

Crisis Management & De-Escalation

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MEDICINE *of* THE HIGHEST ORDER

Kendra, Age 15

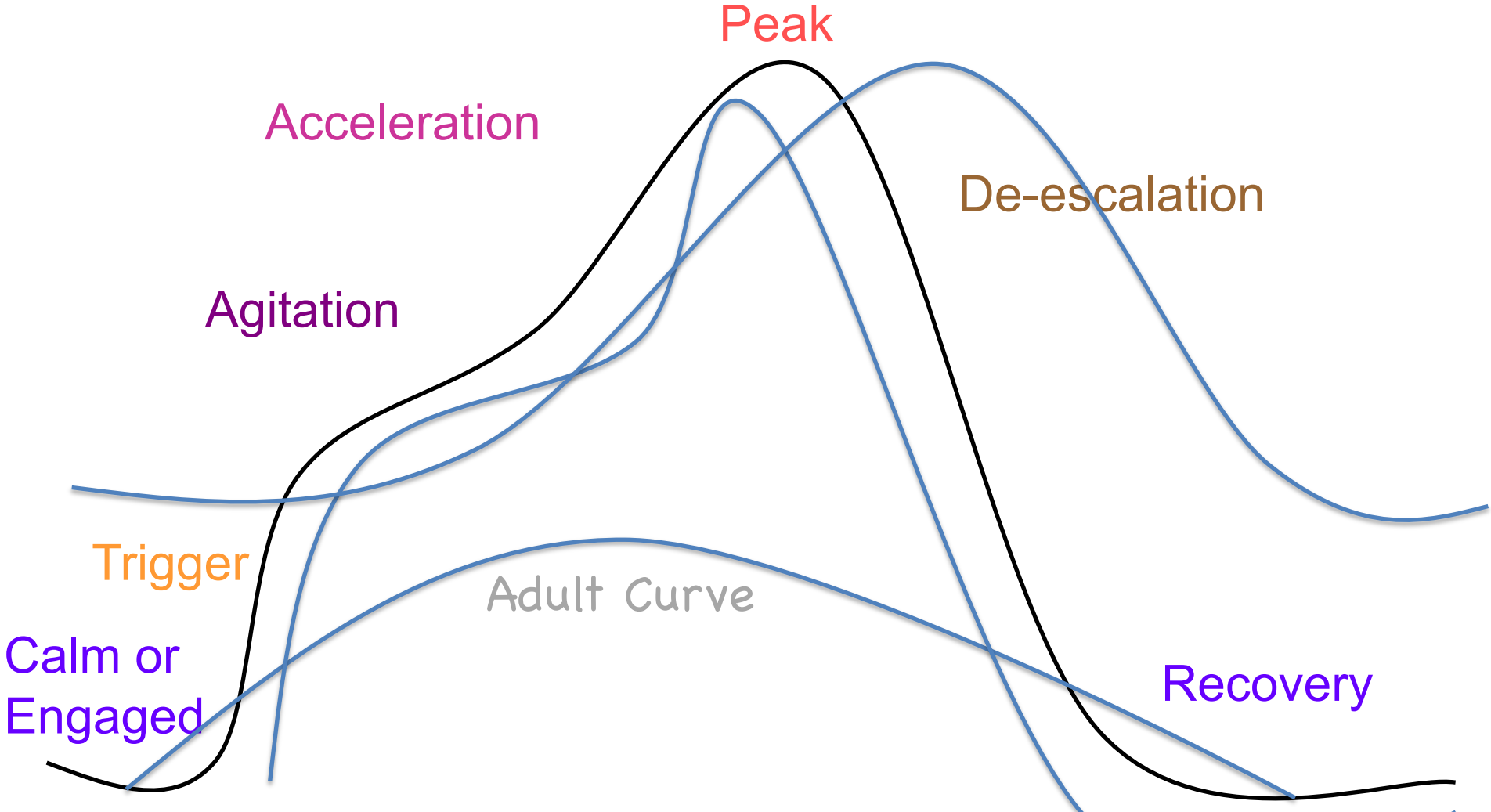
- **Background:** Kendra is a 15-year-old teen who just began high school. She used to enjoy school, and is generally described as kind, friendly, and thoughtful. However, this year seems to be struggling more. Kendra's Grandma, who is like a mom to her, passed away last year - and she's lost almost 15 pounds since. Kendra also commonly complains of stomachaches, headaches, and exhaustion, and has repeatedly asked to be taken out of her advanced placement courses.
- **Earlier Today:** Today, Kendra's teacher noticed that Kendra is spending even less time with friends and more and more time listening to music, drawing in her journal, or ignoring the group. She's snapped at several of her close friends, as well. As a result the other kids have started to leave her alone, and Kendra ate lunch by herself this afternoon. She's been downcast and even moodier since.
- **Now:** During English, Kendra refused to participate and instead sat in the back of the class with her hood up, doodling. Several attempts by her teacher to engage her have been met with eye rolls, heavy sighs, and covered eyes. Finally, her teacher approaches her and takes her drawing pad, telling her that she *has* to engage. Kendra stands up, swears at the teacher, and makes a comment about not wanting to live anymore before storming out of the classroom.

What is Emotional Regulation?

- **Emotional Regulation:** Skillful understanding and balancing of emotions
- Emotion regulation skills develop over the course of infancy and childhood and continue to mature during adolescence

Emotional Regulation: NOT Emotional Suppression

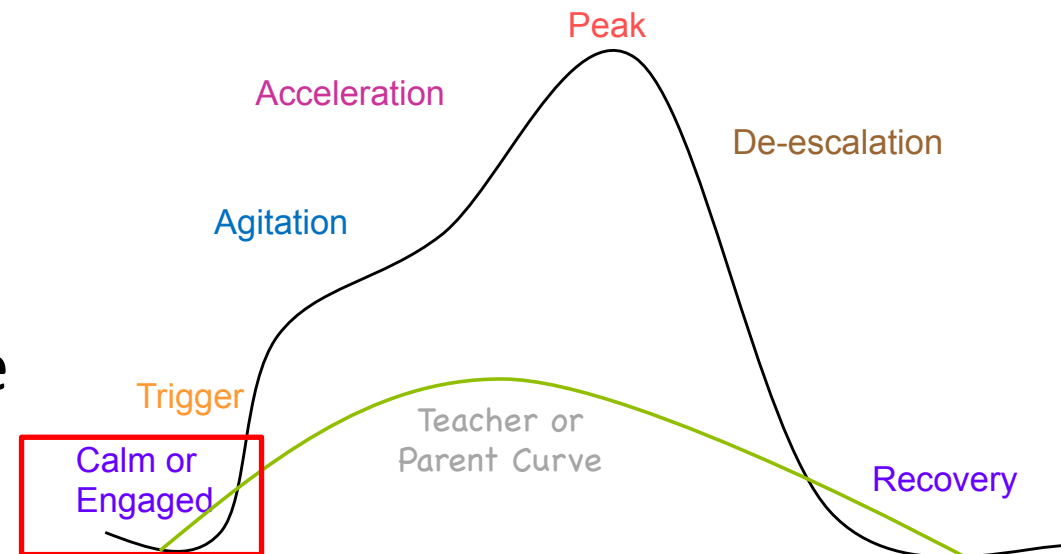
Cycle of Emotional Dysregulation



Calm & Engaged



- Where positive and valuing relationships are built
- Where you teach skills for functioning
- When calm, kids are...
 - Compliant
 - Cooperative
 - Engaged
 - Responsive to Praise

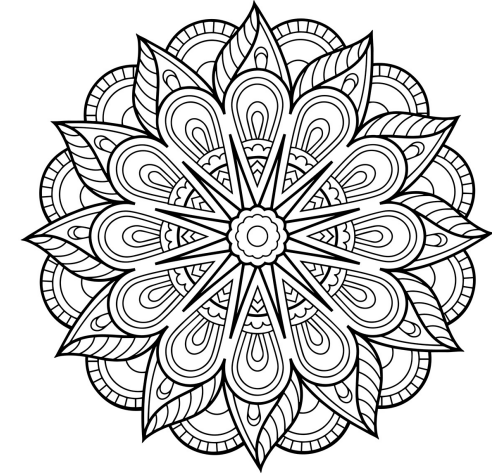
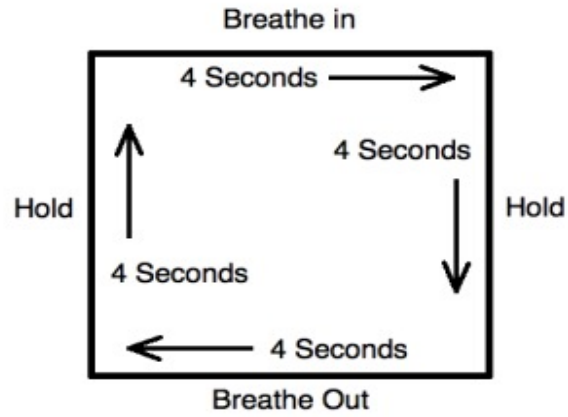


GOAL: Maintain the Calm Phase

- Develop relationships
- Provide structure & consistency
- Teach social and behavioral expectations
- Provide positive attention for positive behaviors
- Explicitly identify and label positive behaviors



Practicing Calm



with the world
SUPER
coloring



<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/education> -
Mindfulness

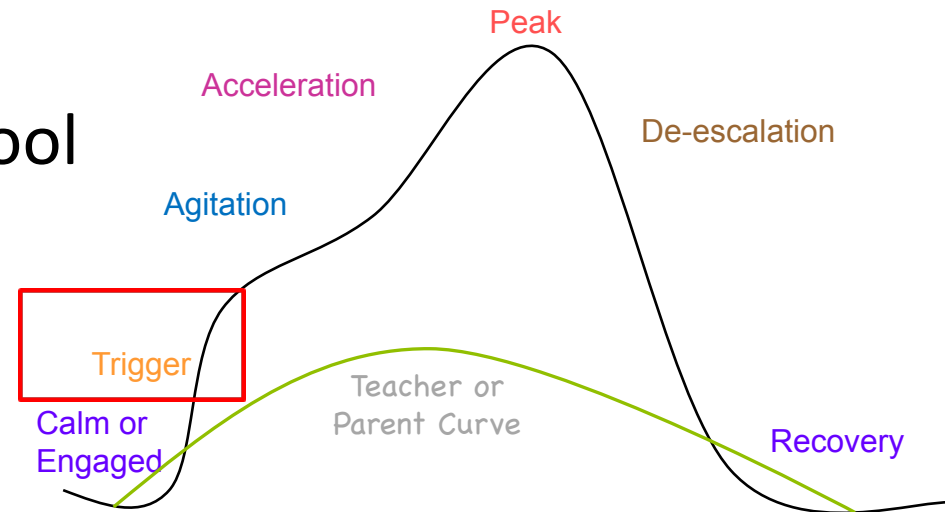
Trigger Phase



- Common School-Based Triggers
 - Difficult academic task
 - Transitions
 - Teasing by peers
 - Negative interactions with teachers/counselors

- Common Triggers Outside of School

- Family conflict
- Sleep & Hunger
- Relationship stress
- Social Media
- Financial hardship



Adapted from The Iris Center: <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>

Interventions for Trigger Phase - 1

- **Anticipate** potential triggers and make student-specific accommodations to prevent escalation
- Best time to **recognize signs of early stress**, and help students refocus attention away from stress
- **Redirection** of Student or Entire Class Activity



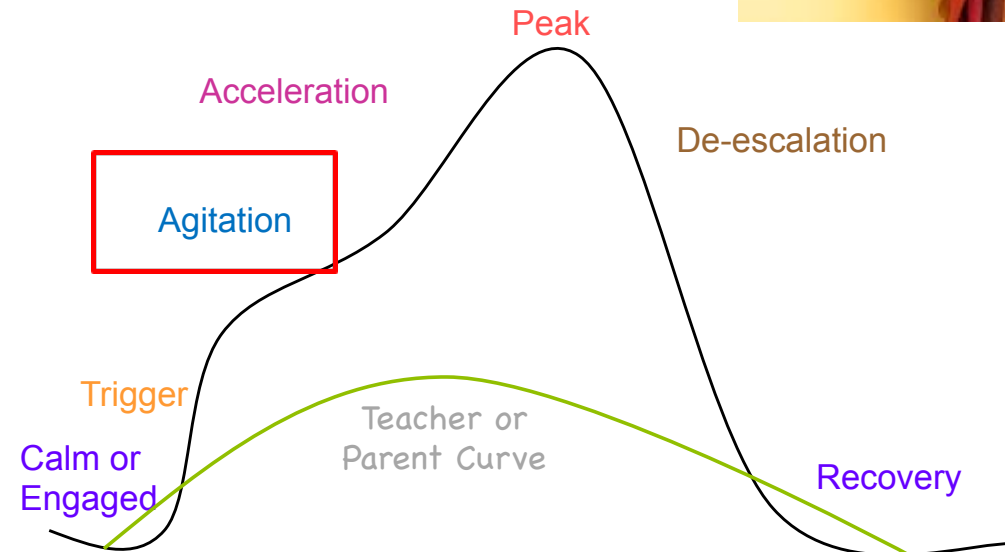
Interventions for Trigger Phase - 2

- **Notice and acknowledge the trigger**
 - Kindness and personal attention
 - Model calming or soothing exercises
 - Proximity; Eye Contact; Use facial Expression; Body Language; Distraction
- Use Refocusing Questions
 - Don't put the child on the spot - embarrassment can cause humiliation provoking revenge
- Distraction

Agitation Phase



- Youth has trouble engaging
- Agitated body language
 - Leg tapping
 - Twirling pencils
 - Clenching fists/jaw
 - Head down



Interventions for Agitation Phase - 1

- Redirection or Shift in Task
 - Ask student if they need help
 - Provide choice & alternative activities
 - Distraction
 - Leave the anxiety-producing event, if necessary

- Validate emotional experience
 - Recognizes and acknowledges the student's emotional experience

Interventions for Agitation Phase – 2

Validation in 3 Steps

1. Reflect the Content

- Start with a question: “Why don’t you like Soccer?”
- Then, either re-state or paraphrase what they said – in their own words. “Soccer’s just not very much fun for you.”

2. Acknowledge the Emotion

- That sounds frustrating. It sounds like you’re feeling worried.
- So you felt confused? How did you feel about that?

3. Communicate Acceptance (of *something!*)

- I can see why you’d feel that way. A lot of people feel that way.
- It can be (upsetting, frustrating, nerve-racking, scary) when that happens.

Notes on Validation

- ***Validation communicates acceptance of the feeling, not the action***
- Validating another person's point of view is *not the same as agreeing with them*. You're just letting the person know you hear them.

ONLY AFTER VALIDATION CAN YOU SUGGEST A BEHAVIOR CHANGE!

Interventions for Agitation Phase - 3

- Direct the youth to act differently, using clear and specific language
 - “Thomas, papers on the desk.”
- Follow with warnings & minor negative consequences*
 - “Thomas, papers on the desk or X.”

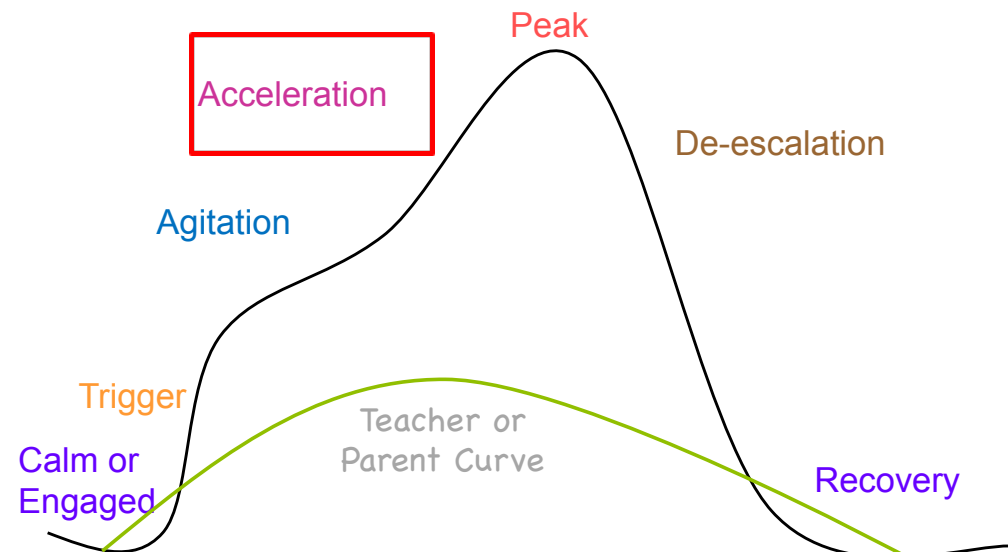


****For kids who escalate into crisis, do not use if they will escalate them further***

Acceleration Phase



- Provocative or argumentative statements
- Behavior becomes more overt
- May become disruptive to the activity
- Middle of cycle but often when others notice



Interventions for Acceleration Phase - 1

- **Acknowledge feeling**
 - “You are feeling angry right now.”
- **Offer a strategy to help deal with the problem**
 - “You can try this a different way.”
- **Identify what the student should be doing to cool off**
 - “Take 5 deep breaths with me.” “Go get a drink of water and come back in 5.”
 - Give student time to respond
- **Provide reinforcement immediately after child begins to respond**
 - Not a great time to ask questions

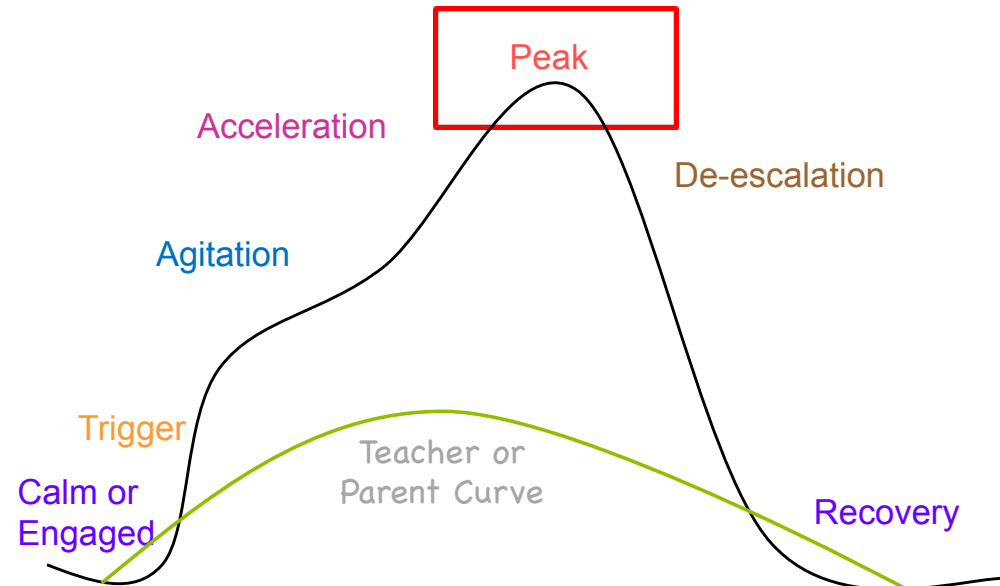
Interventions for Acceleration Phase - 2

- Not a great time to offer choices
 - *Too overwhelming*
- Caution: Don't respond with a demand or threaten consequences
 - *Will likely escalate the student as they have not felt heard, acknowledged, or had any opportunity to correct their behavior*
- Don't take the bait!
 - Don't take things too personally
 - Don't get into power struggles!
 - Don't get distracted by provocative, unrelated topics

Peak Phase



- Behavior
 - Physical aggression
 - Harming self
 - Property destruction
 - Uncontrollable crying
- Typically a short phase
 - Can be refueled through thoughts, actions, or additional triggers



GOAL during the Peak Phase



- When a student is in crisis the goal is NOT:
 - To educate student about why he/she should follow rules
 - To show the student who is in control
 - Have the last word
- **The goal is to reduce the intensity and duration of the potential crisis**

Interventions for Peak phase – 1

Crisis Management

Pay attention to your timing and approach

- Decide if you need to deal with the behavior immediately or if it can wait until later (be flexible)
- If you need to correct or reprimand a student...
 - Speak privately
 - Make sure student is calm enough to hear you
- Not a time to talk, direct, or problem-solve
 - **“No Look, No Talk, No Touch”**
 - **Discussing consequences may escalate behavior**

Interventions for Peak phase - 2

Crisis Management

Pay attention to the environment

- Stand where you can observe the student, while being as *non-intrusive and non-invasive* as possible
 - Do not move toward the student or invade his/her space
- As much as possible, leave an unobstructed exit for the student
- If needed, tell other students not to talk to or involve themselves with the upset student – Your first priority is to keep them safe, calm, and uninvolved

Interventions for Peak phase - 3

Crisis Management

Pay attention to your own behaviors and demeanor

- Play the role of the “calm, cool, and composed.” Acting in this manner actually helps a person to remain calm.
- Do not threaten the student verbally or physically.
- Avoid power struggles
- Physical interventions should only be used as a **last resort**

Interventions for Peak phase - 4

Crisis Management

- What to do:
 - Know the schools policies and procedures
 - Identify a safe-space to calm down
 - Limit stimulus – crowding, yelling, and noise will only further escalate
 - Speak to the student in a *calm* voice
- Validate student's feelings & statements
- Offer simple ways for the student to communicate with you
- Predict positive outcomes

"I can see you are really upset right now"
"I can tell you would prefer to be anywhere else in the world other than in the classroom"

"It seems like you are at a 5 out of 5 on your stress scale? Better yet, a 9 out of 5!!"

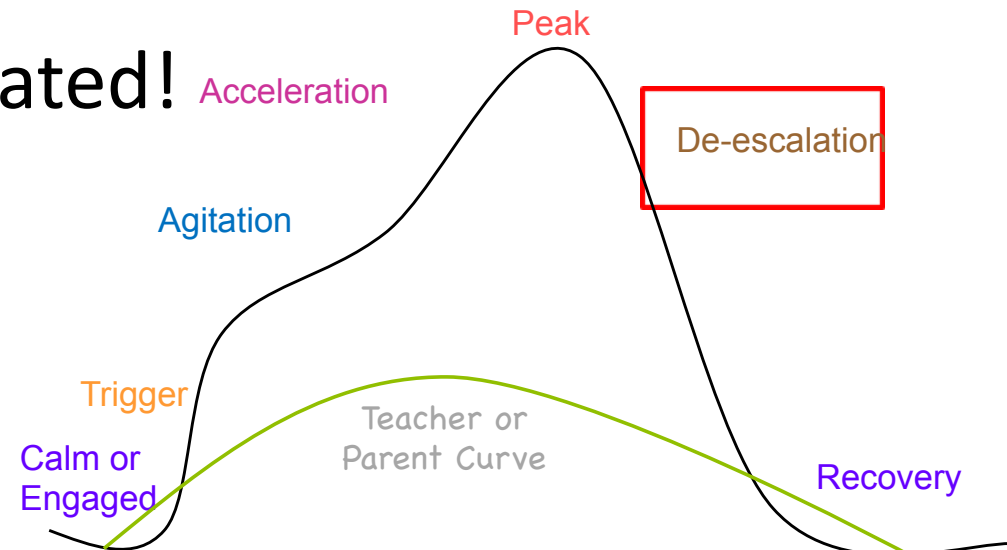
"Everything will be fine. We just need to find a way to help you return to a 2 on your stress scale"

De-escalation Phase



- Student is calming down
 - May be exhausted or worn down
 - Can quickly re-escalate if triggered again

Goal: Keep the student de-escalated!



Interventions for De-Escalation - 1

- Early in the de-escalation phase
 - Try not to redirect the student too quickly
 - **Not** a good time to de-brief about the situation or to learn from the incident
 - Provide other students with activities to engage in while the student is getting back on task
- Use encouraging, supportive words
- Provide calm and gentle redirection once the student has relaxed

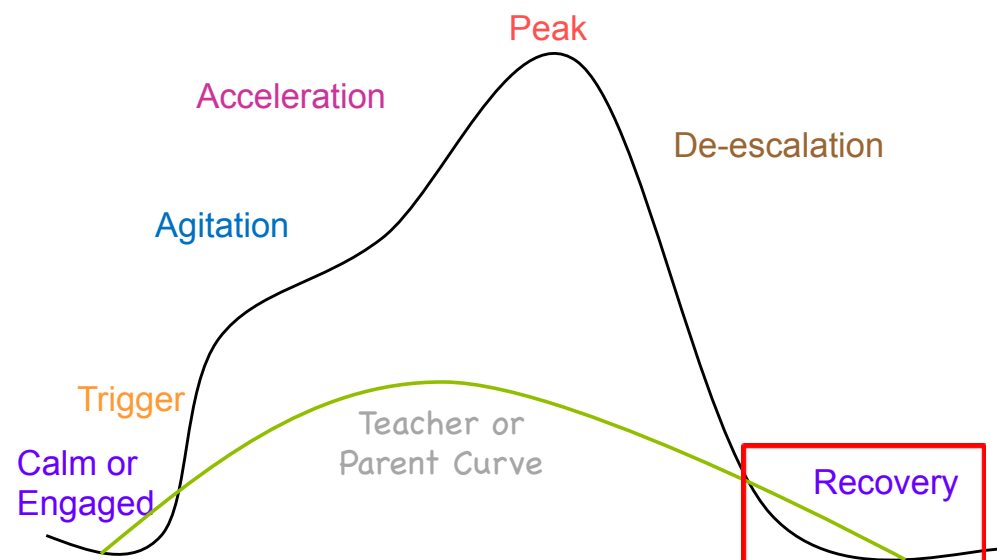
Interventions for De-Escalation - 2

- Important to help the student get back on task
 - Provide a separate work area, or an independent activity for them to work on
 - Activity should be something that they can complete relatively easily and quickly
 - The goal is to provide the student an opportunity to maintain their calm state

Recovery Phase

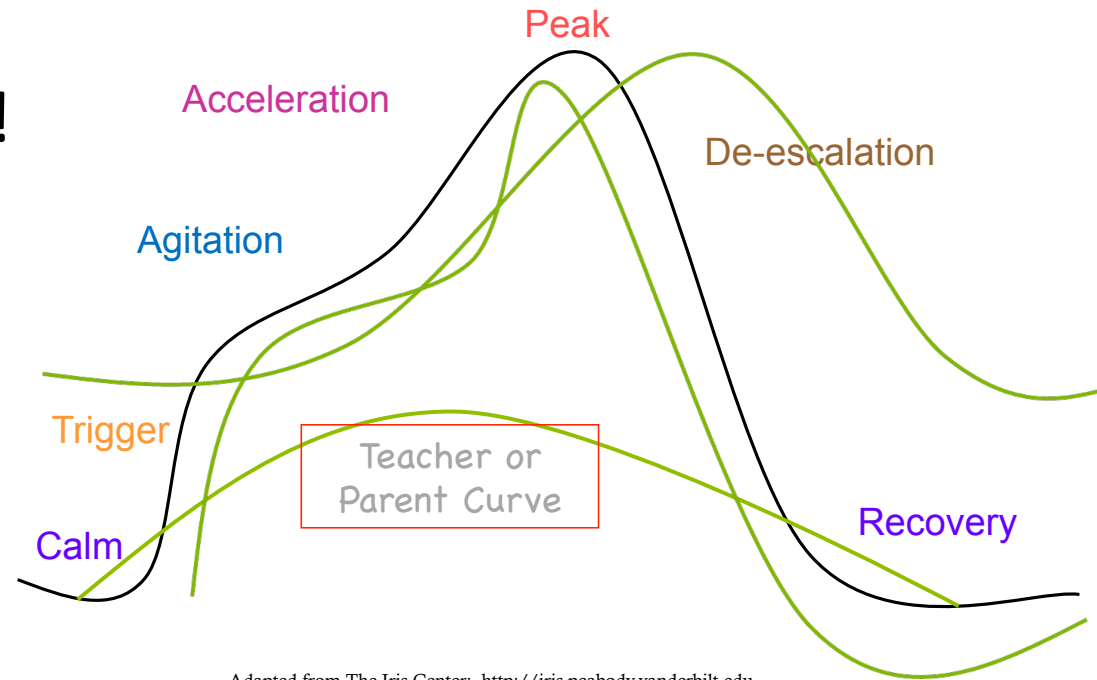


- Debrief with youth
 - Doesn't need to be in the same timeframe
 - Identify trigger
 - Develop a future plan
- Debrief the group, if needed



Staff Curve

- Staff & Teachers have their own curve!
 - How's your day going?
 - Instinct kicks in: Fight or flight!
- Challenge: We also need to self-regulate



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Facilitating Emotional Regulation

- Identify student's strengths
- Build positive relationships
 - Greet youth, ask about their day
 - Learn about hobbies and interests
 - Send positive notes and phone calls home
 - Praise expected behaviors (even if it's obvious)
- In particular, decrease conflictual relationships
 - Seek to understand child's perspectives
 - Seek consultation for challenging behaviors
 - Validation of emotional experiences

Top 10 De-Escalation Tips

Be Empathic & Non-Judgmental: Validate experiences

Respect Personal Space: Stand 1.5 – 3 feet away

Non-threatening Non-verbals: Keep tone, posture neutral

Keep Your Cool: Remain calm, rational, and professional.

Focus on Feelings: “That must be scary” “You feel angry”

Ignore Challenging Questions: Redirect attention

Set Limits: Be clear, speak simply, offer positive choices

Choose Wisely: Be flexible with rules when possible

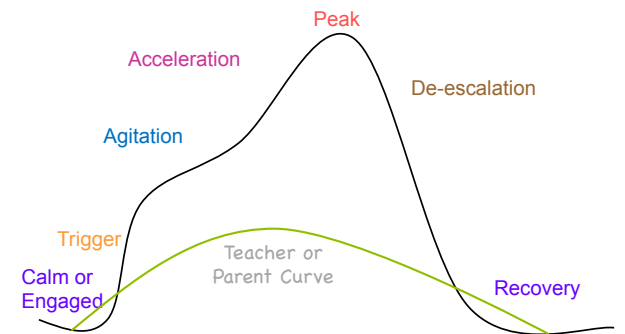
Allow Silence: Give a chance to reflect

Allow Time & Space: No look, no talk, no touch

INDIVIDUAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANS

Three sections:

- What do we need to know in advance
 - *Current difficulties – behaviors of concern – safety concerns*
 - *Pre-crisis behavioral teaching*
- Adult Intervention Strategies
 - *Prevention – Support – De-escalation – Teaching*
- Emergency Contacts



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Thank You



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