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on Legal Issues of Educating Individuals with Disabilities

April 26 - 29, 2015

Colorado Convention Center
DENVER

# AS4: De-escalation Strategies for Agitated and Dangerous Behaviors

**Diana Browning Wright, M.S., L.E.P.**

**Monday, April 27, 2015**

**10:45am - 12:00pm**

**3:00pm - 4:15pm**

# When Behavior Impedes Learning….

- Discuss needs.
- Develop goals.
- Consider strategies …

    Including positive behavioral interventions strategies and supports

    *"If it isn't written down, it didn't happen."*

# P.R.O.M.P.T. For Non-Compliance: A Teacher Skill

- **P**roximity.
- **R**edirection.
- **O**ngoing.
- **M**onitoring/reinforcement.
- **P**rompt.
- **T**eaching interaction.
  - Empathy.
  - Inappropriate behavior.
  - Appropriate behavior.
  - Rationale.
    - Think time with reinforcement or consequences.

# Similarities And Differences

- P.R.O.M.P.T. for non-compliant behavior and Personalized De-escalation Planning (PDP) for explosive behavior have similarities and differences.

- In PDP, we do not prompt to the task, i.e., face the trigger and comply with a direction in spite of the emotional behavior if the student is at the agitation through de-escalation stages.

# The Cycle

## Matching strategies to phases in the escalation cycle
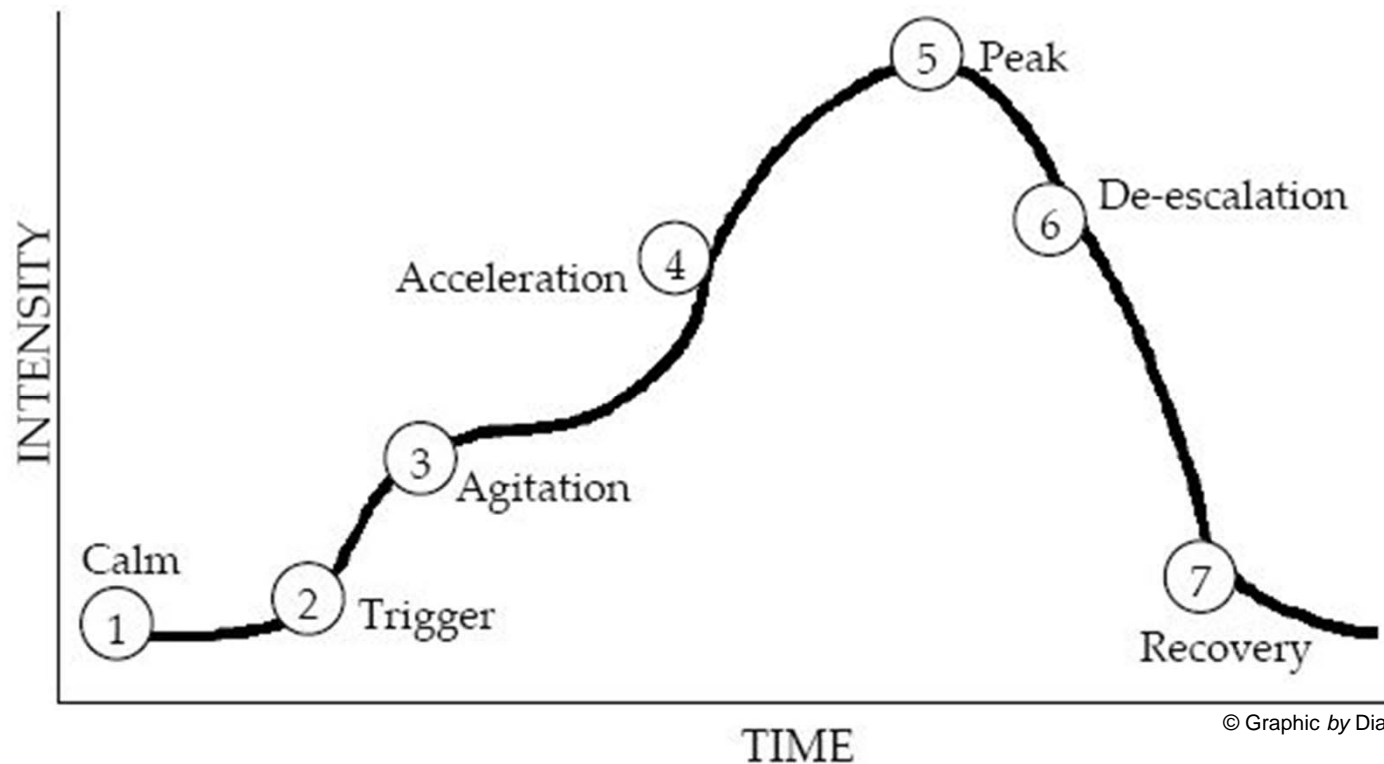


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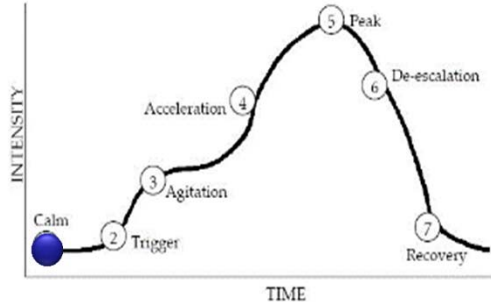
# 1. Calm *Phase*

- The calm phase is characterized by appropriate, cooperative behavior and responsiveness to staff directions.

- Maintain phase with teaching strategies, reinforcement, and pacing. This can be described in a behavior intervention plan (BIP) as well.

- Teach, pre-correct, motivate, and build relationships to enhance self-regulation.
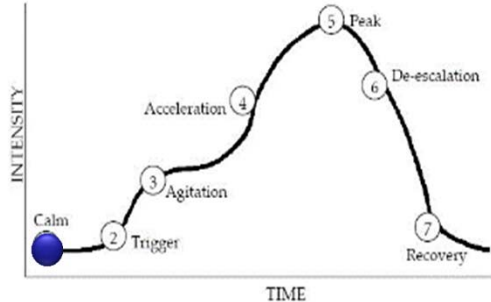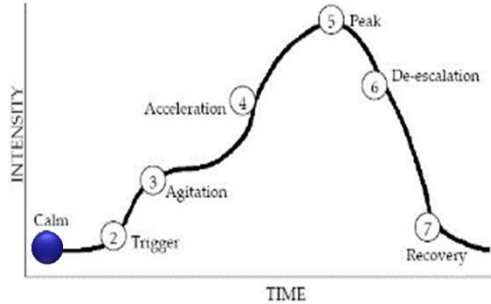
# 1. Calm *Strategies*

- Teaching replacement behaviors and emotional regulation skills (relaxation, positive self-talk, mindfulness, and self-soothing).

- Pre-correction (i.e., errorless learning) reminds the student of potential triggers and the replacement behaviors and emotional regulation skills that can be used. Consider observations and SUDS (subjective units of discomfort scaling)

https://www.msu.edu/course/sw/850/stocks/pack/slfanch.pdf or

"The incredible (5) five point scale" to identify triggers (http://www.5pointscale.com)

# 1. Calm *Strategies*

- **Sampling the reinforcer**: This involves energizing the student's motivation to manage themselves in the face of triggers in order to gain later reinforcement. Sampling the reinforcer has been shown to increase self-regulation and increase the probability the student will not become agitated in the face of the trigger(s).
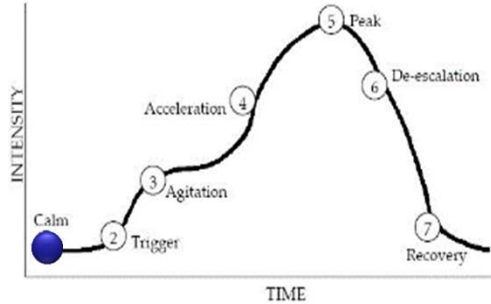
# 1. Calm *Strategies*

- Relationship strategies that either focus on establishing, maintaining, or restoring the relationship.

- Know what situations the student finds stressful, and use that information to assess when the student may be able to confront the trigger and when it may be unsuccessful or unsuccessful without supports.
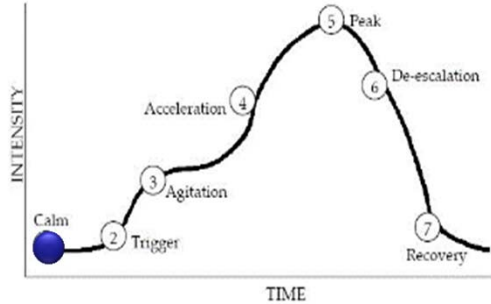
# 1. Calm *Strategies*

- Within the P.R.O.M.P.T. strategy, use proximity control as you would for non-compliance — move around the room, but be sure to spend a few seconds in a friendly manner near the student.
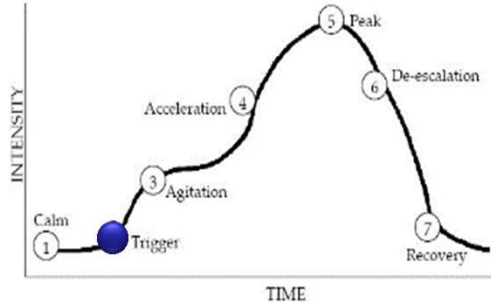
# 2. Trigger *Phase*

- Triggers (antecedents) = situations, people, interactions, directives, requests that provoke the agitation and potentially lead to more explosive behaviors.

- Pathway charting helps visualize paths and strategies to use and identify replacement behaviors to teach in the previous phase, which can then be cued for use as the student faces the trigger.

# Summary Statement

**Desired Alternative**

Sit down, and prepare for instruction
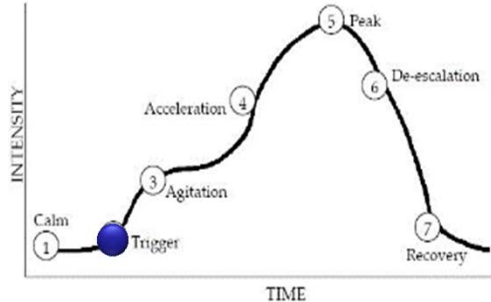
**Typical Consequence**

Ready for instruction

**Setting Events**

Hot day

**Triggering Antecedents**

Bumped by adult

**Problem Behavior**

"What do I have to do to get you to leave me alone? Kill you?!"

**Maintaining Consequences**

*Protests/rejects, removes physical contact*

**Acceptable Alternative**

"Don't touch, I need personal space!"
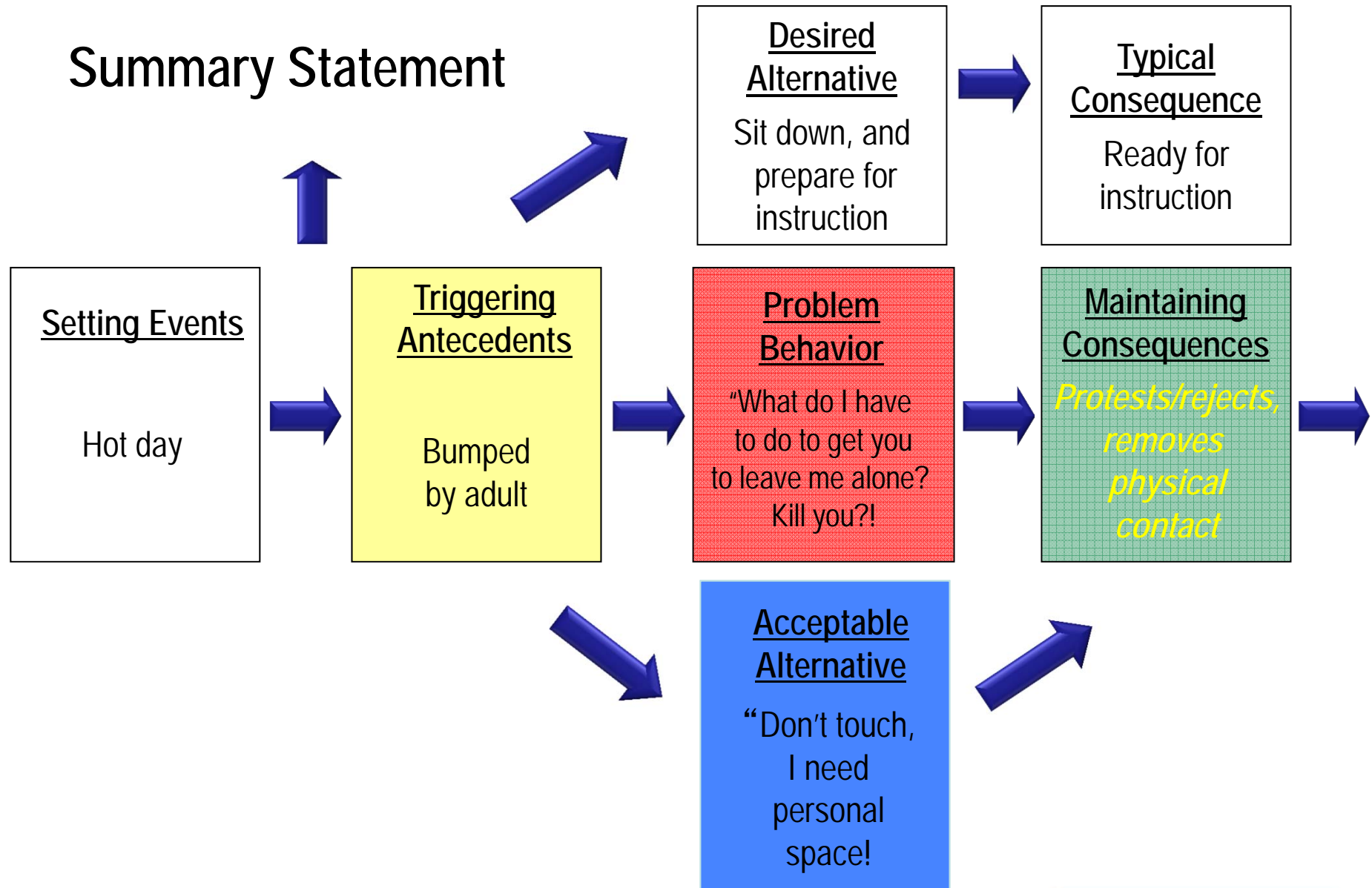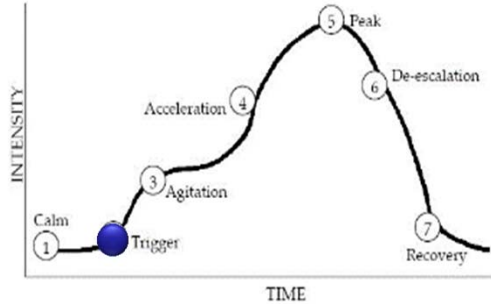
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# 2. Trigger *Strategies*

- Remove or reduce contact with triggers.

- Use "time away" strategy (see: www.pent.ca.gov and handouts) or other self-selected removals to access time to self-soothe or avoid contact with the trigger.

- Gesture/verbal prompt a replacement behavior previously taught, modeled, and rehearsed during the calm stage.

# 2. Trigger *Strategies*

- Reinforce the student for exhibiting the replacement behaviors.

- Within the P.R.O.M.P.T. strategy, use redirection and ongoing monitoring.
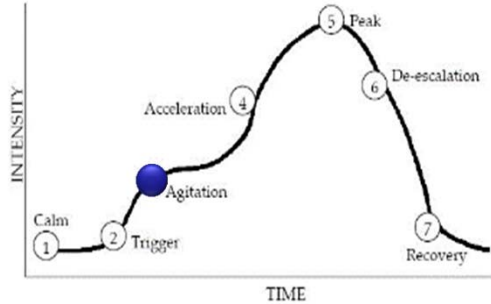
# 3. Agitation *Phase*

- The agitation stage is when the trigger has provoked an emotional reaction, and the previous strategies are insufficient to avoid potential further escalation. The aim here is not to set firm limits and enforce them, as the explosive student will likely escalate to a point that is highly disruptive, dangerous, or destructive.

- The aim is to work with the student to prevent movement up the scale of escalation.
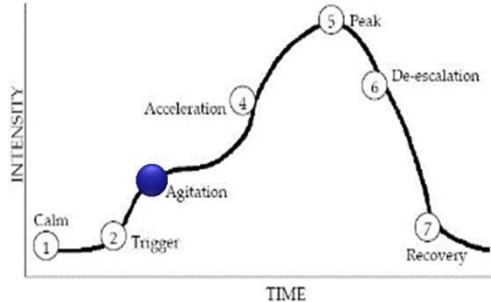
# 3. Agitation *Strategies*

- **Collaborative problem-solving (CPS) is the methodology to effectively communicate with an agitated, explosive student to generate mutually agreed upon solutions, so the student does not feel the need to escalate.**
  - CPS involves three sequential steps:
    - Empathy statement (validation, acceptance, and understanding of the student's feeling, motive, or reason).
    - Sharing the adult perspective.
    - Negotiating or collaborating with the student to generate and enact a solution the student finds acceptable.
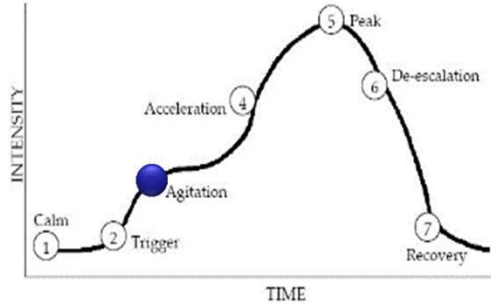
# 3. Agitation *Strategies*

- In the P.R.O.M.P.T. strategy (Proximity, Redirection, Ongoing monitoring, Prompt, Teaching interaction), use the last P (Prompt) not to sustain contact with the trigger, but rather a prompt to use the solution the student finds acceptable that you have pre-determined for this student in this situation or you are determining now.
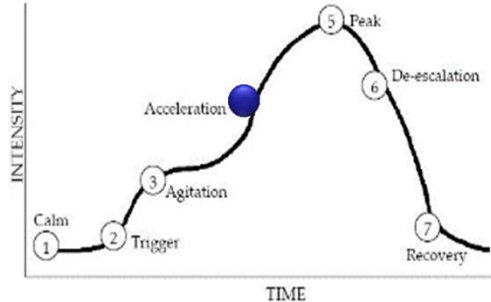
# 4. Acceleration *Phase*

- Students in this phase continue to escalate their behavior and are unwilling to communicate with the adult who is using CPS. They question, argue, and engage in confrontational interactions; they are defiant of teacher communication, may swear, and call staff names.
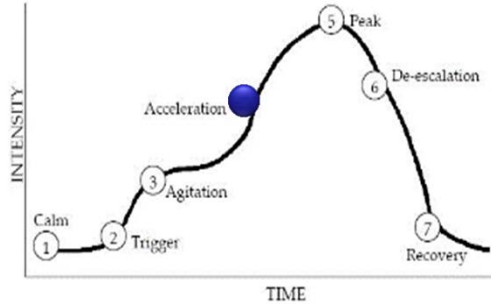
# 4. Acceleration *Phase*

- The aim here is to set up places where the student can go in order to engage in a preferred activity and potentially use emotional regulation strategies.

- In the P.R.O.M.P.T. strategy, this is Redirection.
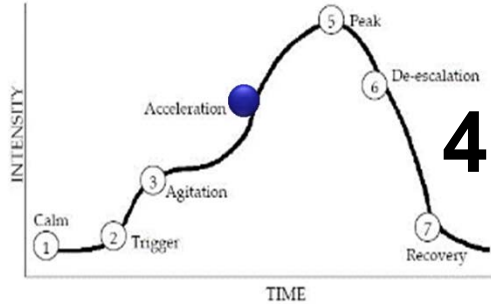
# 4. Acceleration *Strategies*

- Use non-verbal empathy messages.

- Do not engage in reasoning, cajoling, or other interactions that will further escalate the situation, including frowning, crossing arms, or looking mean.

- Wait. Step away.
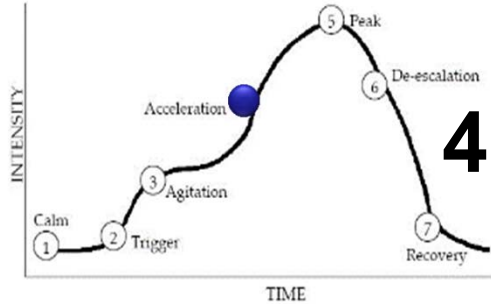
# 4. Acceleration *Strategies*

- Do not put fuel on the fire by explaining, demanding, warning, or employing other corrective procedures.

- Consider gesturing toward a personalized spot in the room the student feels allows him to calm down in an inviting, non-demanding manner.

# 5. Peak *Phase*

- The student has reached full escalation, and there is potential for highly disruptive, dangerous, or destructive behavior if the situation is not handled appropriately. It is imperative that staff has a protocol in place.
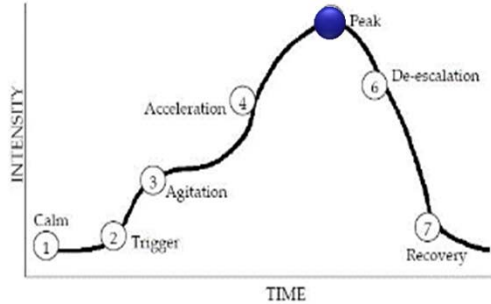
# 5. Peak *Strategies*

- Adults regulate their own behavior by using calm voice tone, decreasing the amount of words spoken, leaving spaces between words, and decreasing voice volume. Making sure the student does not feel like he is being overwhelmed by the adults and forced to do something, focus on controlling staff behavior, demonstrating compassion and tolerance to the student.
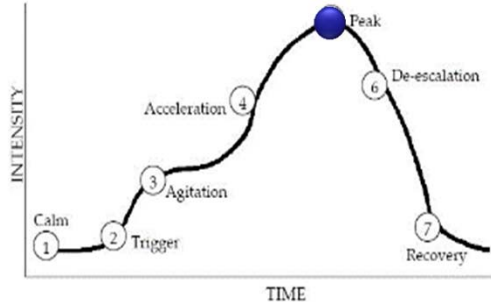
# 5. Peak *Strategies*

- When necessary, intrusive short-term interventions such as removing either the student who is acting out or the other students from the classroom, crisis intervention and prevention techniques (CPI, *ProACT*, etc.), calling the student's parents, contacting the police, etc., may occur.

- Remember that restraint can only be used when there is imminent danger to the student or others. It must generate an incident report.
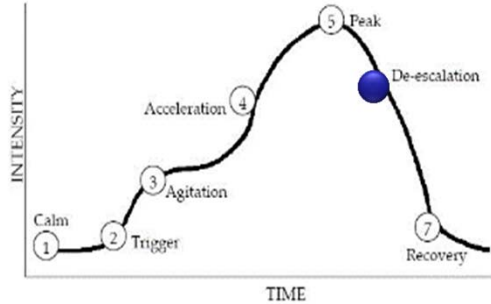
# 6. De-escalation *Phase*

- Once the behavior has left the peak stage and calm is gradually returning to the student, use of techniques to restore relationships and assure the student that escalation is nearing an end can be used.
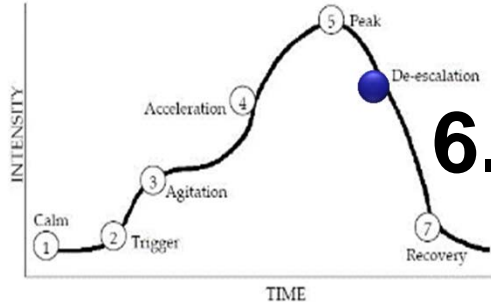
# 6. De-escalation *Strategies*

- In general, do not add too much conversation yet.
- "Pretty soon you will be calm again, and we can fix the problem, Jared. Can I get you a drink of water?"
- "Would you like to cool down further in our 'coping corner' for a few minutes?"
- "I am impressed by the fact that you are calming much faster than you have before. I think you are moving toward success with your emotions."
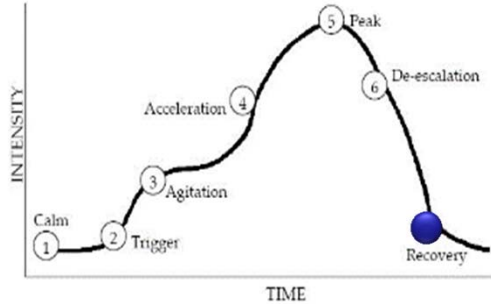
# 7. Recovery *Phase*

- At this stage, the student is often more compliant than in the initial calm stage.

- Here is where restoring relationship is critical.
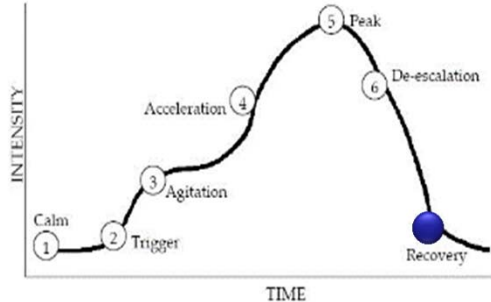
# 7. Recovery *Strategies*

- Rational problem-solving dialogues can be helpful for both staff and student to understand why the explosion continued.

- Forms such as "Thinking About My Inappropriate Behavior" (www.pent.ca.gov) can be used to debrief and restore relationship prior to re-entry into tasks and performance requirements.

# Case Study #1

- **Student name**: Alex.
- **Location**: California.
- **Age**: 12.
- **Program**: ED.

New student (day 2) – attacked student.

# Case Study #1

- Nervous.

- Continuously straightening items on desk.

- Vocalizing distress over student behind him under his breath.

- Counting on fingers on simple math: 17+6.

# The Cycle For <u>Alex</u>

## Matching strategies to phases in the escalation cycle



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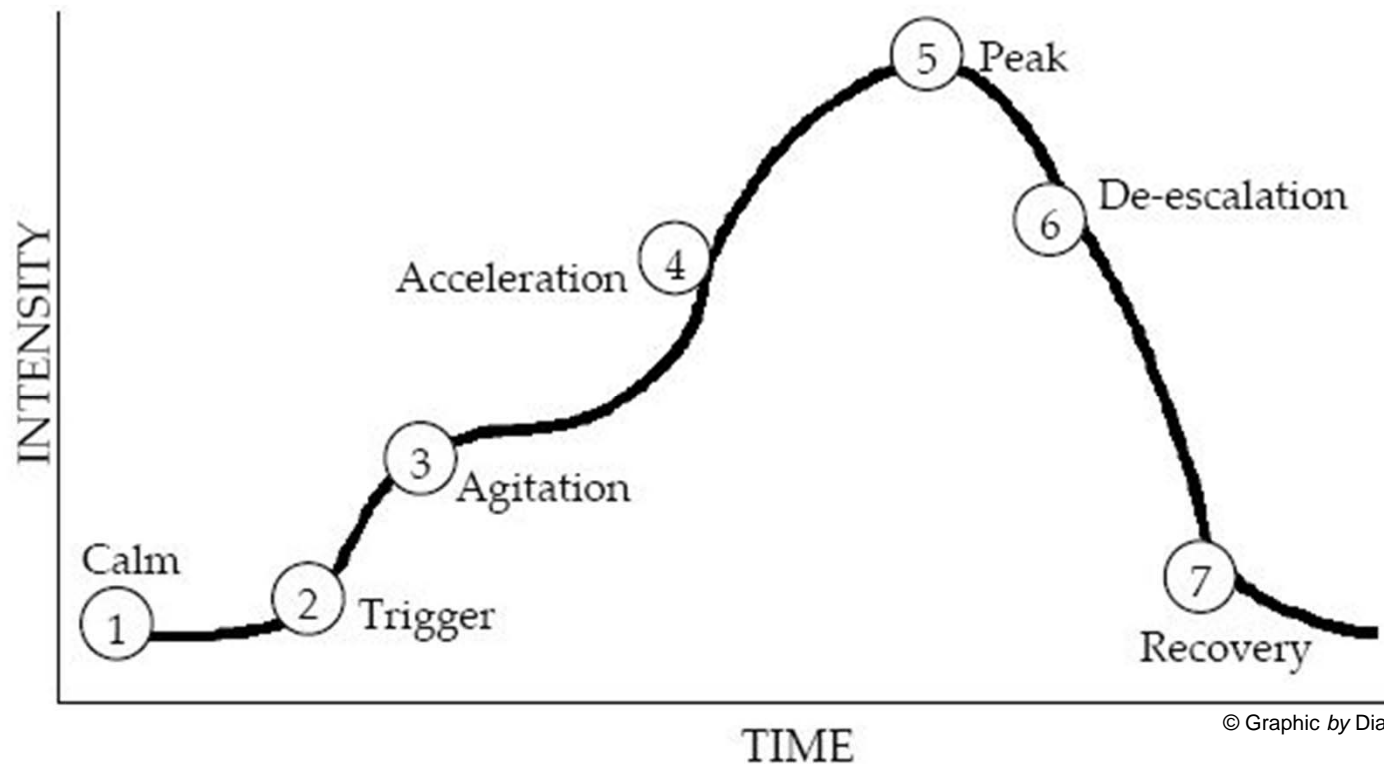
# Case Study #2

- **Student name**: Taylor.
- **Location**: Hawaii.
- **Age**: 14.
- **Program**: SD:ED.

Bright OHI-ADHD, continuous explosions, destruction of property.

# Case Study #2

- Bright OHI-ADHD.

- Spontaneous explosions destroying property throughout the room.

- Highly remorseful.

- Trigger hard to identify.

# The Cycle For <u>Taylor</u>

Matching strategies to phases in the escalation cycle



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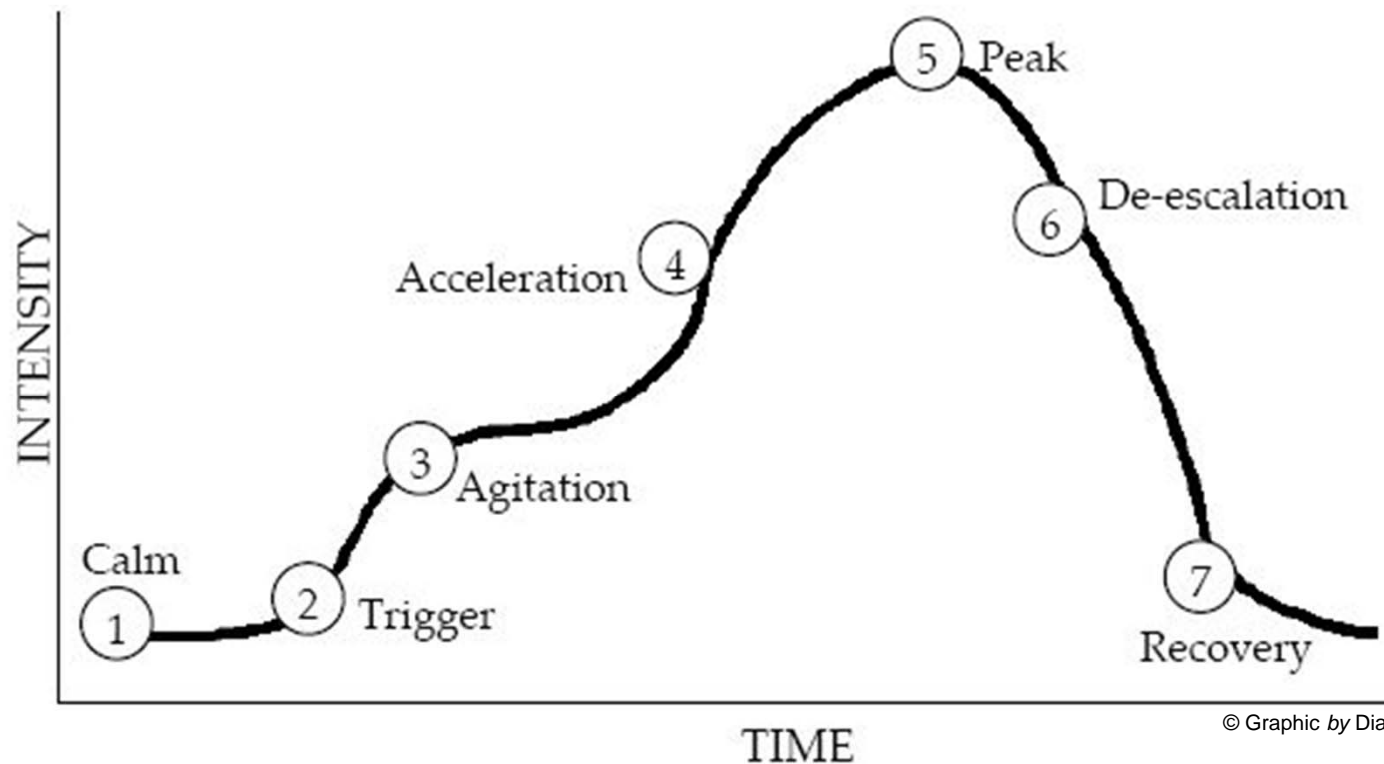
# Thank You!

*For all you do to educate our students with behavioral challenges.*

## Diana Browning Wright

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626-487-9455

© Graphic *by* Diana Browning Wright
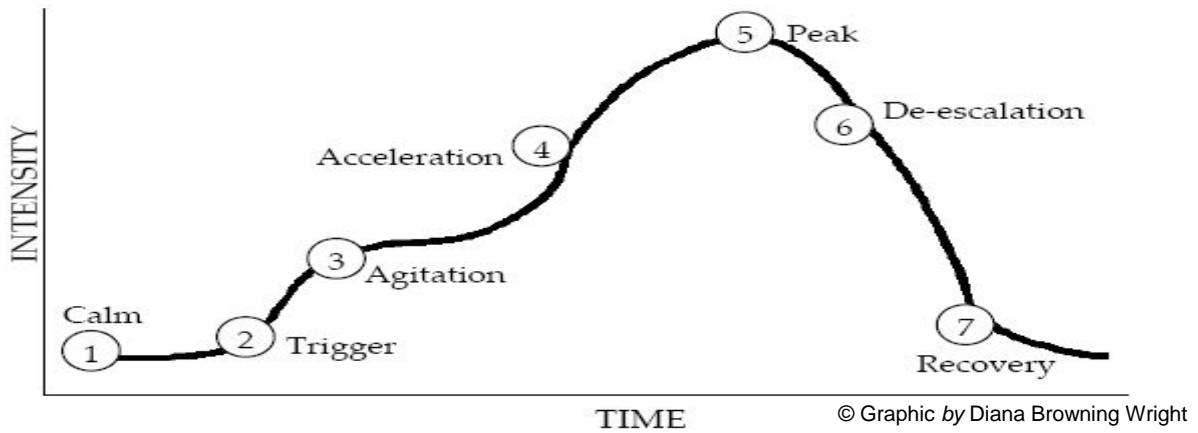
# Personalized Prevention and De-Escalation Plan for a Student with Explosive Behavior

Student: _____

Staff: _____

Staff: _____

Staff: _____

Staff: _____

- **Emergency staff not in the classroom to notify at 4 or 5**: *(whom, under what conditions, by when)*
- **Law enforcement contact to notify at 5, if necessary**: *(under what conditions, when)*
- **Incident Report filing**: *(under what conditions, to whom, by when)*

1. CALM

2. TRIGGER

3. AGITATION

4. ACCELERATION

5. PEAK

6. DE-ESCALATION

7. RECOVERY

*Note: This is not a behavior intervention plan. Stage one, calm overlaps with all the components in a BIP related to teaching and altering environments. Stages 2-7 overlap with Reactive Strategies on a BIP. Inclusion of this sheet in a BIP can provide more clarity on reactive strategies for students with Explosive Behavior.*

# Time-Away:
## A Procedure To Keep Task-Avoiding Students With Emotional/Behavior Disorders Under Instructional Control
Diana Browning Wright, M.S., L.E.P.

Students with challenging behaviors and emotional disturbance are at times unwilling or unable to perform assigned tasks. At this point, they may intentionally engage in acting out behaviors in order to be removed from the class, remain passively unengaged in learning activities (both can be conceptualized as escape-seeking behaviors), or engage in behaviors that interfere with the learning of others around them (i.e., expressing a protest about activities they do not wish to do). In all three situations, the student is not under instructional control (i.e., following the directions of the teacher), nor is he under stimulus control (e.g., in the presence of the chair, desk, written assignment, student is highly likely to engage in written-work behavior). It is impossible to force a completely unwilling student to do an assignment. It is also unacceptable to have students engaging in acting out behaviors in order to escape tasks or to have students not under instructional control. Not all task-avoiding episodes can be solved by sending the student to the office for a "disciplinary referral." Therefore, a procedure called "time-away" may be warranted as a teaching tool to increase the student's ability to cope with work-output demands.

## Time-Away Differentiated From Timeout

*In a timeout procedure,* access to reinforcement is removed or reduced for a specified time period contingent on a response. Either the student is removed from the reinforcing environment or the reinforcing environment is removed for a designated time period.[1] In common usage, timeout is often used as a punishment for misbehavior. The teacher tells the student when to leave and when to return, often with lengthy removals being the norm.

*In a time-away procedure*, as defined by this author, the student exercises the option to leave a learning task that has become aversive to him. The student moves to a location in the environment designated for this purpose and remains there until he is ready to cope with the demands of the learning environment. The student then returns to the assigned learning location (e.g., assigned seat at a desk) by his initiation, not by a teacher signaling the return.

## Effective Use Of Time-Away

The student can be privately encouraged to leave the activity as a "cooling-off" period until he is ready to cope with the assignment, but it must be clearly conveyed that this is the student's choice and that this removal is not a punishment for misbehavior.

Sample dialogue:
"Steven, I am really pleased that you have come to class today and have all your materials with you. However, you seem very upset and unable to get started, despite you and I doing the first few problems together. Steven, you know that in my classroom, you have the option of moving to the 'cooling-off spot' anytime you aren't yet ready to cope with the demands of school. Why don't you think about this carefully and make your choice: 1) begin your work; or 2) choose to just cool off for a while. I'll wait to hear your decision. I need to go help Michael for a few moments while you think this over."

Notice the critical characteristics of this dialogue.
- Teacher called the student by name and then identified desired behaviors he has recently exhibited.

- Teacher pointed out the undesired behavior and reminded Steven that joint efforts had already been made to help him begin his work before this point was reached.

- Teacher invited choice-making between two acceptable options.

- Teacher did not force an immediate choice. Rather, student was given time to think through his choice.

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[1]Wright, D.B. & Gurman, H.G. (2001) Positive interventions for serious behavior problems (2nd ed.-revised). Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education Publications Division (pp.166-167)

Time-Away Systems

*The Beach*

A sixth-grade teacher informed students with EBD in a restrictive setting that when she is having a bad day, going to the beach, even for a few moments, has helped her. Therefore, in her class, anyone who just needs to escape for a breather can go to the beach. The beach is a small box of sand in the back corner of the room equipped with several very large seashells, which when listened to carefully, will produce the calming sounds of the ocean.

*Australia*

High school restrictive setting for students with intense EBD were read the book, *Alexander and the Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst[2]. Students were informed that they could choose to escape to Australia whenever they needed to recoup, think over something, and cope with their feelings or frustrations. "Australia" is a location in the classroom with a map of Australia and several books of Australia to look at. The high school teacher further explained to her class that if you leave this country to enter another, you must "go through customs" and "declare any baggage you are bringing in". She has students enter the time they enter Australia, their departure time, and the amount of baggage they are bringing in, which was previously generated by the students.

Examples include:
1) Fight with someone important in my life is still on my mind. After a time to think, I'll be better able to cope
2) Can't concentrate because of extreme fatigue. After a break, I will be better able to cope.
3) Work looks too long or too complicated for me right now. After a break, I'll be better able to cope.

*The Think Tank*

Middle school teacher in a restrictive setting for students with EBD has a small, padded cubicle sometimes used for counseling sessions in the back of her classroom. This was a former seclusion room that has had the door completely removed. Students are told that they may take a voluntary, brief time-away in the think tank for two reasons. First, whenever they need to "get their act together" to stop a problem behavior, they may select the think tank to prevent a problem. By choosing this option rather than a disruptive behavior, they will retain their points for that time period if less than 10 minutes are used. Second, following a behavior episode that resulted in the loss of points, if they do not believe their behavior is back under their control, they may select the think tank to stop a problem. Under this condition, they can earn a portion of the points lost for disruptive behavior if they use less than 10 minutes and exhibit 10 minutes of on-task behavior when they return from the think tank.

*Dinosaur Walking Time*

A six-year-old student with EBD and deafness in a restrictive setting had a history of running away from reading group instruction and out onto the campus and street, resulting in several adults trying to force him to return. In this time-away procedure, Christopher was allowed "dinosaur walking time" — that is, to take the dinosaur from the table as a token symbolizing his permission to walk calmly around the room. When he finishes this walk with the dinosaur, he returns to his seat and replaces the dinosaur. Data demonstrated that the average time-away was approximately three minutes per twenty-minute instruction period, and he required no further adult intervention and did not disrupt the learning of others either in leaving or returning to the group, nor did he run away from the classroom.

## Key Components For Effective Use Of This Strategy

- Classroom environment must be one in which unconditional, positive regard is available for all students, with effective classroom organization in place. This procedure is not a panacea for an out-of-control classroom[3]. This procedure will be misused by students if teacher-student interactions are typically coercive and punitive.

- Instructional material must in general be accessible to the student, with appropriate accommodations or modifications in place to support the student in successfully completing the assigned material. This procedure will be misused by students if this is the only way they can escape inappropriate seatwork activities.

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[2]Viorst, J. (19) Alexander and the horrible, no good, very bad day.

[3]Refer to necessary effective components in Wright, D.B. (1999) What every teacher should know in order to positively support student behavior. *NASP Communique,* (29) 1.

- Initial explanation of the time-away option should be given to the class as a whole with an explanation of what might be a good reason to choose this option and what might NOT be a good reason. "Learning to cope with the demands of school" should be emphasized. No punitive result will occur from selecting this option, and if the teacher encourages a student to consider whether they might wish to select time-away, this is not a command nor a form of punishment for misbehavior.

  Teacher language sample: "Boys and girls, let's talk about when to use time-away. For example, if the work just looks hard, try gaining your teacher's assistance to get going, to help you break up the assignments into smaller units, or to gain more help from your classmates or adult assistance. That would be a better choice than time-away. However, if you are really upset today and just need a little space to gather your thoughts, calm down, and cope with your feelings and frustrations, time-away could be a good choice for you."

- When the student returns from time-away to the assigned work location, the teacher should privately reinforce the use of this procedure by a quiet acknowledgment, such as, "Steven, thank you for choosing to take a time-away. Glad to see you're ready now." This reinforcement upon return is critical for maintaining the intent of this procedure and to assure the students do not confuse it with timeout.

**Responses To Typical Teacher Questions**

- *'What If They Won't Come Back?' Or 'What If They Want To Go Too Frequently?'*

If it is observed that a student is spending a lengthy time in a time-away location or is selecting the procedure many times during the week, the teacher may wish to examine which task the student is continuing to avoid. If the task is too difficult, the completion criteria is not explicit, or the task seem meaningless to the student, it may be necessary to change the task, modify it, or provide more adult assistance. If this is not the case, the teacher may wish to engage in reflective listening to further determine why the student is not yet able to cope with the demands. Sample dialogue: "Steven, I have noticed that you have been unable to cope with seatwork for quite a while. I am beginning to wonder what we can do about this. I am wondering if I can help in any way with the problem. I am also worried about how we can quickly help you catch up with the work you have missed. I am wondering what steps WE should be taking now to help US solve OUR problem. Would you think about this and I'll check back with you in a few minutes to hear what you think?" (Note the collaborative emphasis: we, us, our. Also note: An appointment for a future discussion alleviates the student's need to engage in challenging behaviors during the discussion. Often allowing the student just a few minutes to reflect will result in better later compliance. At times for repeat users or those exceeding time limits, points will need to be taken for misuse of the option.)

- *'What If They Won't Go When I Suggest They Use It?'*

This happens much less frequently than teachers expect. First, remember that this procedure will not be effective in a coercive or disorganized classroom. The student is not "told" he "must" choose this procedure. Rather, this is one of two options presented to the student if you want to prompt compliance by providing this option. The encouragement to, "Feel free to choose a brief time-away to help you cope," is delivered unemotionally to the student. The meta-message is, "*Be on task by either doing your work, or choose a brief time-away.*" If the student does continue sitting in the work space, is not working, and will not go to the time-away location, the teacher may wish to invite a quiet one-on-one dialogue about the difficulty or initiate a debriefing with other staff members outside the classroom environment. If this is not possible, the teacher may wish to wait briefly, then present a quiet, unemotional, and private second two-choice format: "If you are unable to work right now, Alice, as I have said, you may take a breather in our time-away location. That is no problem. Alternatively, you may choose to get an office referral. Think about this for a moment, and let me know your decision." The teacher must convey a genuine personal connection with the student at this time (use of the student's name can be especially helpful here) and have previously established a real, meaningful relationship with the student through past words, deeds, and reinforcement for achievement from the teacher.

- *'What If Everyone Wants to Be There At Once?'*

When you initially set up the time-away procedure with the students, explain the rules as to how many students may be there at one time. (Suggestion: Limit an area to one or two students, and make sure they are not able to communicate with each other through the use of an environmental barrier if necessary.) Explain to the students: "There are other ways of handling difficulties. If you are having a problem that is preventing you from working and someone else is briefly in the time-away location, let me know your difficulty and WE can think of how to handle OUR problem."

## Final Note

This procedure has been utilized in consultations with teachers across grade levels for students with and without a full range of disabilities. When the student is actively refusing a task or escaping the task through the use of inappropriate behaviors, the student is not under "instructional control," nor is the work space reliably eliciting work behaviors from the student, i.e., "stimulus control" is not in effect. This technique keeps the student under these controls because the teacher is advocating student selection of a location in which not working is allowable, selecting the location is viewed as meeting with teacher approval, and being in this location and not working is still considered an activity that demonstrates the following of the teacher's instruction. Learning to cope with the demands of work output is a challenge for students with emotional difficulties or those experiencing situational stressors. Learning to step back and reflect can become an important cognitive skill for students with fragile coping systems and can result in improved ability to attend and produce an acceptable amount of work. In the author's experience with defiant and fragile students, simply knowing that "not working" for a time is an acceptable choice improves overall on-task behavior if coupled with effective instruction practices. This "freedom" can be an important method of meeting students' needs in the classroom.

Student _____  Date _____  Assisting Staff _____

## Thinking About My Inappropriate Behavior

**Staff statement to begin the process**: "Under stress, self-controlled people think differently than people without self-control. They can describe more accurately: 1) the undesired behavior; 2) the negative consequences of an undesirable behavior; 3) what they should be doing as an alternative strategy; 4) the positive consequences of the appropriate behaviors; and 5) how to prevent this in the future. Are you calm enough to participate in this process now? Do you want to be the one writing the answers, or do you want me to be your secretary for this process?"

1.  "When did my inappropriate behavior happen? Where was it, and who was present at the time?"

    _____
    _____
    _____

2.  "What bad choice did I make?" (Undesirable behavior.)

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

3.  "What negative outcomes might occur (or did occur) if or when I choose to use this unacceptable behavior?"

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

4.  "What could I have done instead?" (Put a ✓ by the one(s) you might do next time if a similar situation occurs.)

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

5.  "What might happen that is positive if I choose an appropriate behavior to handle my problem?"

    _____
    _____
    _____