NCPMI

Keeping calm and carrying on: Responding to challenging behavior in the moment

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Agenda

A quick review: behavior has meaning

Factors impacting our responses

Neutralizing routines
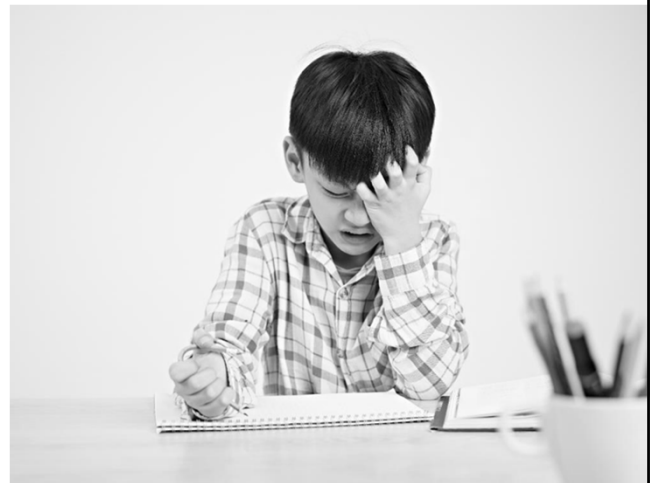
Escalation cycle and responses

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Understanding Challenging Behavior

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Behavior Is Communication

- I want ___.
- I am sad.
- I need help.
- I can't do it.
- I don't want to.
- I am scared.

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Behavior Is Used to Obtain

- Attention
- Play
- Sensory input
- Object

What does the child get?

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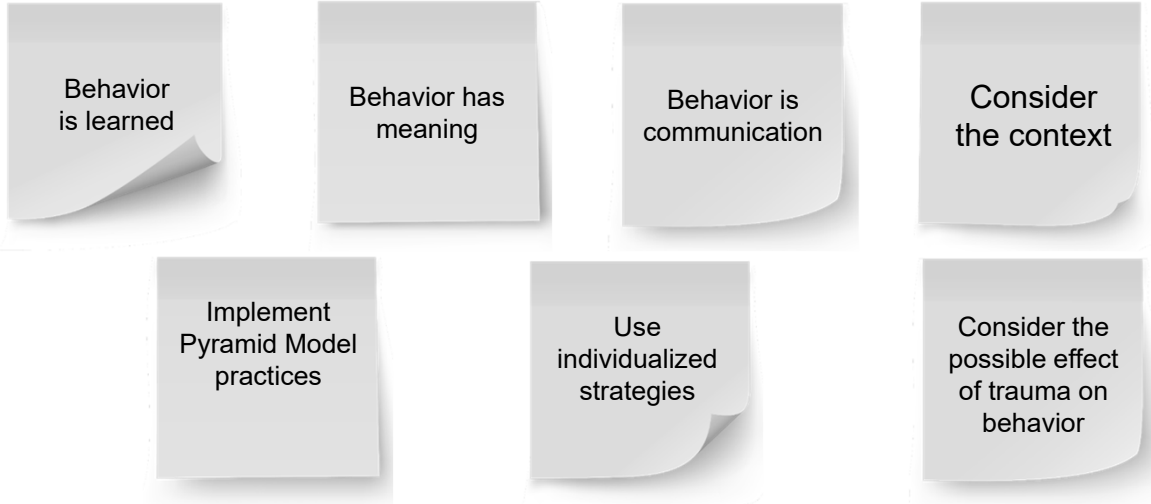# Behavior Is Used to Avoid

- Other children or adults
- Activity (something they don't want to do such as clean up or get in circle)
- Sharing a toy
- Loud noises
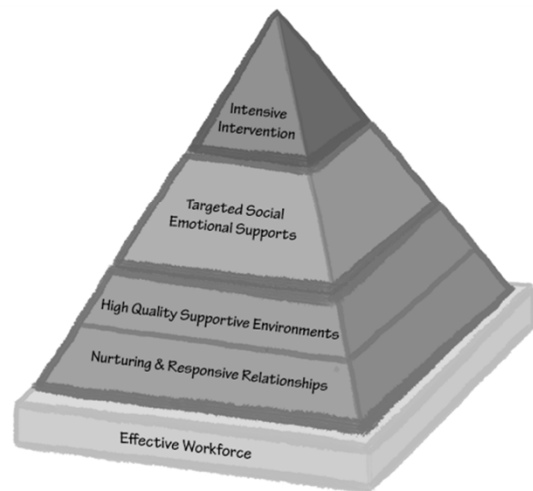- Instructions or directions

What might this child avoid?

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Preventing and Addressing Challenging Beahvior

Behavior is learned

Behavior has meaning

Behavior is communication

Consider the context

Implement Pyramid Model practices

Use individualized strategies

Consider the possible effect of trauma on behavior

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Responding to Challenging Behavior

Even when these practices are in place, some young children will engage in challenging behavior.

Intensive Intervention

Targeted Social Emotional Supports

High Quality Supportive Environments

Nurturing & Responsive Relationships

Effective Workforce

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De-Escalating Behaviors

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Escalating Challenging Behavior

A sequence of challenging behaviors that **increase** in intensity, and/or frequency, and/or volume

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De-Escalating Challenging Behavior

A sequence of challenging behaviors that **decrease** in intensity, and/or frequency, and/or volume

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# Example of Escalation Cycle

- **Calm:** Laura is playing in the house area
- **Trigger:** Austin comes over and begins opening the cabinets and playing with the pots and pans. Laura says "I am playing with that"
- **Agitation:** Laura yells loudly "No, I am playing here. Don't touch!"
- **Escalation:** Austin continues touching the toys. Laura grabs a pan out of Austin's hand and throws it. She continues to shout "no" and "don't touch".
- **Peak:** Laura falls to the floor, cries, and tries to kick the teacher who comes to intervene and help her get up.
- **De-escalation:** The teacher redirects Austin to find another center. Laura continues to sob and has her arms crossed.
- **Recovery:** Laura sits for a few minutes and then get's up and begins putting the pots and pans back in the cabinet..
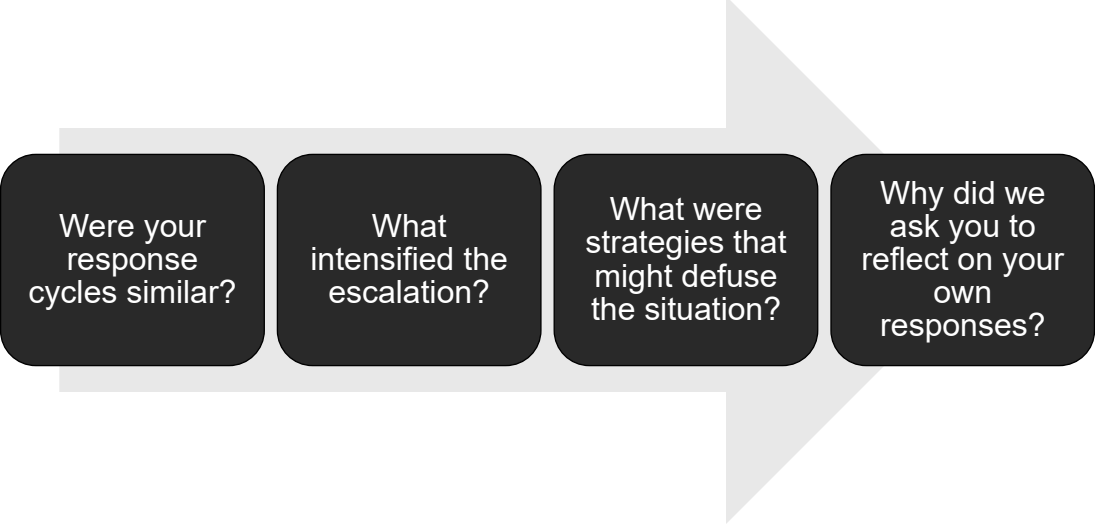
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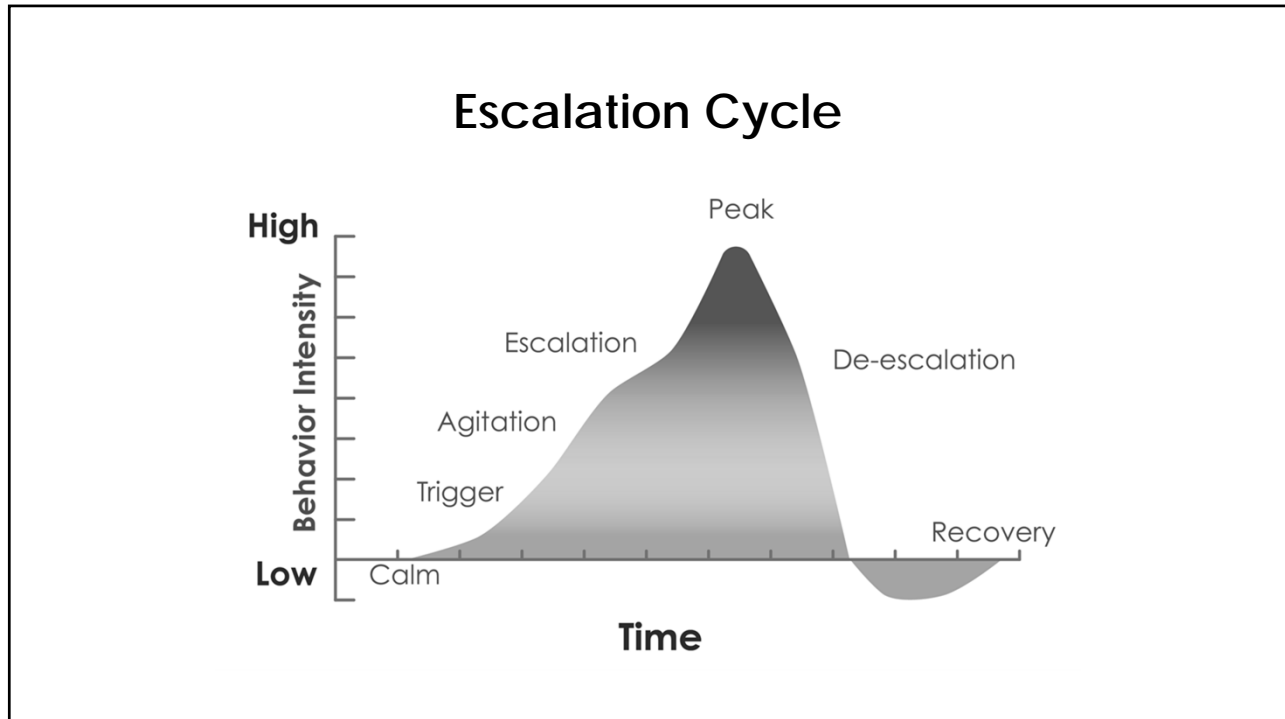
Escalation Cycle

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Pair-Share

- Remember a time you were very angry. What was your cycle?
- Describe to your partner
- Respond to your partner's questions:
  - When you are escalating, what might someone do to make your reaction intensify?
  - What might someone do to help you calm down after the peak?
- Switch roles and repeat

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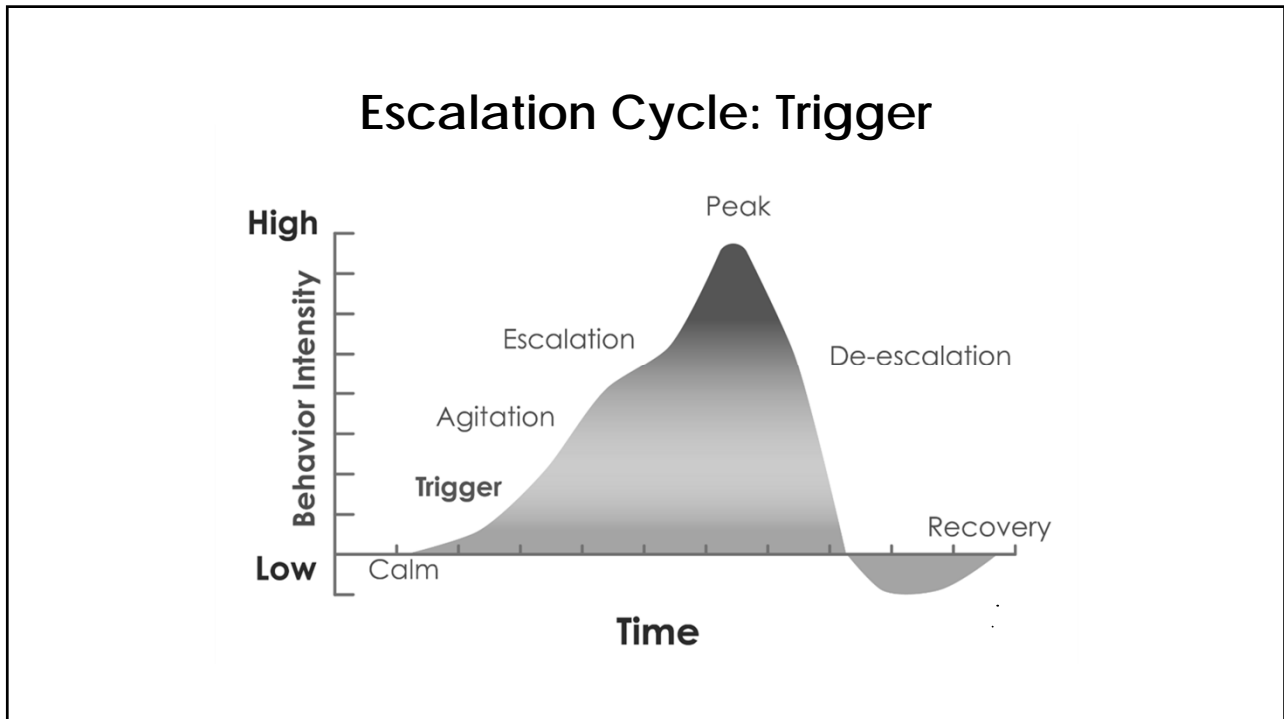# Debrief

| Were your response cycles similar? | What intensified the escalation? | What were strategies that might defuse the situation? | Why did we ask you to reflect on your own responses? |

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Escalation Cycle: Trigger

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Trigger

- Child experiences an unresolved conflict/issue/need.
  - Loss of attention, support, object
  - Desire for object, activity, attention
  - Desire to avoid or escape
  - Inability to voice emotions
  - Repeated frustrations
  - Frequent corrections
  - Confusing demands

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Trigger

- Intervention is focused on prevention & redirection.
  - Consider function of problem behavior in planning/implementing response.
  - Remove from or modify problem context.
  - Increase opportunities for success.
  - Remind child of the tools to use.
  - Validate emotion and redirect.
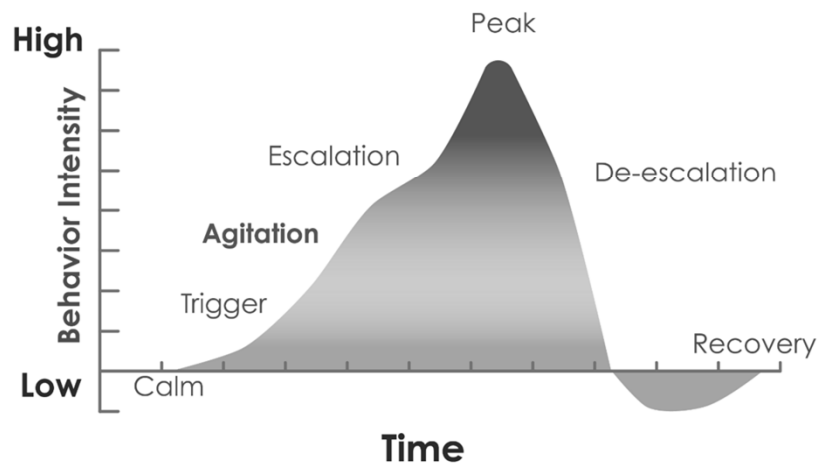 - Focus on what the child does right.

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Trigger: Strategies to Use?

- What practices or strategies might be used to support a child who is beginning to become distressed?

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Escalation Cycle: Agitation

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Agitation

- Intervention is focused on reducing anxiety or distress.
  - Consider function of problem behavior in planning/implementing response.
  - Make structural/environmental modifications.
  - Provide reasonable options & choices.
  - Physical support/proximity support
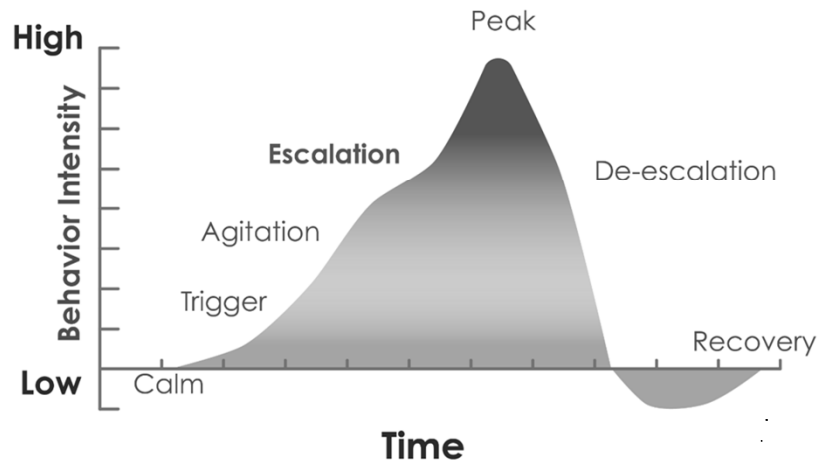 - Guide relaxation strategies

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Agitation

- What strategies or practices can be used to assist the child become calm or less anxious/distressed?

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Escalation Cycle - Escalation

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Escalation

- How might you respond to children in the escalation phase?
- What should teachers avoid doing when children are in this phase?
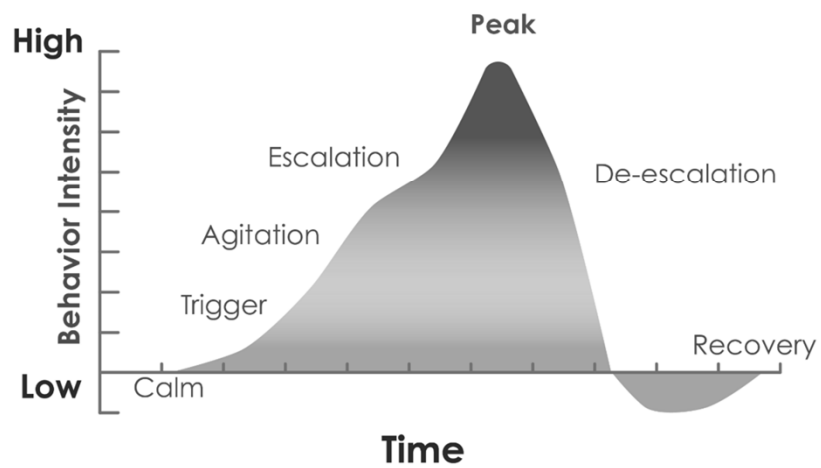

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Avoiding the Power Struggle!

- Step back
- Take a deep breath
- Stay calm
- Maintain a posture of empathy

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Escalation Cycle: Peak

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Example of Escalation Cycle

- **Calm:** Tyler is playing with an airplane.
- **Trigger:** Sarah comes over and grabs the airplane
- **Agitation:** Tyler yells "give it back!"
- **Escalation:** Tyler runs to Sarah and yells "that's mine!" and grabs the airplane.
- **Peak:** Tyler shouts "don't touch my toys" and lunges toward her with the airplane raised to hit her.
- **De-escalation:** Teacher separates the children. Tyler stomps his feet with eyes darting and teeth clenched. Tyler follows teacher prompt to take a deep breath.
- **Recovery:** Tyler sits with his head in his arms and pouts. After a couple of minutes, Tyler plays with blocks.

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Safety-Net Procedures

- Know the procedures and policies of your program!
- If a child is in danger of harming self or others, you must first be concerned about safety.
- You might remove a child from the situation or remove other children from the situation to keep children safe.
- Safety-net procedures should be planned for children who have a history of dangerous outbursts.
- Safety-net procedures only keep children safe; they do not change behavior.
- Safety-net procedures are appropriate only when there is also a full behavior support plan or intention to develop a plan.

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Escalation Cycle: De-Escalation
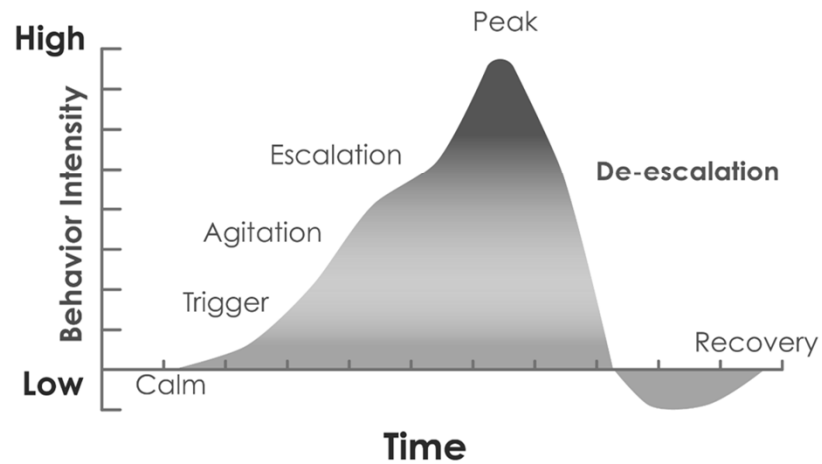
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De-Escalation

- Intervention is focused on removing excess attention
  - Be available but refrain from interaction that could re-trigger the child
  - Avoid blaming
  - Don't force an apology
  - Consider the function of the problem behavior (e.g., provide a hug, help the child access a toy)
  - Emphasize starting anew

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Escalation Cycle: Recovery
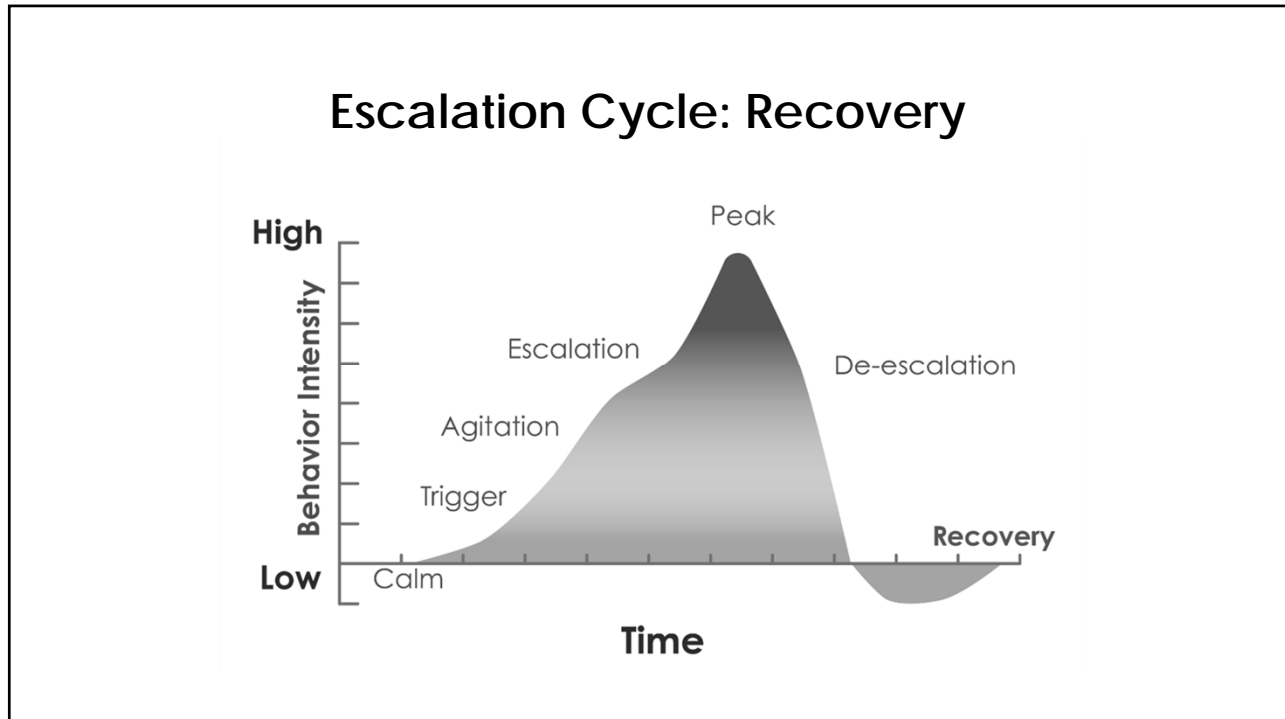
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Recovery

- Child is calm and interested in returning to activities
  - Provide descriptive feedback for all appropriate behavior
  - Support the child's re-engagement with the group

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What if….

- Teachers don't respond calmly, consistently, and using Pyramid practices?
- What influences how we might respond?

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When Behaviors Really Push Our Buttons!

What behaviors push your buttons?


1. _____   2. _____   3. _____

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Vulnerable Decision Point

- When we might make a snap judgment or respond in a manner that is inconsistent with appropriate practices
  - Time of day or locations (tired? chaotic? outside?)
  - State of mind (irritated? stressed? worried?)
  - Physical state (hungry? tired?)

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Five Critical Components of a Neutralizing Routine

1	2	3	4	5
If-Then Statement	Brief	Clear Steps	Doable	Interrupts chain of events
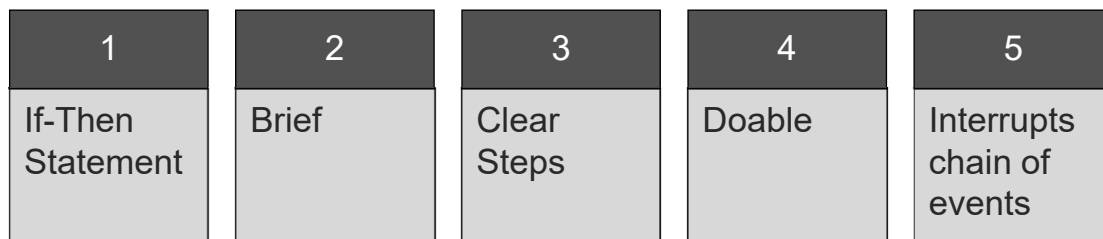
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Neutralizing Routines

- Neutralizing Routine:
  - An instructional vs. reactive response
  - Quick, clear, doable action
  - Interrupts the chain of events so behavior doesn't escalate
- Plan for neutralizing routines before the behavior occurs
- Consider:
  - Elements of the situation
  - Personal decision state

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Pause-Ask-Respond

If you are agitated or stressed by the behavior, then P-A-R

- **P – Pause and Reflect**
  - Take a deep breath.
  - Think about what happened before the behavior occurred.
- **A – Ask**
  - What is this child trying to tell me?
  - Do they want something? Do they need something? What do I know about this child that will help me figure out the reason for the behavior?
- **R – Respond**
  - When I respond, I ensure the child feels validated, listened to, understood, and safe.
  - I guide the child to use an appropriate alternative behavior.
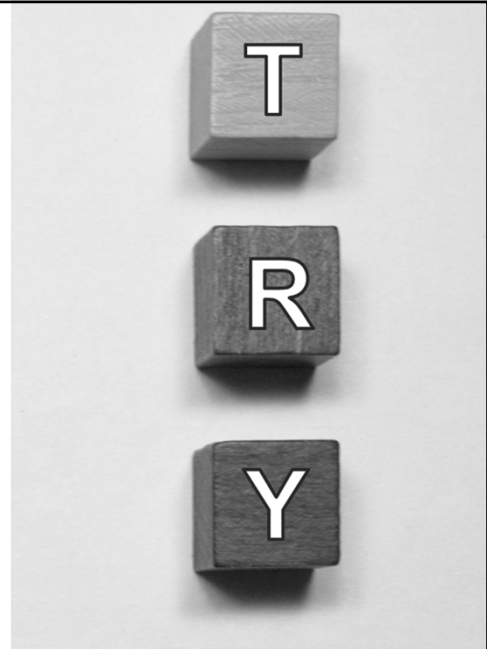

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Another Example: TRY

When I feel stressed by behavior that pushes my buttons, I will

- **T –** Take a deep breath

- **R –** Reflect on my emotions, reflect on the meaning of the child's behavior

- **Y – I will think,** You got this. You can be calm to support the child to be calm.

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Developing Neutralizing Routines Scenario #1

Ms. Carly teaches in a four-year old classroom. She has a large group, and it is a challenge. The transition from lunch to nap time feels chaotic. Ms. Carly doesn't eat until everyone goes down for a nap. During this week, every day at nap time, Sherron begins to cry and says, "I don't want to nap." Ms. Carly is tired and hungry and doesn't have the energy to remind Sherron of the rules of nap time. Ms. Carly ignored the crying while she got the other children situated, but this only resulted in Sherron crying louder. Ms. Carly asks the assistant teacher to "just take Sherron out of the room."

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Developing Neutralizing Routines Scenario #2

Mr. Bruce has taught the expectations for small group time. However, Robert is constantly asking questions by calling out or talking over his friends. At first Mr. Bruce answered each of Robert's questions until he realized that other children were not getting a chance to be heard. Mr. Bruce is coping with some personal issues and on this day and is feeling exhausted. During small group, Robert started in with his questions almost immediately. Mr. Bruce reacted by telling him (in an annoyed tone) to go to reading center and read a book until he was ready to listen and wait for his turn to talk. Robert became visibly upset and stomped to the reading center and began throwing books.

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Develop Your Own Neutralizing Routine

- Identify:
  - Behaviors that push your buttons
  - Initials of children who may exhibit those behaviors
  - Elements of situations that impact your responses
- Develop a neutralizing routine to follow
- Evaluate that routine
  - If-then statements
  - Brief
  - Clear steps
  - Doable
  - Results in a delay between child behavior and adult response

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Wrap-Up Discussion

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Thank You

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