

Effective Classroom Management and Respectful De-escalation in the Adult Basic Skills Classroom

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Overview

- I. Introduction / Overview
- II. Incivilities in Higher Ed Settings
- III Adult Basic Skills Students
- IV. Principles of Classroom Management
- V. The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior, Phases of De-escalation Overview
- VI. Prevention of Negative Behaviors
- VII. Sources of Problematic Behaviors
- VIII. Strategies for Difficult Situations in the Classroom
- IX. Acceleration / Escalation or When a Problem Occurs
- X. Peak, or Crisis, Phase of Escalation
- XI. De-escalation and Recovery
- XII. Conclusion
- XIII. CCC Student Handbook, Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures
- XIV. Sources

“Good instruction and good behavior management are a ‘chicken/egg’ issue. You cannot have one without the other, and one does not precede the other.”

Randy Sprick, 2009
Safe and Civil Schools
Eugene, OR

Disruptive Behaviors in Higher Educational Settings

‘Incivilities in higher educational settings are more common today due to a number of “perfect storm” factors...’

Tamara Rounds,
Arizona, State University,
2017

- Higher enrollments
- Broader diversity in student populations (Generation I, Generation X, Millennials, non-traditional students, veterans, international students, etc.)
- Learning habits and styles of various generations in one classroom
- Higher Education more frequently viewed as an item purchased as a financial investment

According to Nilson (2003) and Nilson and Jackson (2004), many of the widespread uncivil behaviors seen in college classrooms today were virtually nonexistent through the mid-1980s. Only in recent decades has classroom incivility been recognized and labeled as a national concern in higher education.

Nilson, L.B., & Jackson, N.S. (2004, June). *Combating classroom misconduct (incivility) with bills of rights*.

Examples of Uncivil or Disruptive Behavior in College Classrooms

Less Serious Behaviors:

- sleeping in class
- disapproving groans or sighs
- acting bored or disinterested
- not attending class
- challenging the instructor's knowledge or credibility
- dominating class discussion
- not taking notes during lecture

More Serious Behaviors:

- stalking (in person or electronically)
- intimidation
- unjustified complaints to a professor's superiors (e.g., department chair, dean)
- unwarranted negative feedback on an instructor's teaching evaluation
- cheating or other academic integrity violations
- personal comments or verbal attacks against faculty or classmates

Student vs. Faculty Perceptions of Uncivil Conduct in the Classroom

Faculty tend to consider the following student behaviors uncivil:

- failing to participate or express interest in the course
- coming to class unprepared
- making demands and unreasonable requests toward the instructor (e.g., extended deadlines, make-up exams, extra credit opportunities)
- disrupting class by arriving late or leaving early

Student tend to consider the following faculty behaviors to be uncivil:

- presenting lectures at a fast pace with little to no student involvement or interaction
- acting in an aloof, distant manner toward students, or conveying to students that they are a burden
- surprising students with unannounced assessments or unanticipated exam questions
- arriving late to class or canceling class without prior notice
- permitting students to belittle or ridicule classmates

Differences between K-12 and Higher Ed Approaches to Crisis De-escalation

“A Review of Crisis De-escalation Techniques for K-12 and Higher Education Instructors”, Murphy, Van Brunt
The Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention, Vol. 7, 2019

K-12 Settings:

Students’ prior behaviors are identified and planned for (ie. IEPs)

Ability to focus effectively/consistently on mental health

Well-established systems exist related to de-escalation (ie. PBIS)

Higher Education Settings:

Faculty members are experts in subject area more so than expert teachers

Inconsistent instructor classification (ie. adjunct, full-time)

Less training on de-escalation (often in the form of brochures, websites, brief trainings from administration related to teaching initiatives)

Consistency of CM training varies across institutions, disciplines, and instructor classification

Similarities between K-12 and Higher Ed Approaches to Crisis De-escalation

“A Review of Crisis De-escalation Techniques for K-12 and Higher Education Instructors”, Murphy, Van Brunt
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- All effective instructors have an authentic presence and offer engaging content
- A positive classroom environment is critical to crisis de-escalation
- Positive classroom culture, clear and consistent administrative policy, active learning, and empathy enable successful crisis intervention
- All teachers, instructors, and professors should invest in self-care to avoid compassion fatigue, stress and burnout. This includes physical exercise, investing in hobbies and fun activities, seeking peer support, healthy and balanced work habits, and finding opportunities for additional training.

Adult Basic Skills Students

Characteristics and Successful Classroom Practices

Characteristics of Adult Basic Skills Students

The Adult Learner

- Adult Basic Skills students come from diverse backgrounds
- May have negative associations with prior schooling and educational staff
- Tend to be older than college peers and may have dependents
- Balancing a full-time job or struggling with unemployment
- Experience barriers such as transportation limitations or food insecurity
- Lack knowledge of or ability to navigate the “hidden curriculum” of college
- May lack computer literacy and technology skills
- Tend to be more sensitive to being “called out” for errors

Characteristics of Adult Basic Skills Students

Youth in ABE enter alternative education for a variety of reasons and tend to be labeled as “at risk” or “marginalized youth”. Possible reasons may include:

- Disengagement from traditional school or have dropped out
- Experienced bullying or feeling unsafe in a traditional school environment
- Expulsion for drug related or behavioral issues
- Housing insecurity and poverty
- Undiagnosed learning disabilities
- Home schooling or lack of experience in educational environments
- Foster care
- Adjudicated or involvement with juvenile justice system

Characteristics of Highly Performing ABS Classrooms

- While programmatic and instructional characteristics affect GED completion rates, establishing a culture based on motivation is a prominent theme among successful programs. This includes:
 - Caring relationships with participants
 - Effective attendance and retention strategies
 - Establishment of individual goals
 - Utilization of external incentives (gift cards, awards, etc.)
 - Informative guest speakers (including program graduates)
 - Parties and food
 - Recognition of achievements

Creating Community in the ABS Classroom

- In highly performing ABS classrooms, instructors are intentional about creating a learning environment in the classroom. To achieve this, instructors build rapport with students and make them feel comfortable in class by making it a safe place to work with others (as students would have to do in the workplace.)
- To achieve this sense of ‘community in the classroom’, instructors try to establish peer relationships among students - a sense of caring for and helping each other, and sharing successes and difficulties.
- Instructors need to be intentional about fostering student self-esteem, confidence, belonging, and a “can do” attitude.
- The presence of a “motivational culture” plays a role in retention because it encourages students to stay long enough to reach their goals.

Adult Basic Skills Students: Barriers to Success

- **Situational Barriers**
 - transportation
 - financial problems
 - health
 - family
 - employment schedule
- **Institutional Barriers**
 - scheduling inconvenience
 - procedure rules
 - complicated processes
- ***Dispositional Barriers***
 - Low motivation
 - Low expectations
 - Negative past experiences

Adult Basic Skills Students: Dispositional Barriers

While dispositional barriers may not be the most significant of the 3 types of barriers faced by ABS students, they are the ones that educators and programs have the most ability to influence. This is important, because students with dispositional barriers tend to have low motivation which negatively impacts student persistence. These students also tend to be the individuals who present behavior challenges in the classroom.

The students who drop out are not the ones that go to the teacher with questions. So they can be difficult to identify. (They do, however, often go to a councilor or advisor prior to stopping out. These are people that they see as playing a less authoritative role.)

Students with dispositional barriers need to be identified as quickly as possible, either through informal interactions with the instructor or through intentional intake processes (ie. the “Prior Schooling and Self-Perception Inventory” questionnaire)

Adult Basic Skills Students: The First 3 Weeks and Motivation

The majority of students who drop out of ABS programs do so within the first 3 weeks of class. It's important to consider these learners' experience during these "drop-out weeks".

Teachers can influence motivation and potential classroom management issues by responding to student needs *right away*.

This is called "teacher immediacy".

Verbal connections with new learners are critical in sustaining motivation and student 'buy-in'.

If "teacher immediacy" is not established in the first 2 to 3 weeks of class, the odds that a student will drop out increase.

Tools for Teacher Immediacy, or Authentically Connecting with Students Early in the Term

- Learn students' names as quickly as possible.
- Greet students at the door prior to class. (Arrive to class and have the classroom prepared 10 minutes prior to the start time.)
- When possible, verbally engage with students individually as they depart the classroom, providing compliments or encouragement where appropriate.
- Learn students' goals and motivations, and discuss these with students often.
- Make frequent references to students' post-high-school-equivalency attainment plans. (ie. the classes they plan to take, the employment they hope to have, etc.)

In order to learn these student motivations, it's important to provide an Interest Survey on the first day of class (see next slide). This allows the student to reflect on the reasons they are in class, and provides the instructor with the information needed to authentically engage with students.

Interest Survey or Student Inventory

Examples of Interest Survey items:

What are your college goals?

What are your career goals?

What are some specialized skills or talents that you have?

What have teachers and professors done in the past that helped you to learn?

What is one hobby that you have? Or, what are your interests outside of school?

What are your preferred pronouns?

Note: Students with dispositional barriers can often be identified by responses of “I don’t know” for the first two items. Answers to the other items can be used to establish connections with these students at the outset of class.

Principles of Classroom Management

Adapted with permission from Prof. Kenneth D. Peterson, Portland State University
Graduate Teacher Education Program, 2008

Principles of Classroom Management

- 1) Classroom management is more than attending to an unexpectedly unruly, disruptive, or disobedient student.
- 2) No teacher begins their career knowing how to manage a classroom.
- 3) A good academic subject-matter classroom is the best external motivator for good student behavior and learning.
- 4) Most effective management and discipline systems have two components: established classroom routines and patterns of teacher interactions.
- 5) Relationships are important reasons for students to behave themselves and learn.
- 6) Direct, overt teacher control of students is rare – rather, the effective teacher is in control of themselves, and the way in which they guide and react to students.
- 7) Good classroom communication is an effective strategy for classroom management.

Principles of Classroom Management (continued...)

8. Teachers have power and can compel behavior, but power is very difficult to use well.
9. Students want to play the role of 'student', they want teachers to play the role of 'teacher'.
10. Most classroom problems are caused by a very small number of students.
11. There will often be students in class who need to disrupt because of other life circumstances, not because of the teacher or class.
12. Teachers should not assume that students come to class knowing how to use the room for learning, getting along, and cooperating with others.
13. A well-functioning classroom is an important internal reward (satisfaction, confidence) and external reward (viewed positively by peers) to teachers.

Principles of Classroom Management (continued...)

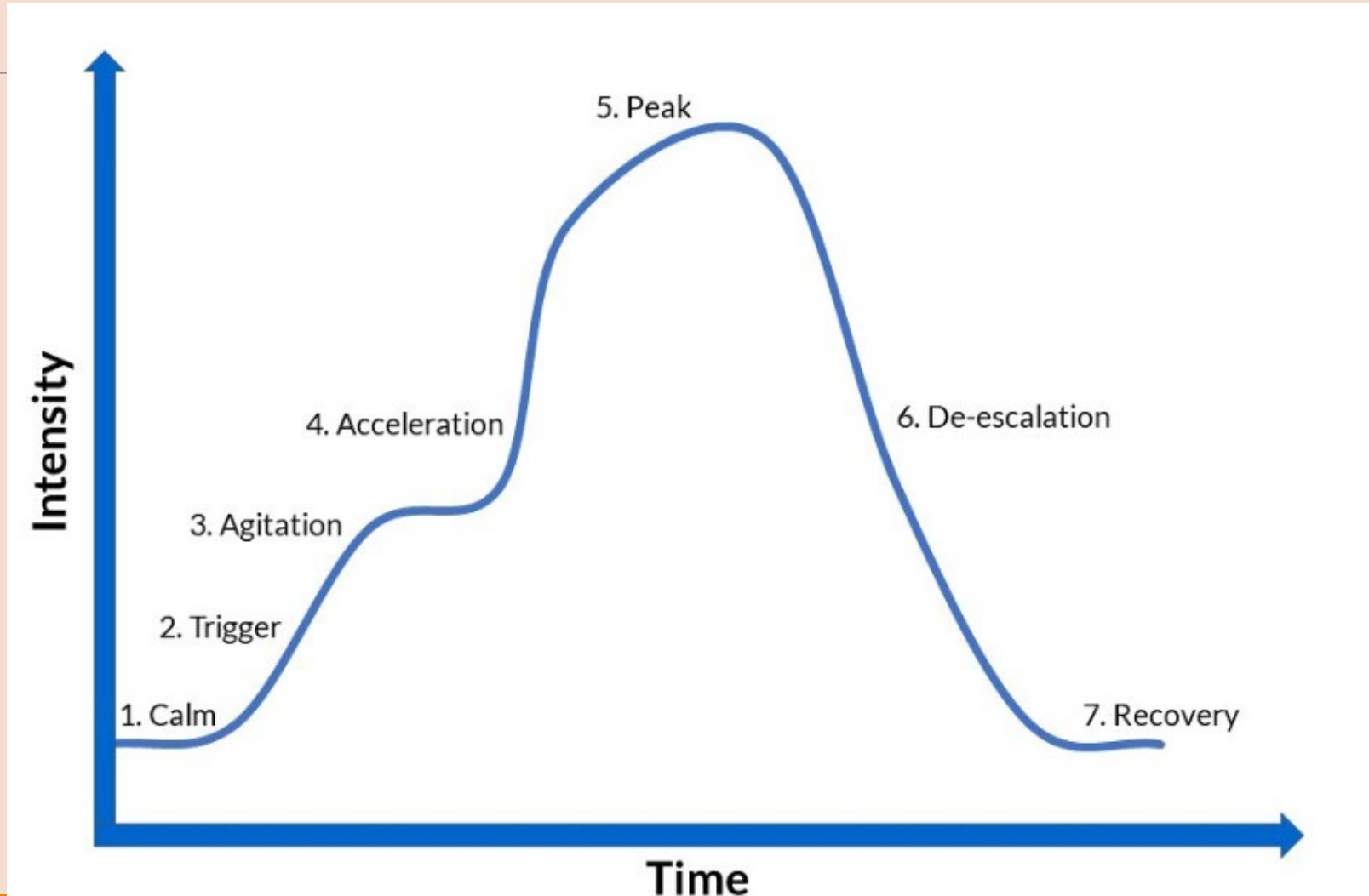
- 14. Punishment and other negative 'consequences' manufactured by teachers do not increase the amount of good behavior.
- 15. Good management does not always respond directly to the specific observable misbehavior or problem
- 16. There is not simply a single, effective response to each discipline problem

Good management enables teachers to accomplish more subject matter learning, engage more students, and provide a better school experience for both students and teachers. It enables teachers to get closer to why they became teachers in the first place. Good management is learned with ideas, perceptions, techniques, and years of experience.

The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior

A summary of leading researcher Geoff Colvin's
research on Crisis Escalation and De-escalation in the
classroom

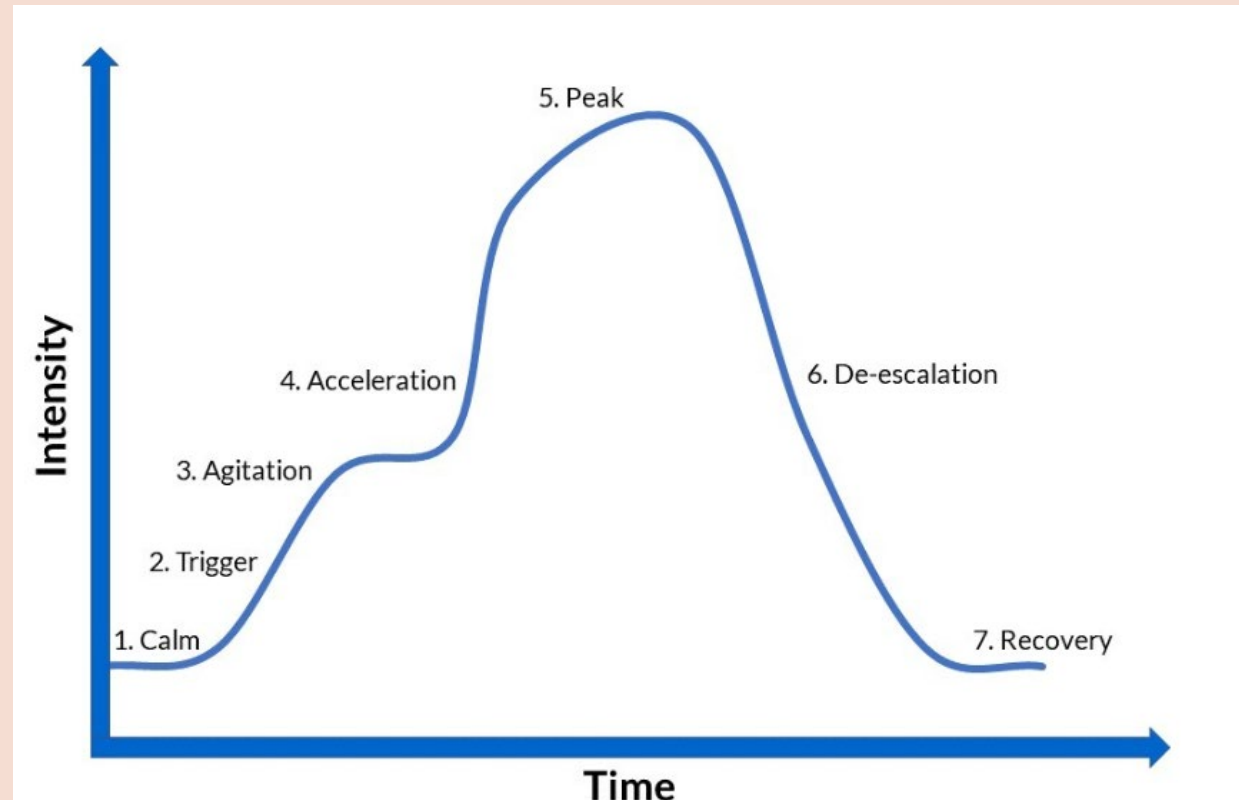
The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior



The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior

Good instruction and good behavior management (chicken/egg) can be thought of as setting the stage for the 'Calm' phase of this cycle.

The next section of slides provides information about the research-based procedures and practices that form the basis of good instruction and good behavior management.



Example of Clear, Shared Expectations: Classroom Bill of Rights

The student bill of rights includes items such as:

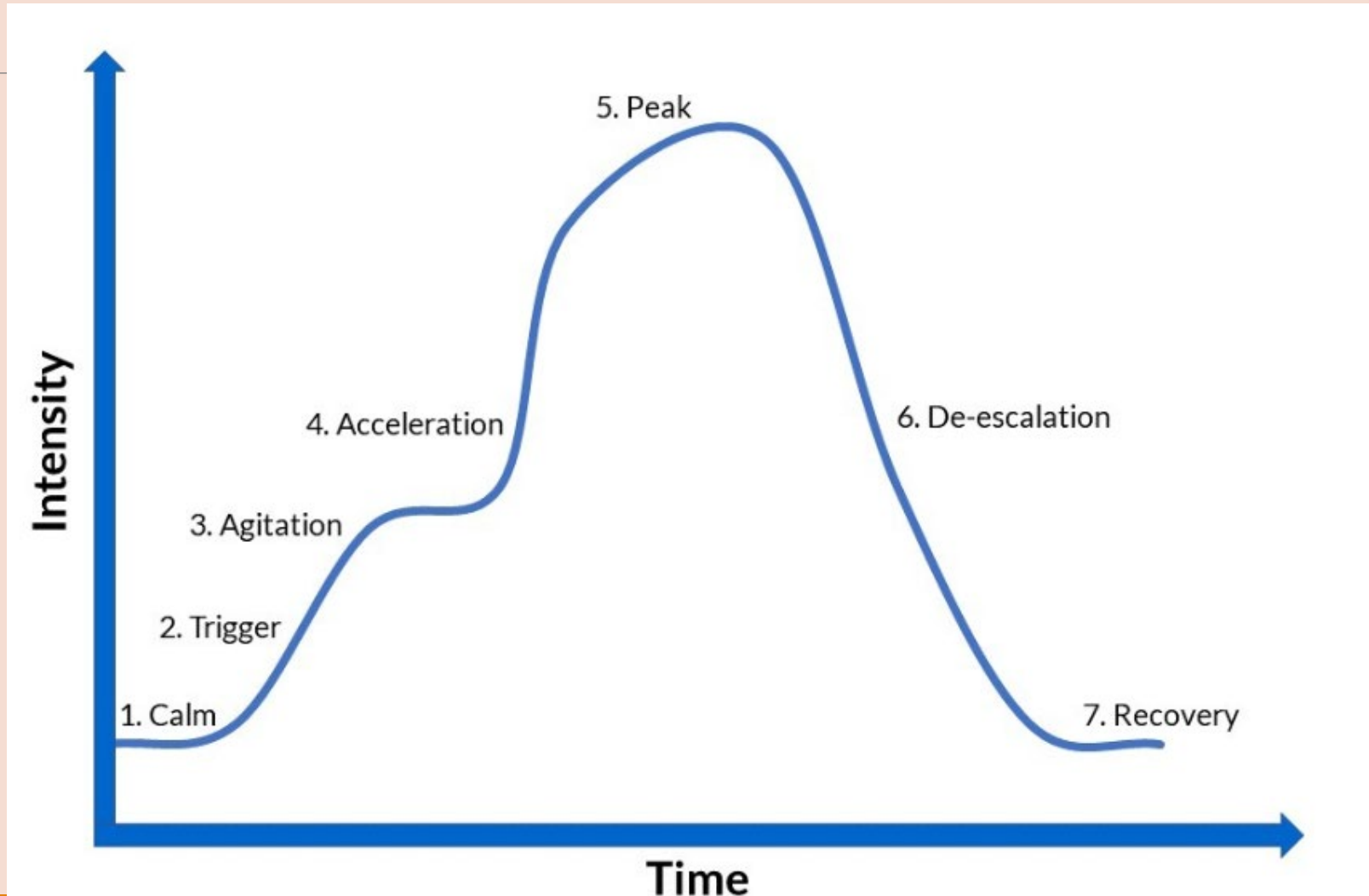
- 1) to be treated with respect;
- 2) to be treated fairly;
- 3) to receive clear learning objectives
- 4) to receive prompt feedback.

The faculty bill of rights includes items such as:

- 1) to know course material
- 2) to be on time and prepared for class
- 3) to explain course content
- 4) to assess student work fairly.

Nilson, L.B., & Jackson, N.S. (2004, June). *Combating classroom misconduct (incivility) with bills of rights*. Paper presented at the Fourth Conference of the International Consortium for Educational Development, Ottawa, ON.

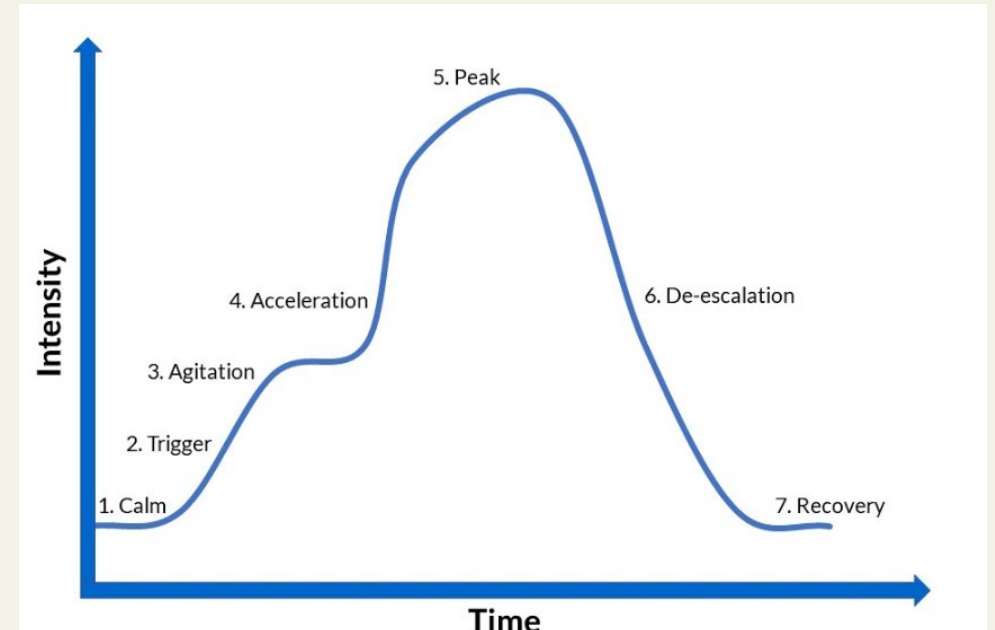
The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior



Stage 1: Calm

Overall student behavior is cooperative and acceptable.

- Supervise, reduce distractions, and provide quiet space
- Establish clear expectations, praise compliance
- Establish routines to decrease downtime, distractions, disruptions
- Prepare ahead for transitions, and entry and exit routines



Strategies for the Prevention of Behavior Challenges in the Classroom

An environment that encourages positive student classroom behavior...

(Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021)

Learning environments that minimize the likelihood of behavior challenges should be positive, predictable, and engaging. An instructor should:

- Create a safe and inclusive classroom where all members of the community belong (CCC's Center for Teaching and Learning has extensive resources and strategies for addressing student belonging in the classroom and campus)
- Develop and explicitly teach clear positive behavior expectations and important social-emotional skills. (For example, how to work in groups, how to ask for help, how to solve disagreements, etc.)
- Establish and explicitly teach consistent classroom routines (arrival, transitions, dismissal, etc.)
- Provide engaging academic instruction that matches students' instructional level. (Assessment of student skills is critical.) Frequent and varied opportunities to contribute/respond prevents off-task and disruptive behavior.
- Acknowledge prosocial behavior and redirecting when behavioral errors happen

Strategies for helping students get “on-task” during instruction

- Establish an entry activity and prompt students to engage quickly
- Make initial explanations brief
- Make sure all students are paying attention before giving instructions or explanations
- Plan ahead for difficult transitions in the lesson / instruction
- Use direct speech
- Avoid dead time
- Establish a calm classroom environment before the end of class

Tips for Prevention of Negative Behaviors

(Peterson, 2008)

-
- Set the right tone regarding behavior expectations (There are two sentences in my syllabus regarding respectful behavior that I read verbatim at the outset of each class.)
 - Clear expectations regarding lesson and course outcomes
 - Well-planned activities including learning standards
 - Engaging academic subject matter that is contextualized, necessary to the student, and meaningful (ie. has a relevant outcome to the student)
 - Established classroom routines that include:
 - Procedures and repetitive activities
 - Ground rules with expectations
 - Elements that are proactive and predictable
 - Consistency (ie. routines and expectations are used with few exceptions.)

The Importance of Pacing...

- “Pacing” is “the rate at which instructional activities occur or at which specific ‘learning trials’ are presented to the student.” (Feeney, Hibbard, and Ylvisaker, (2006) An effectively paced lesson creates the perception that the class is moving at just the right speed for students.
- When the pace of a lesson is too slow, students will get bored or disengaged. When a lessons moves to quickly, students can get lost and discouraged. Both instances create the conditions for student misbehavior.
- **In general, a relatively fast-paced lesson or instruction delivery is ideal.** The pace should move as quickly as the students can effectively grasp the material. (However, the pace can slow during portions of lessons that include the presentation of new material.)

Indications of Appropriate Pacing

Signs that the pace is too slow:

- Students act restless or put their heads down
- Students are preoccupied or inattentive
- Inappropriate behaviors increase over the course of the lesson

Signs that the pace is too fast:

- Multiple student questions for clarification
- Students look confused, or struggle to understand the material

Signs that the pace is ideal:

- Student are engaged with the lesson (asking appropriate questions, completing tasks, working effectively with peers)
- Students are learning the content of the lesson (correct responses to check-for-learning questions or activities)

The Importance of “Proximity” ...

Thomas, Roth, J. “Classroom Management for Successful Instruction”, Shell Educational Publishing, 2014

- Personal space is a critical element of social interaction. Instructors who walk around the classroom and monitor student conduct usually maintain better classroom control than those who remain stationary or seated.

Think of the classroom as being divided into 3 distinct areas: the red zone, the yellow zone, and the green zone. The area closest to the instructor is the **red zone**, where students are actively engaged. The area about 15 feet from the instructor is the **yellow zone**, where students are involved when they believe they are being watched. The area farthest from the instructor is the **green zone**, where students are disengaged from instruction. (F. Jones, 2000)

When an instructor moves around the classroom, they are constantly disrupting the boundaries of these zones which disrupts the students’ impulse to become distracted or disengaged from the activity.

The Importance of Transition Times

Transition time is the time it takes to change from one activity to another (for example, from group work to independent study, or from lecture to work stations, from one subject to the next, etc.) Transition times also include the beginning and ending of class. By their nature, transition times detract from instruction and learning. They are also times when students commonly exhibit off-task or distracting behaviors.

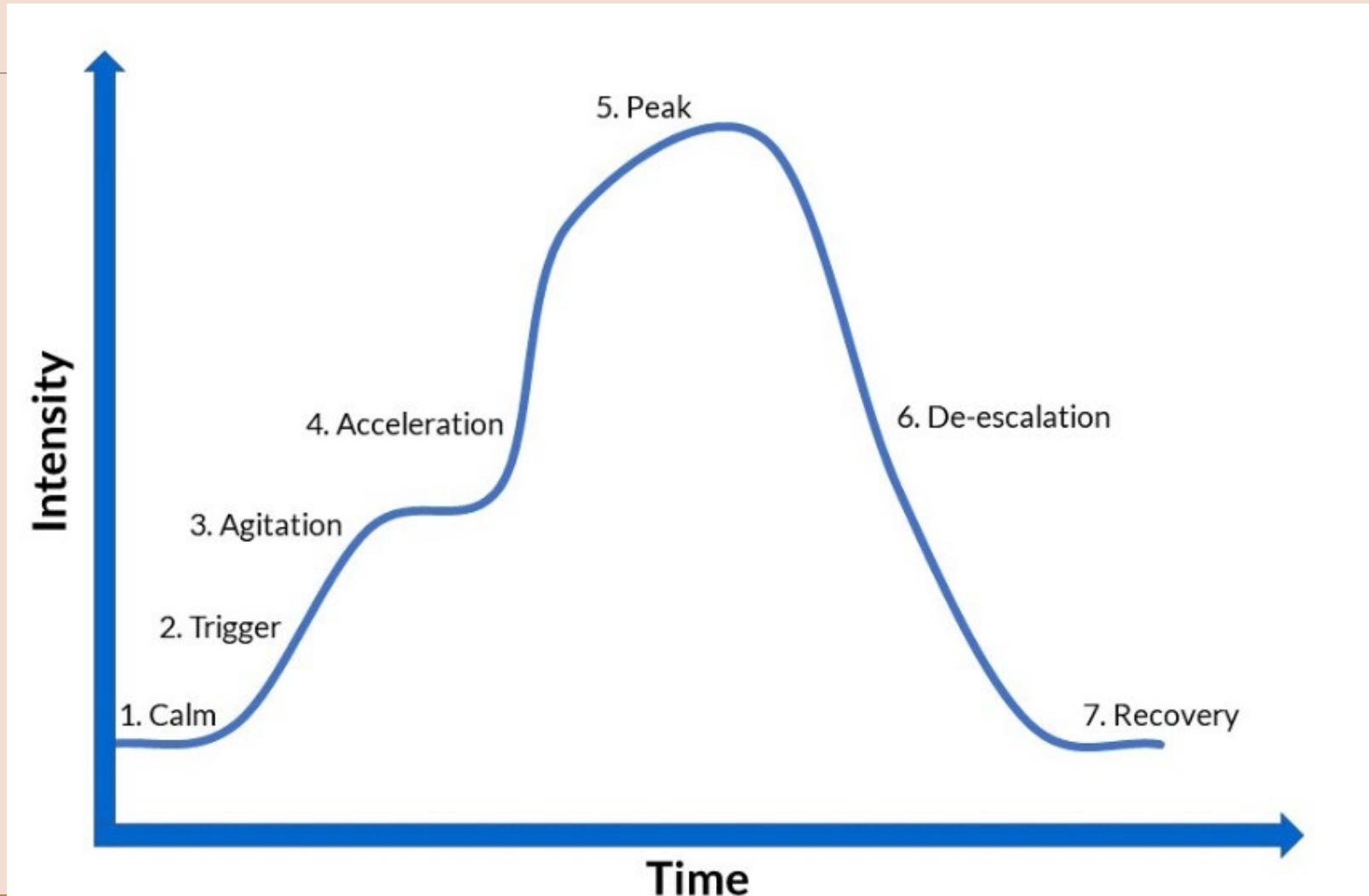
To shorten typical transition times:

- Prior to a transition time, get students' attention and state the expectations for the following activity.
- Provide these step-by-step directions when students are seated and attentive
- When students are entering (or returning to) the classroom, have an activity ready for them to do immediately. This should be routine and expected by the students.
- List the daily lesson's segments in a visible place so that students know what to expect.

Sources of Problematic Behavior in the Classroom

Moving from the 'Calm' Stage to the Potential 'Triggers' Stage

The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior



Sources of Problematic Behaviors

- Non-aligned expectations between the student and the instructor
- A lack of communication regarding classroom expectations (unclear limits)
- Additional student-centered underlying causes:
 - Physical (ie. illness, lack of sleep, medications/drugs, stress, etc.)
 - Emotional (ie. isolation, boredom, immaturity, misdirected aggression, low motivation, negative peer relationships, etc.)
 - Environmental (ie. norm of conduct, class size, culture, task, etc.)
- Negative Prior School Experiences
- Lack of Belonging

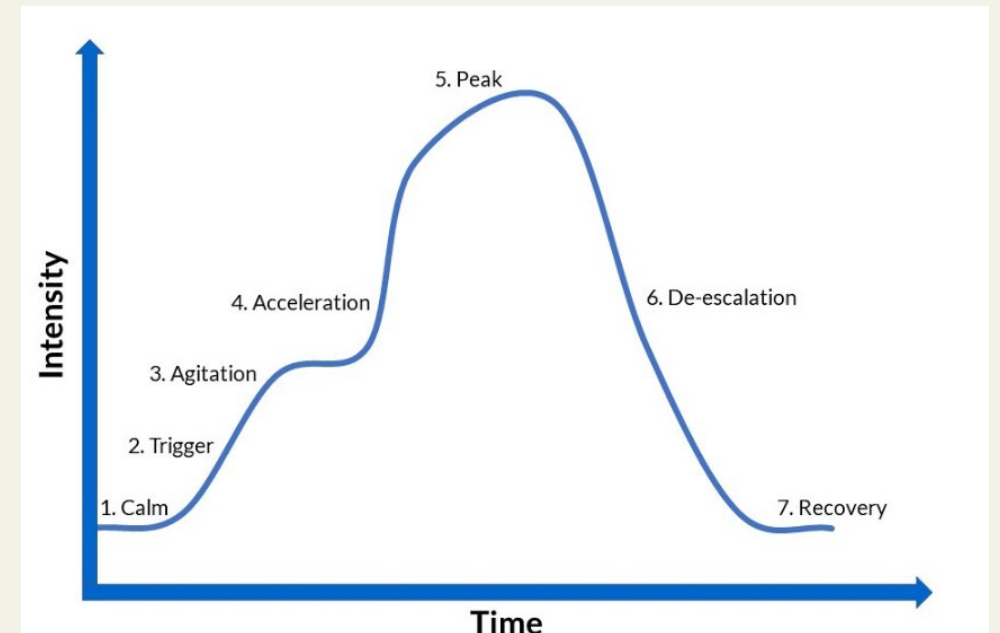
Conditions for Non-compliant Behavior

- Misunderstanding of directions (Instruction and directions should always be as clear as possible and repeated as many times as necessary. I like to *tell* the students what we will be doing, then *show* the students what we will be doing, then *work alongside* students as the activity unfolds.)
- Capacity to understand the directions (Some students may need instructions delivered in multiple formats.)
- Delivery or Tone of instruction or directions (It's critical for the instructor to maintain a calm and respectful demeanor 100% of the time.)
- Student inattention prior to delivery of instruction or directions (This is where established routines and predictability of the class become essential.)
- Delayed addressing of disruptive behavior (“Widespread problems in a class usually mean the teacher did not act earlier.” Ken Peterson, 2008)
- Lack of “teacher immediacy” (Instructors can influence motivation and behavior by connecting with students and responding to their needs quickly at the outset of class.)

Stage 2: Trigger

Overall student behavior involves a series of unresolved problems. (Triggers can occur in the classroom, elsewhere at school, outside the school setting, or be a combination of each.)

- Identify the situation where the behavior is likely to occur
- Rehearse expectations, remind students when needed, provide specific praise and reinforcement



The “Anatomy” of Loaded Moments

“The Evolution of ‘Loaded Moments’ Toward Escalation or De-Escalation in Student-Teacher Interactions”, Review of Educational Research, Kennedy and Junker, 2023

- Loaded Moments begin with *instigations* – interactions between teachers and student that disrupt the flow toward shared, short-term goals and outcomes.
- Existing patterns for how students and teachers have interacted affect the unfolding of loaded moments
 - Moment-to-moment interactions lead to students’ and teachers’ mental representations of their relationship, which then inform new interactions (creating a positive or negative cycle)
 - Positive “contact moments” that affirm connectedness (shaking hands, telling stories, praise, tailoring personal responses) build and reinforce positive relationships that shape later contact moments.
 - The way teachers and students have previously negotiated conflicting interests create the context in which a loaded moment unfolds

Incompatibilities that Cause Loaded Moments

"The Evolution of 'Loaded Moments' Toward Escalation or De-Escalation in Student-Teacher Interactions", Review of Educational Research, Kennedy and Junker, 2023

- Incompatible expectations related to teacher and student autonomy – Loaded moments may occur when there is a mismatch between the autonomy that students want or need and the autonomy the teacher allows or supports
- Incompatible perceptions related the fairness of teacher behaviors – Loaded moments can occur when students perceive a teacher's behavior to be unfair while the teacher does not
- Mismatches between students' and teachers' need for contact – Examples of "bad contact" moments include when a student is not acknowledged, receives brief or no eye-contact, a student's thinking or conversation is interrupted, or the teacher is not focused or clear. (These moments usually occur when the teacher is too busy, overwhelmed, or distracted.)
- Mismatches between students' and teachers' need for classroom safety - Teachers are ultimately responsible for the for maintaining a safe space, but sometimes teachers' and students' perceptions of interactions are not aligned as to when a boundary is crossed. (For example, students may find some peer-to-peer interactions harmless where the teacher views it as unacceptable.)

When a Loaded Moment Gains or Loses Steam (Escalates or De-escalates)

"The Evolution of 'Loaded Moments' Toward Escalation or De-Escalation in Student-Teacher Interactions", Review of Educational Research, Kennedy and Junker, 2023

- Kennedy/Junker refer to the student-teacher interaction as a “co-construction”, meaning the two parties equally participate in the direction the interaction will go. After an instigating event, the situation may escalate or de-escalate.
 - In an escalation, actors may “use threats and coercive strategies, and end in the dissatisfaction of both parties”.
 - A de-escalation may be stable or unstable.
 - **Stable de-escalation** leads to a full resolution in which both parties are satisfied.
 - Unstable de-escalation shifts attention away from the conflict but leaves open the possibility for a re-escalation

Stable De-escalation Co-Constructions

"The Evolution of 'Loaded Moments' Toward Escalation or De-Escalation in Student-Teacher Interactions", Review of Educational Research, Kennedy and Junker, 2023

Stable De-escalations involve Trade-offs and Turns

- **Trade-offs:** students and teachers accommodate each other's behavior to accomplish their own goals.

In a successful trade-off, teachers offer warmth and accommodation of student behavior, and students offer reciprocal warmth demonstrated by compliance and lack of protest. (For example, a student listening to headphones and tapping feet during a quiet-study time is allowed to keep the headphones but must stop tapping their feet. The student complies.)

- **Turns:** students and teachers shifted their own perspectives to align more closely with the other (or, *turned* from opposition to cooperation)

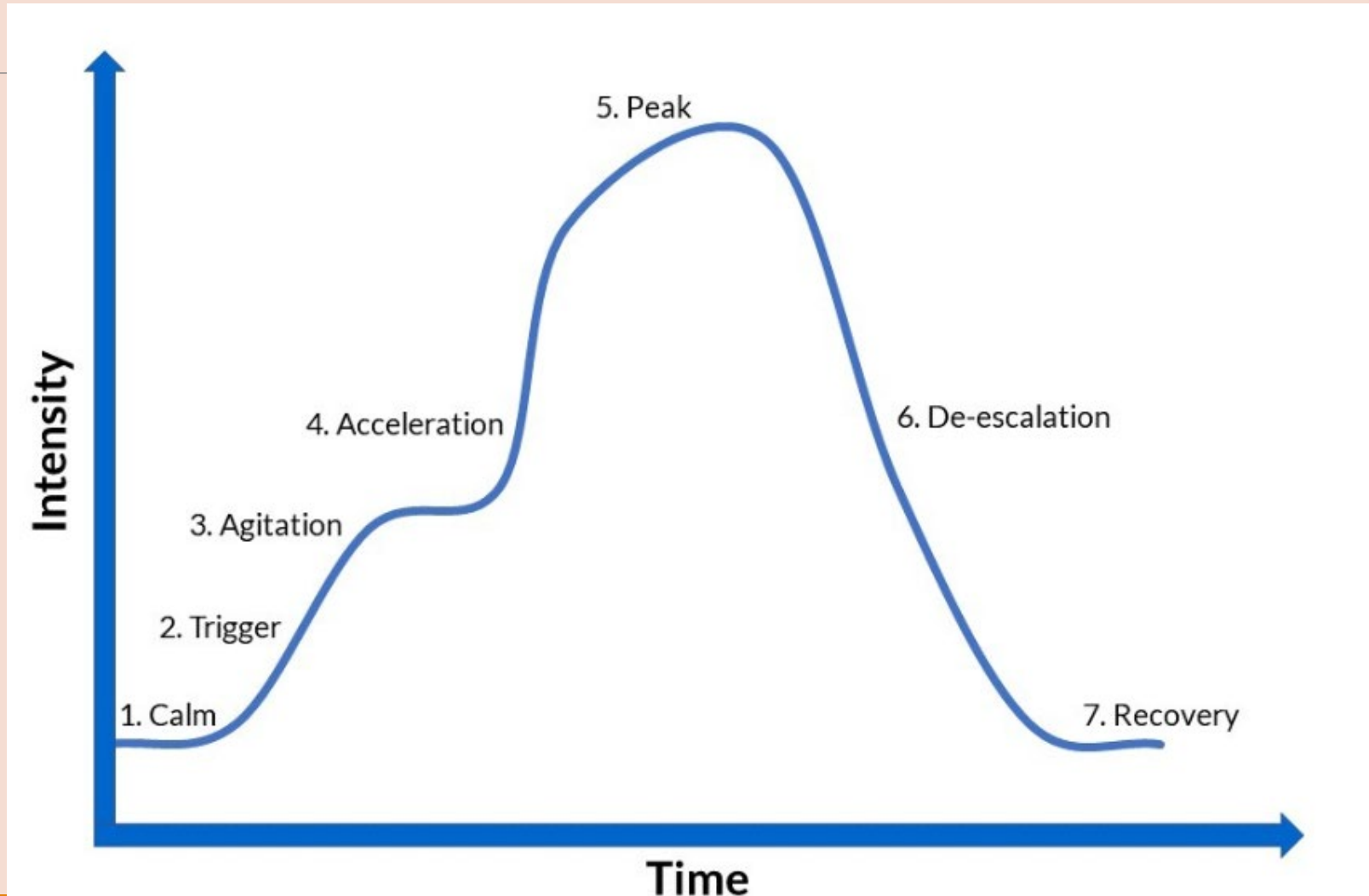
In a successful turn, teachers release their exclusive perspectives or desires and replace them with those that accommodate the student. (For example, a student's verbal response that at first seems wildly off-subject is permitted and then steered toward a meaningful contribution to the lesson.)

(Trade-offs and Turns both require a willingness for the instructor to be flexible in dealing with an instigating circumstance. Stable de-escalations require cooperation between teachers and students that involve skilled/strategic teacher responses such as planned ignoring and authentic praise.)

Strategies for Difficult Situations in the Classroom

What Not To Do
Tools for Agitated Students
Tools for Diffusion
Engaging With Students in a Non-threatening Manner

The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior

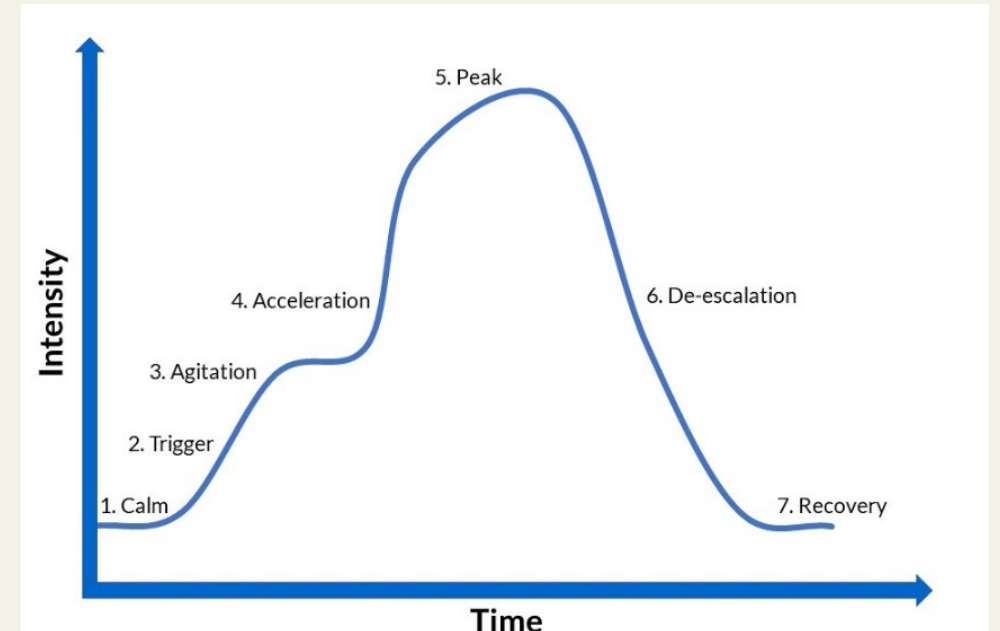


Stage 3: Agitation

Signs of Agitation:

Overall student behavior is unfocused and distracted. Often a student will either become more active than usual or become withdrawn and shut down.

- Show empathy
- Recognize the student's problem and communicate concern
- Redirect and help the student become engaged in the lesson or activity
- Provide choices
- Allow student to disengage briefly (provide space), or allow for student movement
- Use proximity or brief interactions



The importance of identifying and managing agitated students

Recognizing and addressing student agitation is an important component of preventing potentially disruptive behavior in the classroom. There are 2 main reasons for this:

1. Agitation often precedes more serious problem behavior. Managing an agitated student helps a student become settled and reduces the likelihood of an escalation by interrupting the chain of serious behavior.
2. An agitated student has difficulty engaging in learning activities. If an instructor can successfully use strategies to reduce the distraction then it enables the student to participate in instruction.

What Not to Do...

Instructor responses likely to escalate problematic student behaviors:

- Agitated behavior from the instructor (for example, shouting, facial expressions, etc.)
- Moving into a student's space (cornering, leaning forward toward student, pointing)
- Engaging in power struggles
- Sudden and quick responses
- Making discrediting statements (for example, "This is a college, not an elementary school.")
- Becoming defensive and arguing
- Communicating frustration through body language

Note: These can be instinctive responses. If an instructor is getting drawn into one of these behaviors it's best to dis-engage from the situation and then return. For example, state that you will return shortly and move to check-in with an on-task student until regaining composure.

Tools for Visibly Agitated Students (prior to defiant behavior)

Instructor Empathy:

- Recognize that the student has a problem, and
- Communicate concern to the student

This is more effective and comes across as more genuine if the instructor has already made a connection with the student (see Interest Survey slide)

Provide assistance for student to begin the task or focus on the task.

Provide an alternative task or independent activity.

Provide a movement activity. (Agitated students often exhibit increased levels of movement while also having the expectation to sit still.) Ask the student to run an errand, distribute papers, etc.)

Provide the student with space or isolation from the rest of the class

For some students, instructor proximity is helpful. An instructor can stand near a student's desk and lightly engage with dialogue. (If the student exhibits negative body language or looks uncomfortable then move away.)

Additional Strategies for Agitated Students...

- Give recognition and support
- Provide space
- Present options
- Allow for preferred activities
- Stay in proximity to the student when possible
- Allow for independent activities
- Allow for movement
- Offer relaxation activities (breathing, fidget, etc.)
- Involve student in the plan (which communicates support and an offer of partnership)

Tools for Diffusion

- Present Choices as a Decision
 - The instructor focuses on the student making a choice, rather than focusing on the non-compliant behavior
 - Allow some time for the student to decide (up to a minute).
 - Move away from the student and engage in another task or previous activity, then return to the student for follow-up
- Maintain Calmness, Respect, and Detachment (see slides 49 - 51)

A note on “Teacher Proximity” regarding agitated students...

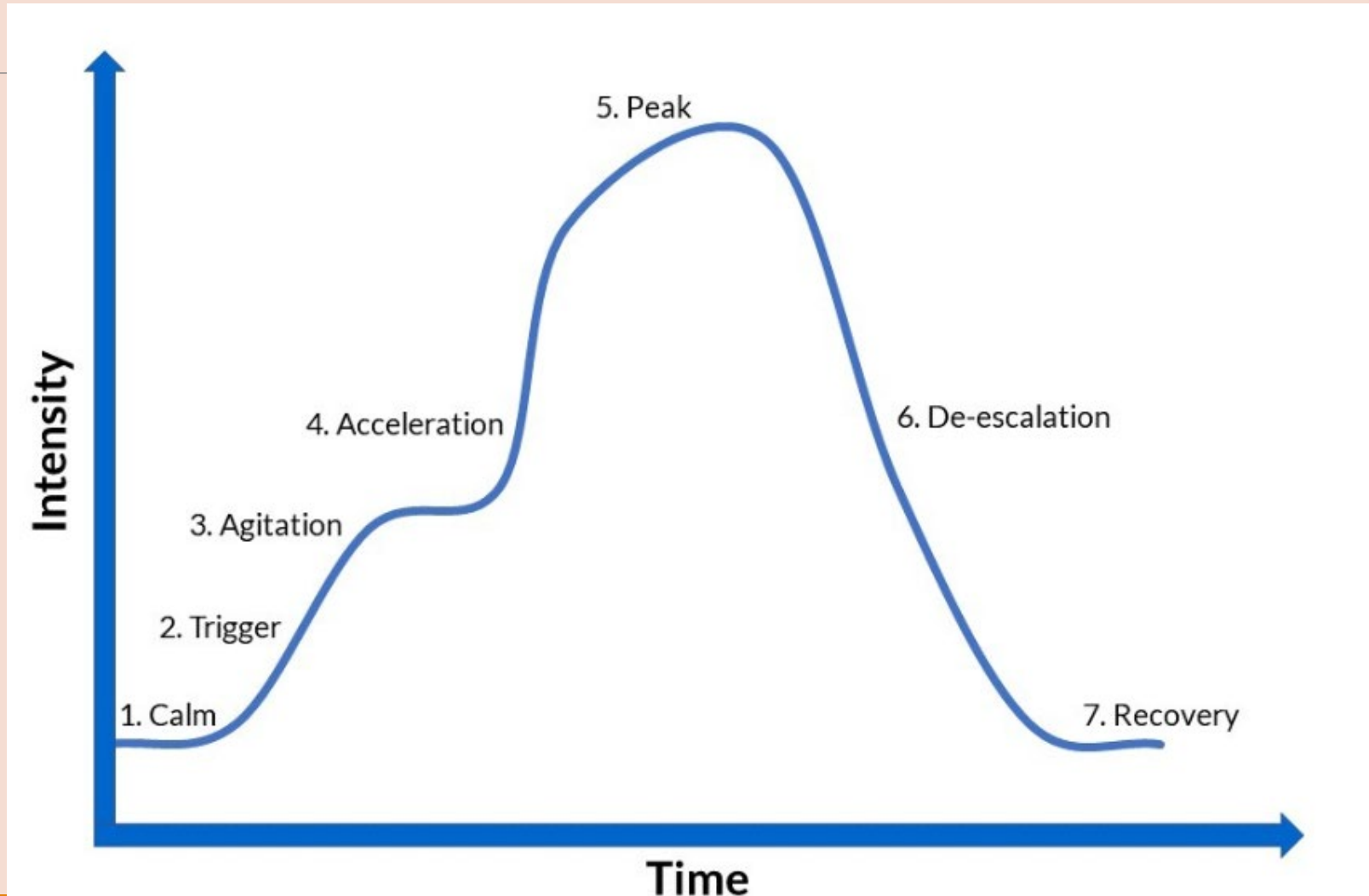
Students who are agitated are often insecure or uncomfortable. The student has likely been agitated in this context before and subsequently experienced negative escalations. Sometimes by standing near an agitated student (and remaining empathetic, calm, etc.), an instructor can help the student feel reassured which can slow or reverse an escalating situation. When an instructor is present to the student during agitation the student may experience acceptance where they have previously experienced rejection or hostility. This can settle a student.

Examples of Proximity:

- Standing near a student’s desk
- Initiating brief interactions (ie. “How’s it going, [student’s name]?”)

Important: If the student reacts adversely, usually by way of body language, the instructor should withdraw. The student is communicating the need to be left alone.

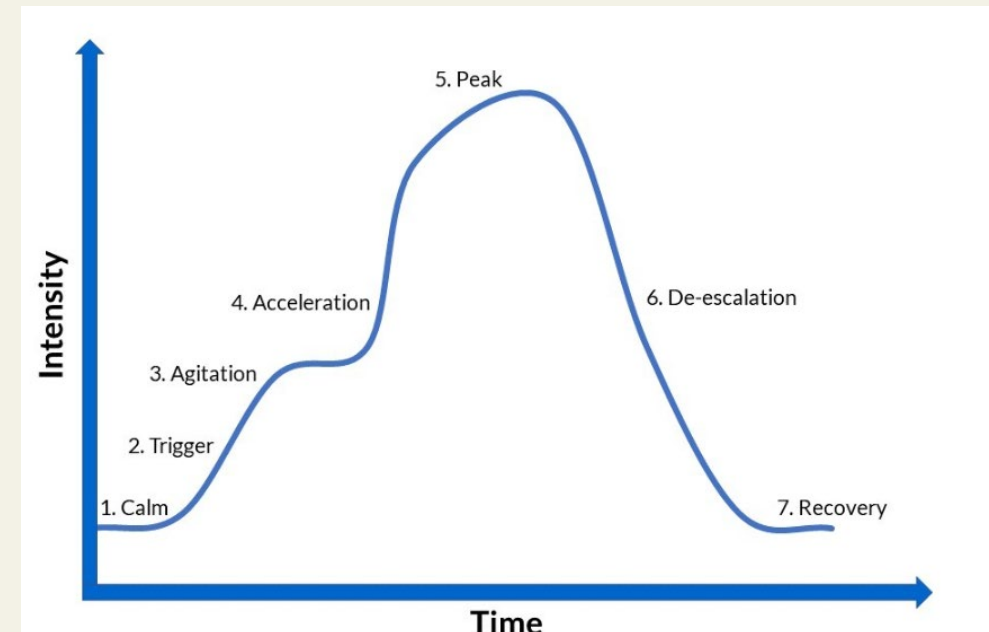
The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior



Stage 4: Acceleration

Overall student behavior is staff-engaging, leading to further negative interactions.

- Pause and Assess the severity of the situation (ie. “Is this an emergency situation?”)
- Avoid escalating student’s behavior
- Pausing, as opposed to immediately engaging or reacting, shows students that while they may be overwhelmed/upset/out of control, the instructor is calm and in control
- Use a calm but serious tone
- If situation escalates, withdraw and focus on school procedures for emergency situations* (see slide #:)



Maintaining Calmness (while diffusing escalating behavior)

- The instructor needs to recognize that the student is trying to engage them. The best response is no reaction (to pause) so that the student can see the instructor is in control of themselves and that the behavior is not following a familiar pattern. (Kindsvatter and Levine, 1980)

Maintaining Respect (while diffusing escalating behavior)

- Any indication of disrespect for a student's dignity or rights will escalate the behavior
- Students will take the exchange less personally if the instructor focuses on the student's behavior, not the student.
- Always speak privately to the student, which lessens the chance of a student "saving face" escalation. This also eliminates the attention a student may be trying to get from peers. (See next slide for guidelines for private conversations with students.)

Guidelines for Private Conversations with Students

Tamara Rounds, Mitigating Disruptive Behavior in the College Classroom, Arizona State University, 2017

1. Invite the student to speak in a private area.
2. Acknowledge the emotions of the student.
3. Briefly state your concern.
4. Give the student an opportunity to talk. Listen.
5. Ask for clarification if necessary. (“I’m not sure what you mean by...” “Can you tell me more...”)
6. Paraphrase what has been said to you without adding your own interpretation. (“I understand that the situation at home is difficult and affecting your schoolwork...”)
7. Assess the situation. Focus on the behavior and clearly state your expectations and the consequences. (These should be clearly stated and previously known by the student.)
8. Ask the student for comments.
9. Thank the student for their time.

Maintaining Detachment (while diffusing escalating behavior)

- Have a disposition that indicates to the student that they are ultimately responsible for their own behavior.
- Don't communicate any degree of anxiety or sense of pleading with the student to behave appropriately.
- It's important to use a matter-of-fact tone of voice and body language, not too loud and not too quiet.

Tips / Reminders for Engaging with Students in a Non-threatening Manner

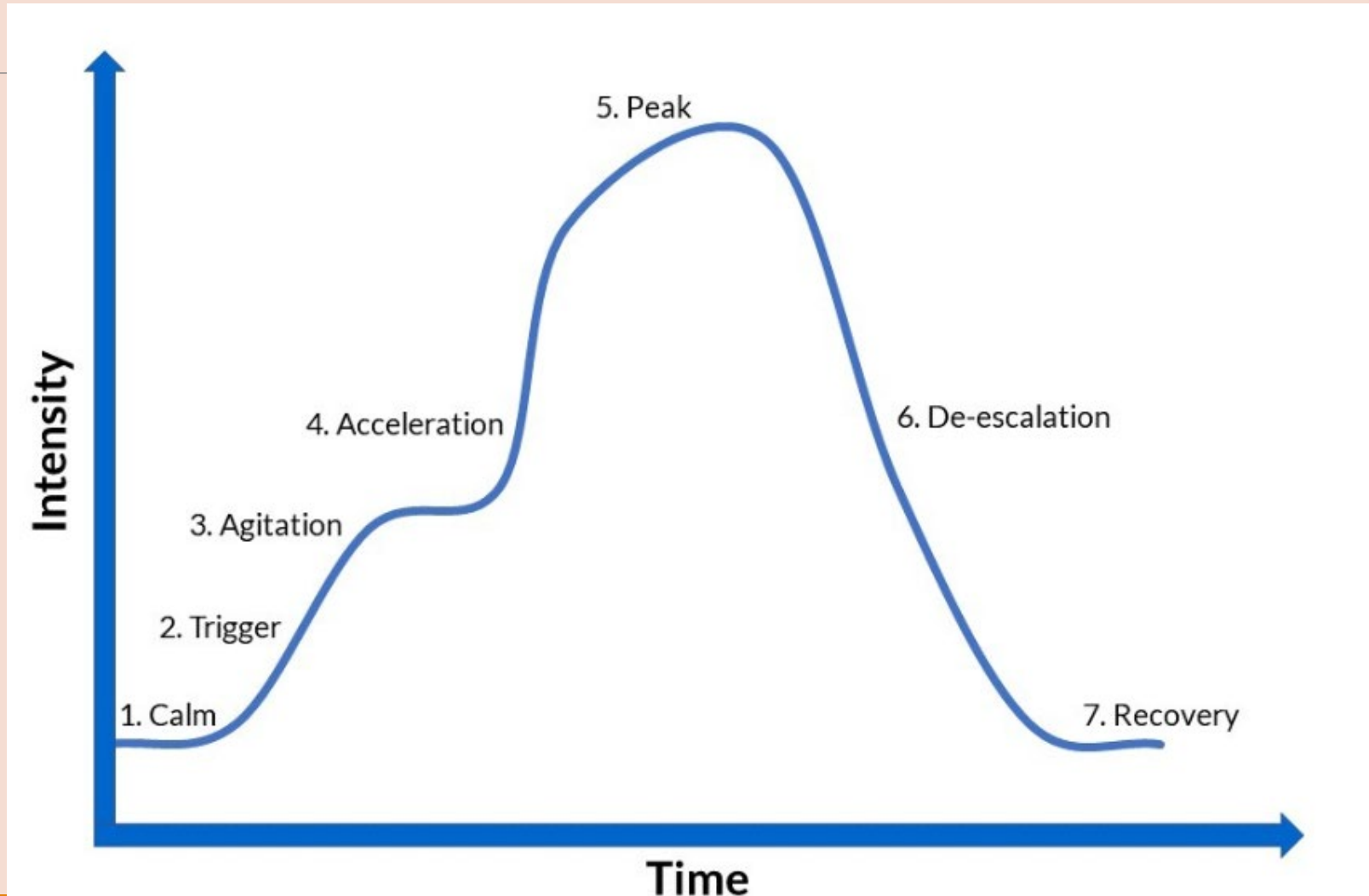
There is a high probability of escalation at this phase of management if the instructor's behavior is not extremely controlled and non-threatening. Be unhurried and calm while maintaining a respectful tone of voice. The student's behavior is designed to engage the instructor. The less the instructor becomes engaged emotionally, the more effectively the situation will be diffused. Some guidelines:

- Move slowly, calmly, and deliberately toward the problem situation. (If possible, provide on-task interactions with other students on the way to the target situation.)
- Speak privately, and avoid statements that address anyone except the student concerned
- Speak calmly. Be as matter-of-fact as possible in a controlled tone. Avoid making threats

Additional Tips / Reminders for Engaging with Students in a Non-threatening Manner

- Be as still as possible – minimize body language. Do not point at, stare at, or crowd the student.
- Keep a reasonable distance, allowing the student to have their own space.
- Speak respectfully - use the student's name and speak in a soft and detached manner.
- Establish eye-level position. If a student is sitting, then sit or squat near them. Do not tower over the student. (This is important at all phases of classroom management. I find it helpful, if possible, to maintain a below-eye-level position when checking in with or working independently with students.)
- Be brief. Long-winded statements make some student react negatively.
- Acknowledge cooperation. Compliment the student if they disengage from the escalation or problem situation.
- Withdraw if the situation escalates. Move away from the student and follow school emergency procedures. Later, connect with the CCC Care Team.

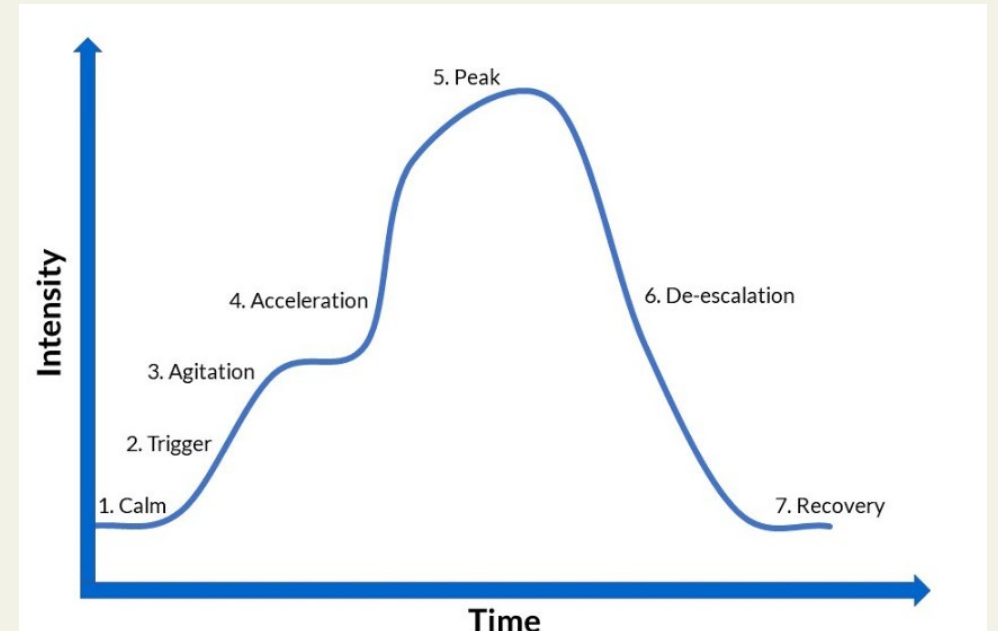
The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior



Stage 5: Peak

Overall student behavior is out of control.

- Focus on student and staff safety
- If needed, evacuate others
- Contact appropriate assistance (CCC Campus Safety: x6650)



Tips for Encounters with Individuals Experiencing Crisis

From “Verbal de-escalation for clinical practice safety”, JM Jubb, CJ baack, American Nurse Today, 2019

Verbal De-escalation Tips

- Take a deep breath
 - Have a planned escape / exit route
 - Stay at least two arms' length away from the person escalating and don't turn your back on them
-
- Keep your expression and posture relaxed and don't use too many gestures
 - Stay at eye with the individual
 - Maintain a calm expression and voice
 - Keep your hands where the individual can see them
 - Only have one person communicating with the individual
 - Re-state what the individual says so that they know they are being heard
 - Don't threaten, but do set boundaries ("I understand you're upset, but the expectation is...")
 - Speak in short sentences
 - Empathize with feelings and be non-judgmental
 - Offer realistic choices when possible
 - Use the individual's name and suggest that you both sit down, or walk and talk
 - Be OK with silence – this often gives people time to realize the difficulty that their behavior is causing
 - Don't argue, but do point out consequences of the behavior
 - Be respectful, but don't answer rude questions
 - Don't hesitate to get help

Responding to Crisis Behavior

Examples of Crisis Behavior:

- Behavior indicates drug or alcohol use
- Possession of weapon
- Serious threats
- Aggression or other unexpected hostile behavior

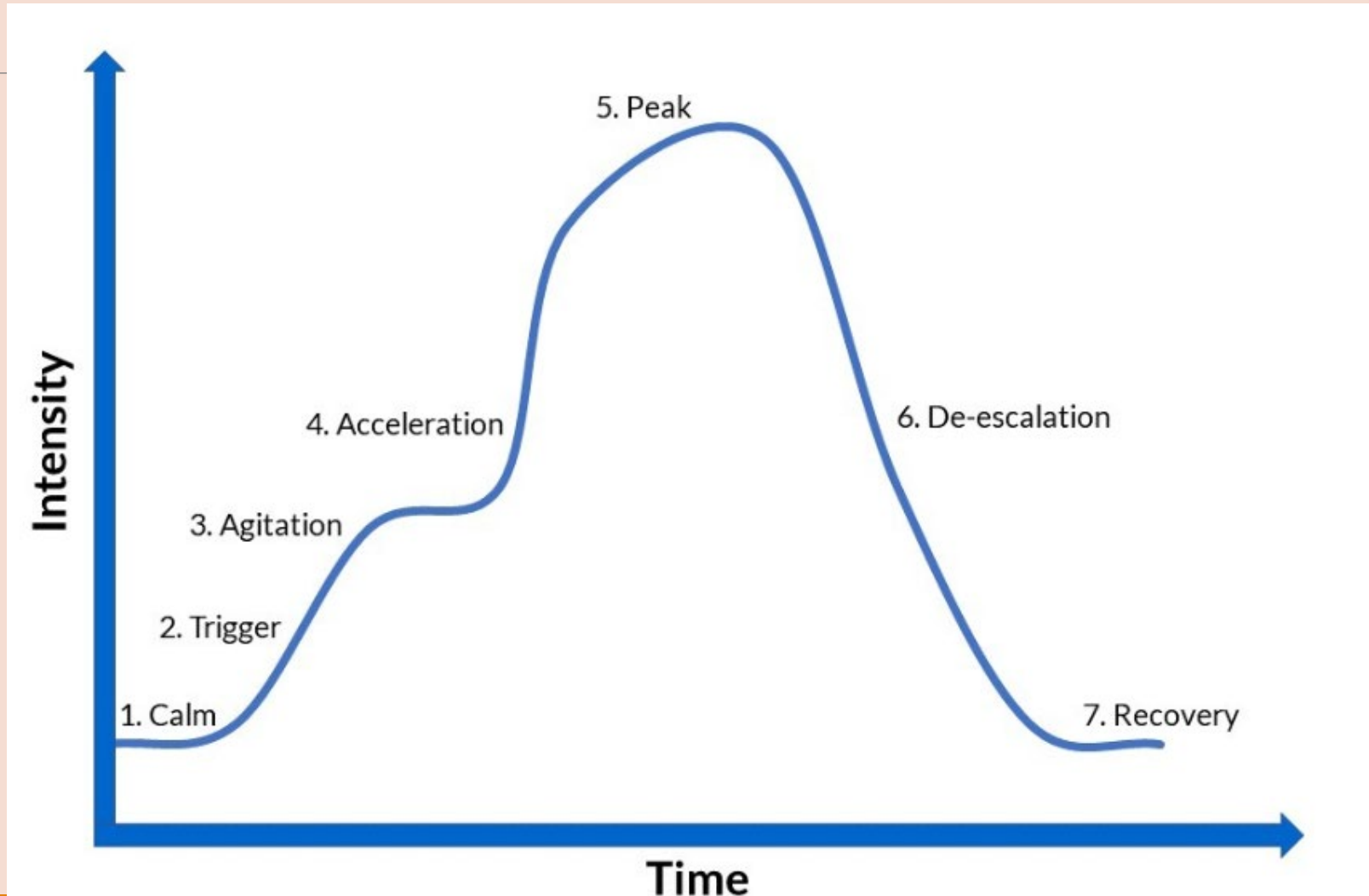
Step 1: Pause and Assess

- Do not respond immediately. Look at the floor, look at the student, and assess if this is an emergency situation. If yes,

Step 2: Physically disengage and send for help

- Say to the student, calmly and firmly, “Just a second,” and step back in a calm and deliberate manner. Without looking at the student, move to the nearest classroom and follow school emergency procedure. (CCC Campus Safety x6650)

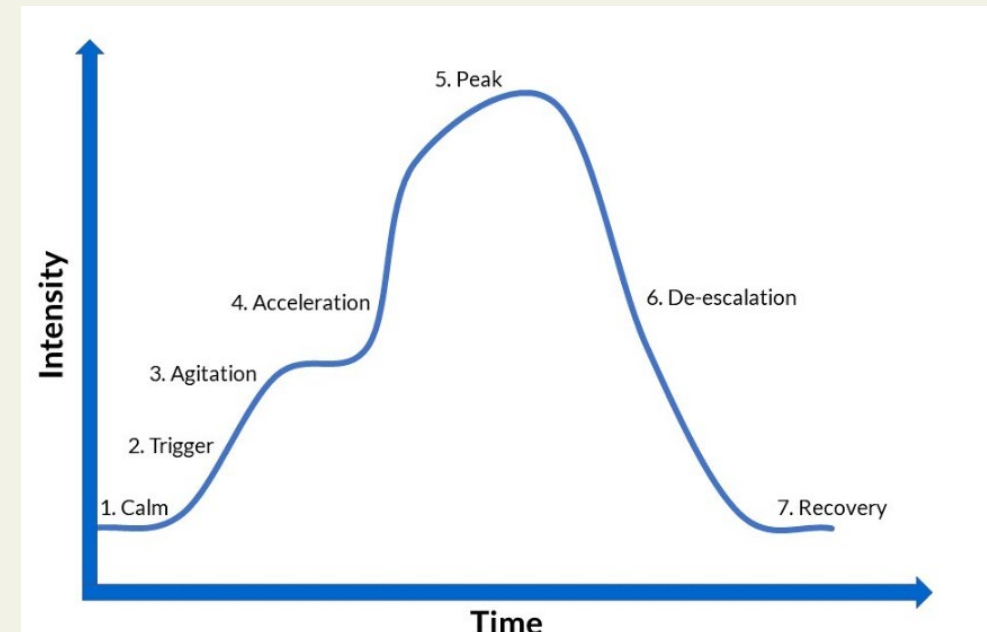
The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior



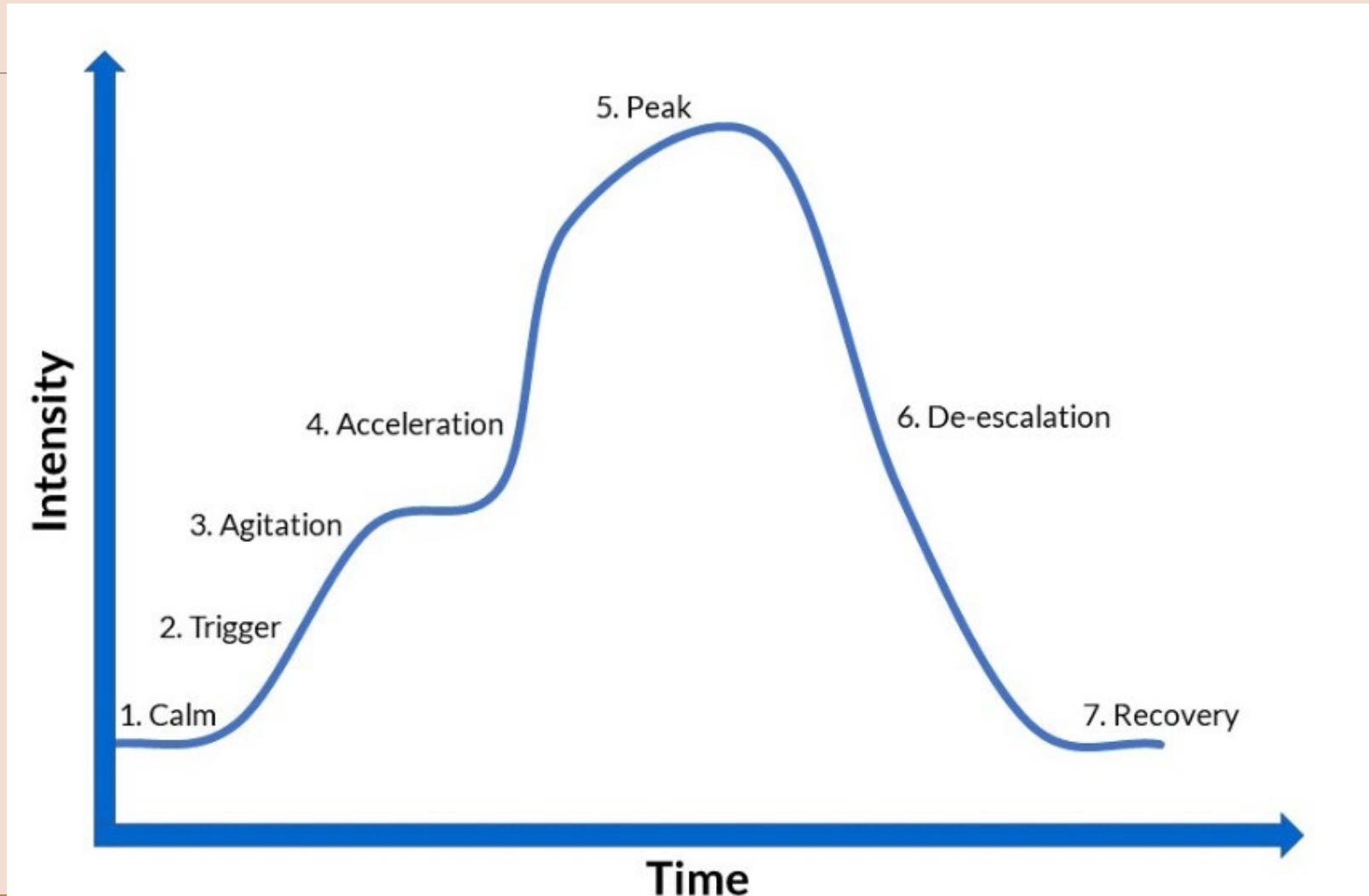
Stage 6: De-escalation

Overall student behavior shows confusion and lack of focus.

- After the escalation, allow the student space to calm down (while supervised)
- Provide an independent task or assignment that is basic enough to help student regain focus
- Debrief and document the incident to provide data for future planning for safety (CCC Care Team referral)



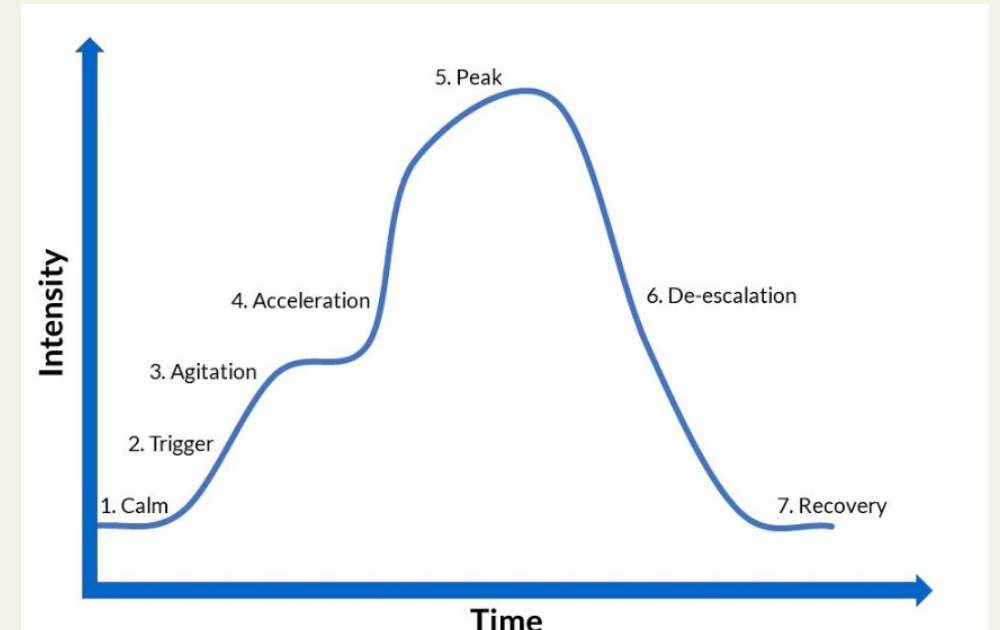
The Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior



Stage 7: Recovery

Overall student behavior shows an eagerness for busy work and reluctance to interact.

- Assist the student with returning to normal activities to re-engage with learning
- Follow through with consequences without discussion or negotiation
- Praise cooperative and appropriate behavior
- Support student in changing the problem behavior



An Important Reminder...

All teachers, instructors, and professors should invest in self-care to avoid compassion fatigue, stress and burnout. This includes physical exercise, investing in hobbies and fun activities, seeking peer support, healthy and balanced work habits, and finding opportunities for additional training.

Similarities between K-12 and Higher Ed Approaches to Crisis De-escalation
“A Review of Crisis De-escalation Techniques for K-12 and Higher Education Instructors”, Murphy, Van Brunt
The Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention, Vol. 7, 2019

Thank
you

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CCC Student Handbook Code of Conduct Disciplinary Procedures

<https://www.clackamas.edu/about-us/accreditation-policies/student-handbook#codeConduct>

Disciplinary Procedures:

- Any student or staff member who is concerned about a student's behavior that appears to violate the student Code of Conduct should complete the Student of Concern form (located on the CCC portal under the "forms" section). When submitted, this form will automatically be directed to the CARE Team for follow up. Student of Concern forms should be submitted as soon as possible after the event or behavior is discovered.
- The Associate Dean or designee will follow up with the student(s) involved and other sources if needed to gather more information about the concern. The Associate Dean consults with the Conduct Team to determine additional next steps, which may include initiating the informal or formal disciplinary process depending upon the severity of the situation.

Informal Disciplinary Process

- The Associate Dean will invite the student via verbal or written notification to discuss the concern. The Associate Dean will have an informal conversation with the student to put the student “on notice” that a conduct issue has been identified and consequences may result if the student is found responsible for violating the code of conduct. The conversation could include a review of the code of conduct, ways that such incidents can be avoided in the future, referrals to appropriate campus resources, educational sanctions, a written behavioral contract or censure notification that both parties review and sign. Educational sanctions, behavior contracts, and notes of censure are recorded in the student’s disciplinary file for internal purposes only. They may be considered in further conduct cases, but are not considered part of the student’s permanent disciplinary record once the student leaves CCC.
- The Associate Dean will notify the student during an informal disciplinary meeting that continuation of the identified behavior or new information regarding the incident may result in formal disciplinary procedures as outlined below.

Formal Disciplinary Process

- The Associate Dean will invite the student(s) involved via written notification to discuss the possible code of conduct violations and disciplinary action(s). Notice of this meeting should, whenever possible, be given at least two working days prior to the scheduled appointment. During the meeting the participants may present any evidence, explanations and/or defenses regarding the events that occurred. If the student(s) fails to appear for their scheduled appointment or refuses to present any explanations and/or evidence, they lose any rights to further meetings or to appeal any resulting disciplinary decision.
- After the meeting, the Associate Dean will consult with the Conduct Team to determine whether the student is responsible for violating the Code of Conduct and if so, which disciplinary sanctions will be imposed. The following disciplinary sanctions may be applied:

Formal Disciplinary Process (cont...)

- **Disciplinary Probation:** Disciplinary Probation may be applied for repeated minor misconduct, single incidents which contain multiple minor violations of misconduct, or for more serious misconduct that falls short of suspension-level misconduct. A student who is placed on disciplinary probation may also be required to sign a behavior contract and/or complete educational sanctions such as reflective exercises, research and civic education, community education, community involvement, academic success, restorative education and/or referral sanctions. The student will receive a sanction letter outlining probationary conditions which spell out prohibited conduct and/or activities. The sanctioned student is conditionally allowed to continue attending classes and/or participate in student activities. Sanctions of disciplinary probation are recorded in the student's permanent disciplinary record and may be considered in further conduct cases.
- **Suspension:** Suspended students are forbidden to enroll in or attend classes, or may not be allowed on campus for a specified period of time, up to two academic years (eight terms). The student will receive a suspension letter which specifies conditions for possible re-enrollment after the suspension period. Suspensions are recorded in the student's permanent disciplinary record and may be considered in further conduct cases.
- **Expulsion:** Expelled students are forbidden to enroll in or attend classes, or are not allowed on campus for an indefinite period of time. The student will receive an expulsion letter. Expulsions are recorded in the student's permanent disciplinary record and may be considered in further conduct cases.
- **No-Trespass Order:** A suspended or expelled student may be issued a no-trespass order which would exclude them from all Clackamas Community College campuses and would be noted in their student record.

Immediate Suspensions and Interim Measures

A. Temporary Suspension (up to 24 hours in duration)

Any college staff member, upon determining that a student is acting inappropriately or is potentially in violation of the student code of conduct, may temporarily remove a student from a class, activity/ event, or campus for no more than one day (24 hours). If necessary, College Safety can assist with removal of the student. Any temporary suspension must be summarized and reported to the Associate Dean of Academic Foundations and Connections within 24 hours via the Student of Concern form (located on the CCC webpage under “Forms and Documents” at this link: www.clackamas.edu/about-us/accreditation-policies/forms-and-documents) for review and consideration of summary suspension or other disciplinary proceedings.

Immediate Suspensions and Interim Measures (cont...)

B. Summary Suspension (variable duration)

Summary suspension may be used to protect the school from the immediate possibility of disorder or threat to safety of students or staff. An Associate Dean, Dean, or Vice President may summarily suspend a student or students. Summary suspension will automatically last until the immediate possibility of disorder or threat to safety of students or staff no longer exists. Summary suspension will also include a hold on any future registration activity for a student until such time as a Threat Assessment has been completed. Summary suspension shall be for the purpose of investigation of the event or events in which the student or students were allegedly involved. It may be continued pending final disposition of the case through the formal process (see below) if it is determined that it is necessary for the safety of the students or the staff or the welfare of the college.

1. The reason(s) for summary suspension shall be personally delivered to the student or mailed to his/her latest known address used for registration within 72 hours of the suspension. This notice shall include an invitation to the student to give an explanation as to why the summary suspension should not be continued.
2. If formal charges are warranted, the formal disciplinary process outlined in Section D and subsequent sections shall be followed from this point forward. If no grounds for formal charges can be identified, the summary suspension ends.

Immediate Suspensions and Interim Measures (cont...)

C. Interim Measures for Remediation

Interim measures may be used to protect students, complainants, respondents, and others during or after an investigation of alleged misconduct. An Associate Dean, Dean, or Vice President may initiate such measures as appropriate.

In general, interim measures:

1. May include non-contact directives (including no-trespass or temporary suspension) on both complainant and respondents, and others as appropriate;
2. Will be applied equitably, however in cases where a preference must be made between complainant and respondent (e.g. in moving one person away from another), the respondent is prioritized to move;
3. Will until final judgments (including appeal) are determined;
4. Will be communicated in the same manner as summary suspension;
5. Can be appealed to the Dean of AFAC in the same manner as a conduct sanction;
6. Are “directions” under Section B 11 of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Policy. Failure to follow these restrictions can result in sanctions.

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Additional Resource

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS)
U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and Elementary and Secondary Education.
www.pbis.org

Course Completed

Defusing Anger and Aggression: Safe Strategies for Secondary School Educators, IRIS Educational Media, 2011
(Course taken September 2024)