

# TLPCA Conference 2025

Therapeutic Connectedness: Using Evidence-Based  
De-escalation for Your Most Challenging Clients

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Dr. Powers



# Agenda/ Objectives

11:00

**Objective 1: Following this presentation, participants will be able to identify escalating behaviors according to the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) model (Cornell University, 2020).**

**Objective #2: Following this presentation, participants will be able to utilize intervention tips to de-escalate behavior as directed by Colvin & Sugai (1989).**

**Objective 3: Following this presentation, participants will be able to de-escalate behavior by understanding the areas of focus and interventions during a crisis (Colvin & Sugai, 1989).**

## Why do children misbehave? (4 CORNERS)



GROUP 1

GROUP 2

GROUP 3

GROUP 4

## We believe...

- That there's no such thing as a bad child.
- That badness is not a normal condition but is the result of misdirected energy and unmet needs.
- That every child will be good if given an opportunity in an environment of love and activity.

# Functions of Behavior (intentional)

11:20

## S sensory

### why?

These behaviors provide access to sensory stimulation. It "feels good to engage in the behavior."

### when?

Sensory behaviors occur at any time, in the presence or absence of another person.

### How to Respond:

Teach a functional replacement behavior that provides compatible sensory input.

For example: If a child puts non-edible things in their mouth, provide them with access to a chew tube or gum.



## E Escape

### why?

These behaviors remove an undesired situation or person.

### when?

Escape behaviors occur at a time in which something is viewed as being too hard, too boring, or too loud.

### How to Respond:

Teach the child to request a break when needed. Divide tasks into small parts or give within activity choices.

For example: If a child flops out of their chair during a work session, provide them with access to a break card.



## A Attention

### why?

These behaviors provide a reaction from others. They are often described as "acting-out" behaviors.

### when?

Attention seeking behaviors occur at a time in which the child desires a social interaction with another person.

### How to Respond:

Teach the child to request and receive positive attention through engaging in desirable behaviors.

For example: If a child screams to gain attention, provide them with access to praise for having a quiet voice.



## T Tangible

### why?

These behaviors provide access to highly preferred items or activities.

### when?

Tangible seeking behaviors occur at a time in which the child desires a specific item or activity.

### How to Respond:

Teach the child to ask for, wait, and/or exhibit a specific behavior prior to granting access to the item.

For example: If a child begs to use the iPad, allow them access following the completion of a task or chore.



Give students an outlet that matches their function of behavior

OR it is  
TRAUMA?  
(unintentional  
behavior)

## What is trauma?

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing.  
(SAMHSA, 2014).

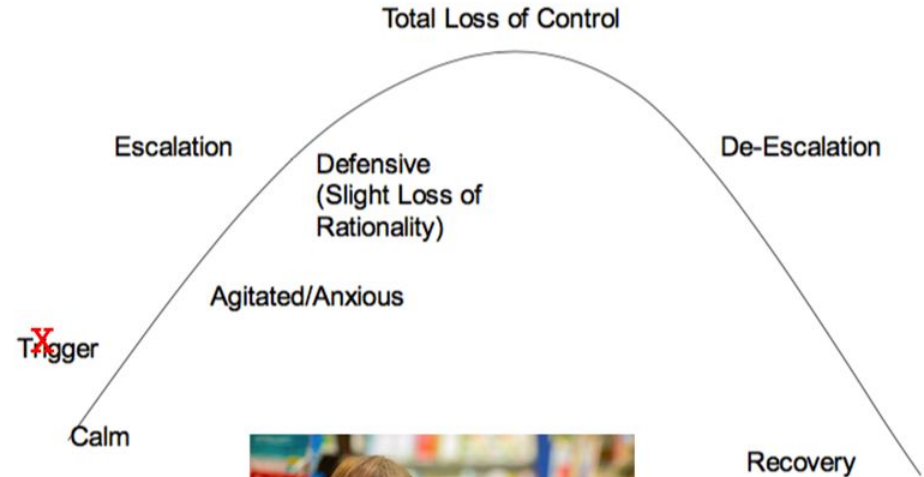


# Crisis Cycle

CALM-

What does it  
look like?

What should  
staff focus on?

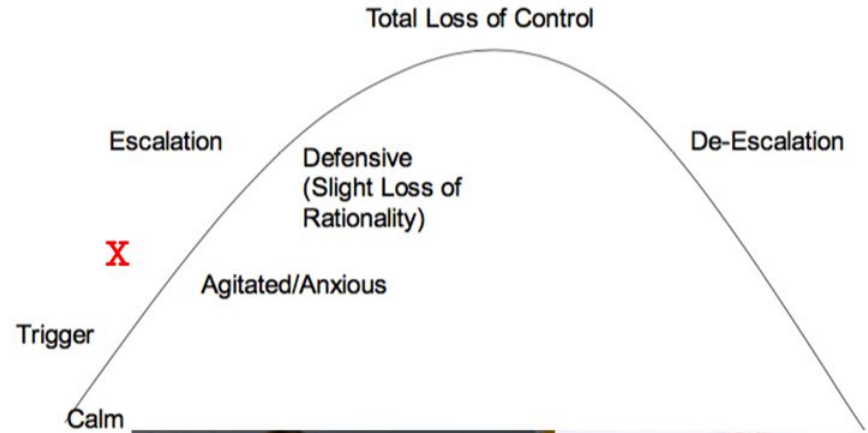


# Crisis Cycle

## TRIGGER-

What does it  
look like?

What should  
staff focus on?



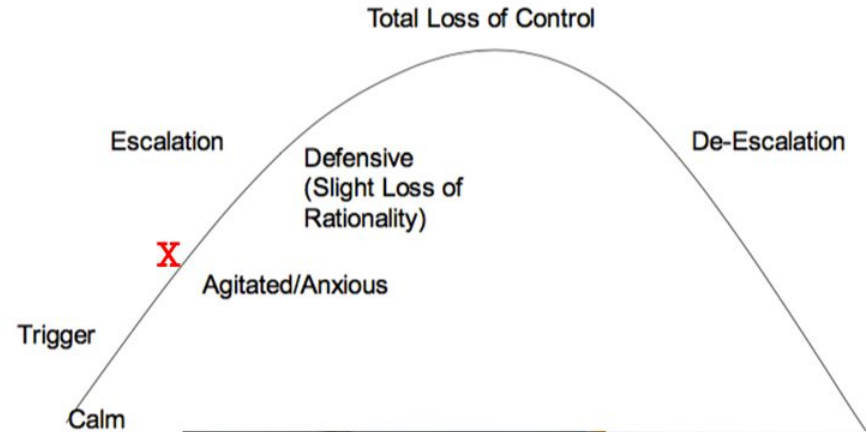


# Crisis Cycle

## AGITATION-

What does it  
look like?

What should  
staff focus on?

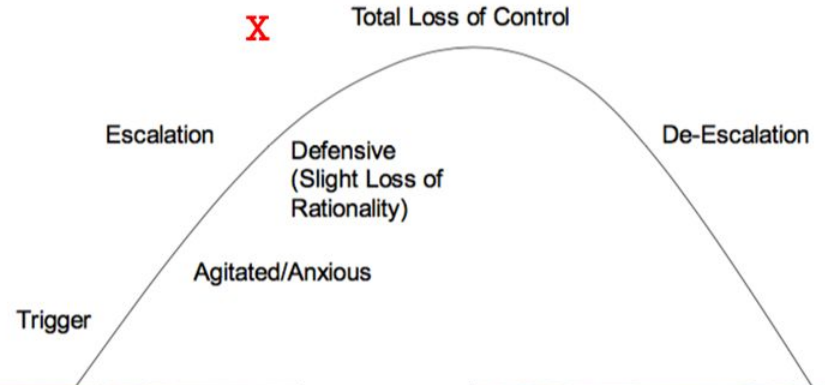


# Crisis Cycle

ACCELERATION--

What does it look like?

What should staff focus on?





Conflict is inevitable

**but**

**Combat is optional!**

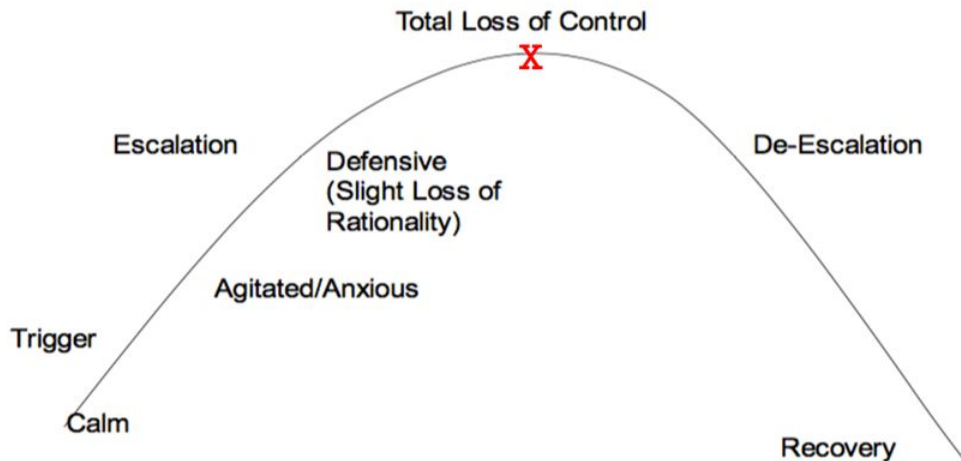
# Crisis Cycle

11:45

CRISIS/ PEAK-

What does it  
look like?

What should  
staff focus on?



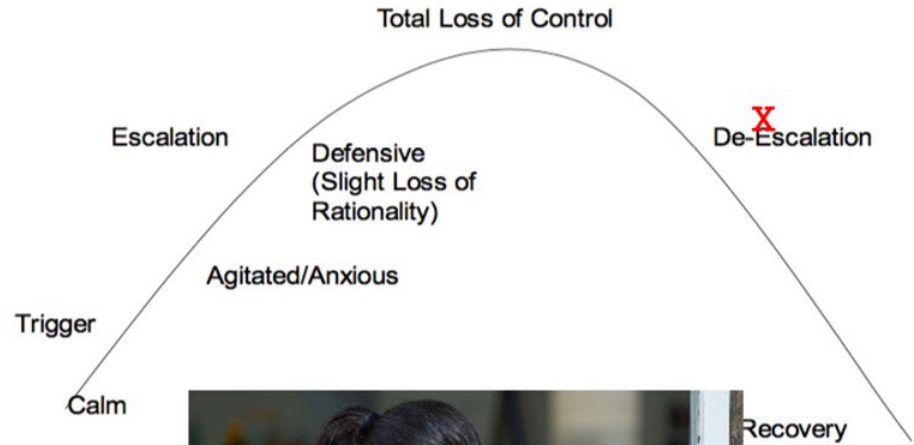


# Crisis Cycle

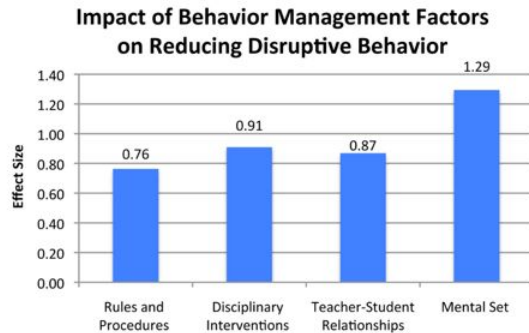
## DE-ESCALATION

What does it  
look like?

What should  
staff focus on?



## Most Critical Skills



Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering, 2003

1. SILENCE!

2. Catch your A/T

3. Change your perception

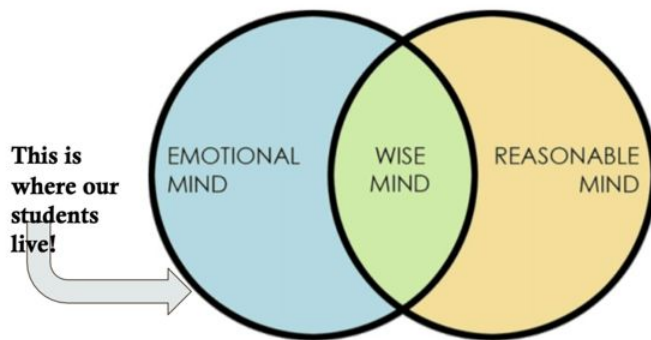
4. Control your response!



# Strategies to de-escalate and regulate

## STRATEGIES TO CALM A STUDENT IN THE MOMENT

- Be a co-regulator in “wise mind”
- Get them to match your voice and behaviors
- Get on their level



The **emotional mind** is used when feelings control a person's thoughts and behavior. They might act impulsively with little regard for consequences.

The **wise mind** refers to a balance between the reasonable and emotional halves. They are able to recognize and respect their feelings, while responding to them in a rational manner.

A person uses their **reasonable mind** when they approach a situation intellectually. They plan and make decisions based on fact.



S.T.A.R.



Drain



Balloon



Pretzel

We will learn about recovery/  
restoration next class!

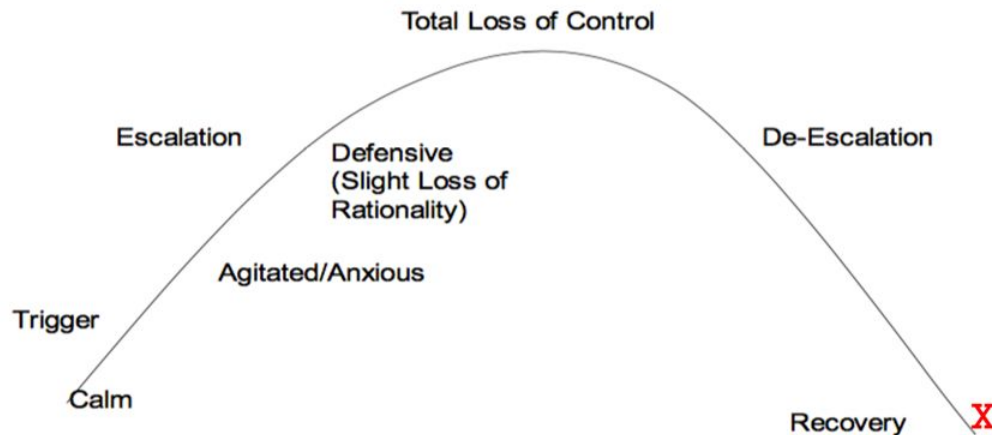
## RECOVERY-

What does it  
look like?

What should  
staff focus on?

## Crisis Cycle

11:55



## RECOVERY-

What does it  
look like?

What should  
staff focus on?

## Life Space Interviews: I ESCAPE

LSI Steps
Isolate the conversation.
Explore the young person's point of view.
Summarize the feelings and the content.
Connect the young person's feelings and behaviors.
Alternative behaviors discussed.
Plan developed/ Practice new behaviors.
Enter the young person back into the program.

EXAMPLES:  
What NOT to  
do!



# Behavior Management 1

If time  
permits

EXAMPLES:  
What NOT to  
do!



# References

Asheville, NC Law Enforcement Academy: *Crisis Intervention Team Training* ppt, 2010.

<http://naminc.org/nn/blet/bunc-de-escalation.ppt>

Colvin, G., & Sugai, G. (1989). *Understanding and Managing Escalating Behavior* (ppt).

<http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources>.

DeSautels, L. (2024). *Connections over compliance : Rewiring our perceptions of discipline*. Wyatt-Makenzie Publishing.

Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2019). *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: Pre-corrections, big ideas, and key investments*. U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.