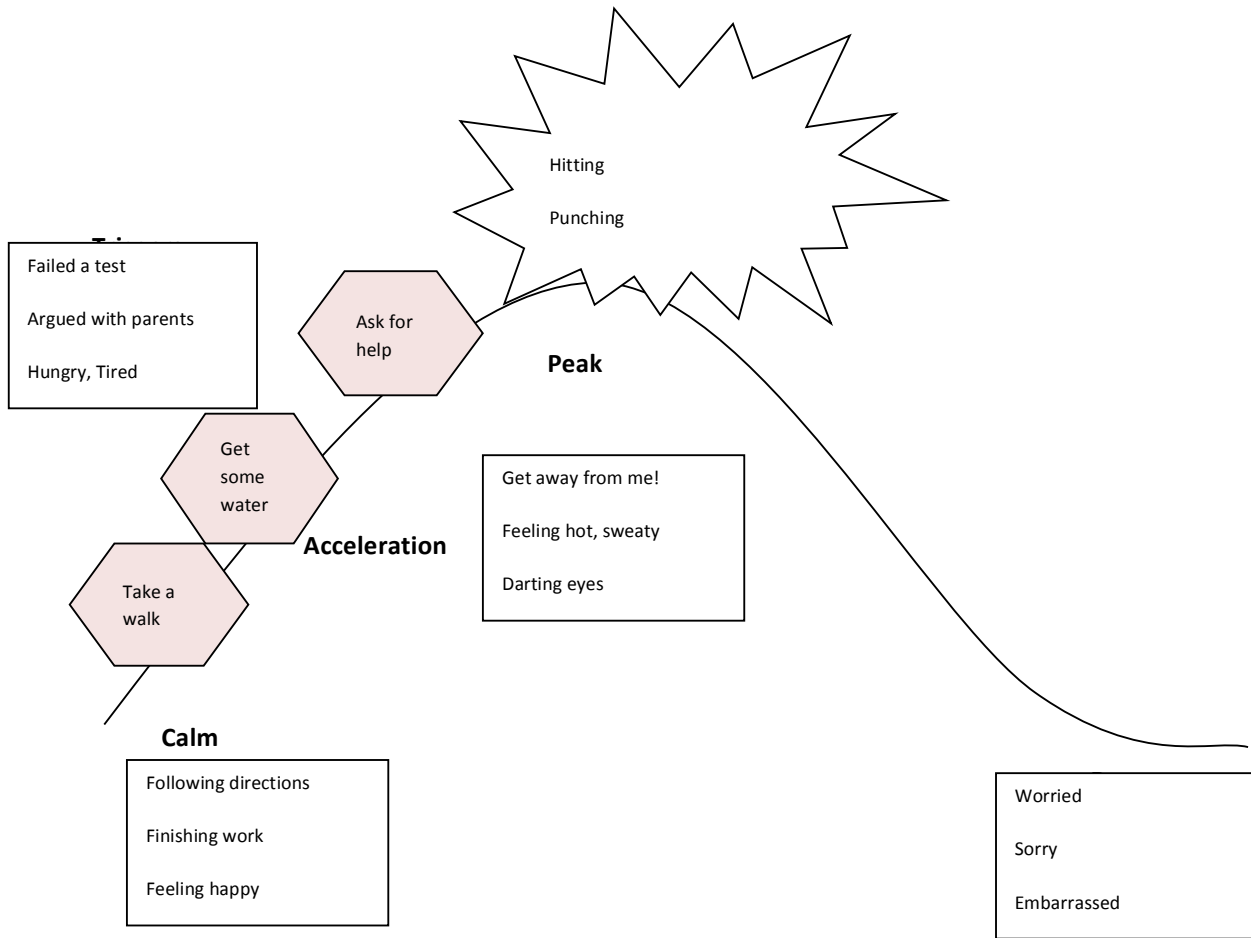
**CLOSURE**

“Knowing more about your feelings and how feelings can impact behavior can help you take control of situations that are challenging or upsetting. Next time we will practice using strategies in class when you feel frustrated.”

On a blank sheet of paper or poster, provide students with the following:



Provide students with a model by filling a behavior curve out with them through discussion (Steps 3-7).  
Tape the stop sign strategies on top of the Acceleration line (Step 10).



## De-escalation Lesson Plan

### Part 2: Using Strategies

- Who can teach- Teacher, school counselor, Check & Connect mentor, etc.
- Set expectations for respectful language and respect for others' experiences.
- May be taught in a group or individually
- May be reviewed as needed

<p><b><u>RATIONALE</u></b></p> <p>This lesson focuses on student use of calming strategies to (a) prevent acceleration and peak behaviors; and (b) return to a calm state so learning can continue in the classroom.</p>
<p><b><u>OBJECTIVE</u></b></p> <p>Students will (a) identify when calming strategies should be used; and (b) practice the use of calming strategies with teacher assistance.</p>
<p><b><u>MATERIALS</u></b></p> <p>Student Acting Out Cycle created from Part 1 Self-monitoring sheet, if part of student's de-escalation plan</p>
<p><b><u>INTRODUCTION</u></b></p> <p>Sometimes students may have difficulty managing their emotions and behaviors which can lead to problems at school. This lesson will help you identify and practice different strategies you could use to help you make better choices when you do have strong feelings. It is important to practice these strategies when you are calm so you know exactly what to do when you are feeling upset.</p> <p><i>Review:</i> Last time, we discussed the Acting Out Cycle and you created your very own Acting Out Cycle. To refresh our memory, what can you tell me about the Acting Out Cycle? <i>Elicit student responses- allow students to refer to their Acting Out Cycle chart and/or notes. Ensure student has a clear understanding of each part of the Acting Out Cycle.</i></p>
<p><b><u>KEY VOCABULARY</u></b></p> <p><u>Acting Out Cycle</u>- the path that a person's behavior follows when he or she is upset</p> <p><u>Trigger</u>- an event that causes a person to feel something (could be happy, angry, anxious, frustrated, unhappy, scared, etc)</p> <p><u>Acceleration</u>- a series of behaviors that show a person is upset</p> <p><u>Calming Strategy</u>- an activity that helps you calm down when you are feeling angry, anxious, frustrated, unhappy, or scared.</p>



## TEACHING SEQUENCE

1. “At the end of the last lesson, you identified some strategies you could use to help calm down. You wrote those strategies on red stop signs and pasted them on the Acceleration part of the Acting Out Cycle.”
2. “The purpose of today’s lesson is to practice using your strategies. More specifically, we will talk about how to access strategies, how to use a strategy appropriately, and how to return to the class after using a strategy.”
3. “Remember that we talked about Triggers- We talked about school triggers and other triggers. What were some we talked about?” *Student responses: hard work, forgetting assignment, failing a test, bully, arguing with a teacher; oversleeping, forgetting to eat breakfast, fight with family member.* “When triggers happen, you need to be ready to use a strategy if you begin to feel angry, upset, scared, or frustrated.”
4. “Strategies are ways to STOP acceleration before you feel out of control. The purpose of using a strategy is to help return your feelings to a more calm and controlled state. This does not mean that you won’t still be angry, upset, or anxious. It means that you will be able to stop yourself from losing control.” What are some benefits to using a strategy before you lose control? *Student responses: avoid getting into arguments or fights, think more clearly about the situation, listen better to choices and directions, re-set your mind, cope better with things you can’t change, etc.*
5. “Excellent- Now the trick is to practice using strategies and get really familiar with using strategies BEFORE you actually need to use them. When you are already at your peak, that’s no time to learn how to do something new. Knowing how to access strategies and how to use the strategies appropriately will help you deal with your feelings and then get back into the classroom and continue learning and be successful. You already know that fighting and arguing lead to trouble, so why not try to use a strategy and see if it makes things better?”
6. “The first thing you need to do is plan how you want to communicate to a teacher that you need to use a strategy. Teachers aren’t mind readers and they won’t know what you are up to if you suddenly put your head down. I might think you are sleeping when you are actually being quite responsible by putting your head on your desk to calm down. Here are some suggestions: Raise your hand and tell a teacher you would like to use a strategy, use a signal/cue card on the corner of your desk. Sometimes a teacher may prompt you to try a strategy. Do you have any ideas about how a teacher could let you know you should use a calming strategy?” *Student responses: use a codeword, speak to me privately, use a piece of colored paper, or other signal.*
7. “Very good. After you and your teacher know that you will be using a strategy, then you need to go ahead and use your strategy. The main thing to understand about using the strategy is that it is a temporary break to calm down. The end goal will always be to come back to the class and get back to work or rejoin the activity. Using a strategy is not about wandering around the hallway. It is about taking a quick break, enough to get back on track and back to work. For example, if my strategy is to get a drink of water, then I will ask the teacher to use a strategy, I will get a drink of water, and come right back to my area. This should take no longer than 2 minutes.”
8. Role play scenarios specific to the student and specific strategies that the teacher/administrator has identified as acceptable. Some example scenarios: academic frustration, feeling silly, feeling anxious, feeling angry about peer interaction, getting a bad grade, being teased. Support student(s) in actually requesting the strategy, getting up out of seat to use the strategy (e.g., walking to the water fountain),

and returning to the classroom to begin work. Ensure the student has a clear understanding of all three steps.

9. If student is using a self-monitoring sheet as part of the de-escalation intervention, teach the student how to self-monitor his/her behavior. Model how the student will receive feedback on the accuracy of his or her self-monitoring (e.g., privately, by teacher). Refer to the Self-monitoring intervention procedures.
10. “Great work! Knowing how to use a strategy appropriately is very helpful as you become an adult and interact in the community, too. This is all about knowing what helps you calm down and staying in control of yourself so that you can be successful at school.”

**CLOSURE**

“Knowing more about your feelings and how feelings can impact behavior can help you take control of situations that are challenging or upsetting.”

This lesson may be repeated periodically as needed.

**DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES TREATMENT INTEGRITY FORM**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Integrity Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Booster Number : \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Observe implementation of De-escalation Lesson Plan and determine integrity.

Materials were available to the students.	Yes	No
2. Teacher introduced lesson to students by following script.	Yes	No
3. Key vocabulary introduced during teaching sequence.	Yes	No
4. Teacher followed Teaching Sequence.	Yes	No
5. Teacher elicited student responses.	Yes	No
6. Teacher introduced strategies acceptable for use in class.	Yes	No
7. Teacher proceeded to Using Strategies lesson or determined date to meet for Using Strategies lesson.	Yes	No
<b>Divide number of Yes's by 7 and multiply by 100 to determine integrity:</b>		%

**If step 6 above is "No" or integrity does not reach 85%, booster session indicated.**

Booster Session Indicated: Yes No If indicated, date booster session scheduled: \_\_\_\_\_

Student #1:	The target student completed the Acting Out Cycle activity (100%)	Yes	No
Student #2:	The target student completed the Acting Out Cycle activity (100%)	Yes	No
Student #3:	The target student completed the Acting Out Cycle activity (100%)	Yes	No

Student #4:	The target student completed the Acting Out Cycle activity (100%)	Yes	No
Student #5:	The target student completed the Acting Out Cycle activity (100%)	Yes	No

Subject Utility Instructions: Observe implementation of De-escalation Lesson Plan and answer below