Seclusion and Restraint Plan

De-Escalation Techniques

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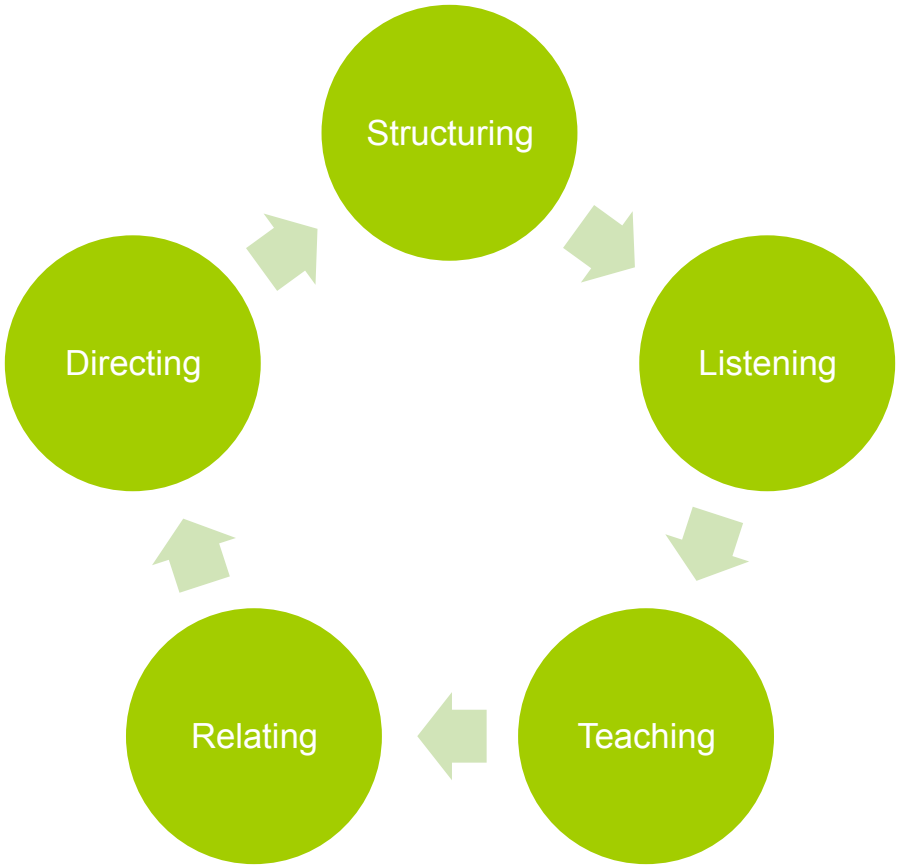
Practice Intervention Techniques BEFORE a Crisis



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Recognize Fight-or-Flight Reflexes

- De-escalation techniques go against this natural reflex.
- Remaining calm and professionally detached is <u>not</u> natural.
- Adults need to retrain themselves to respond in a different way when a challenging situation occurs.
- Reasoning with an escalated student is not possible.
- Adults' aim must be to reduce the level of agitation.

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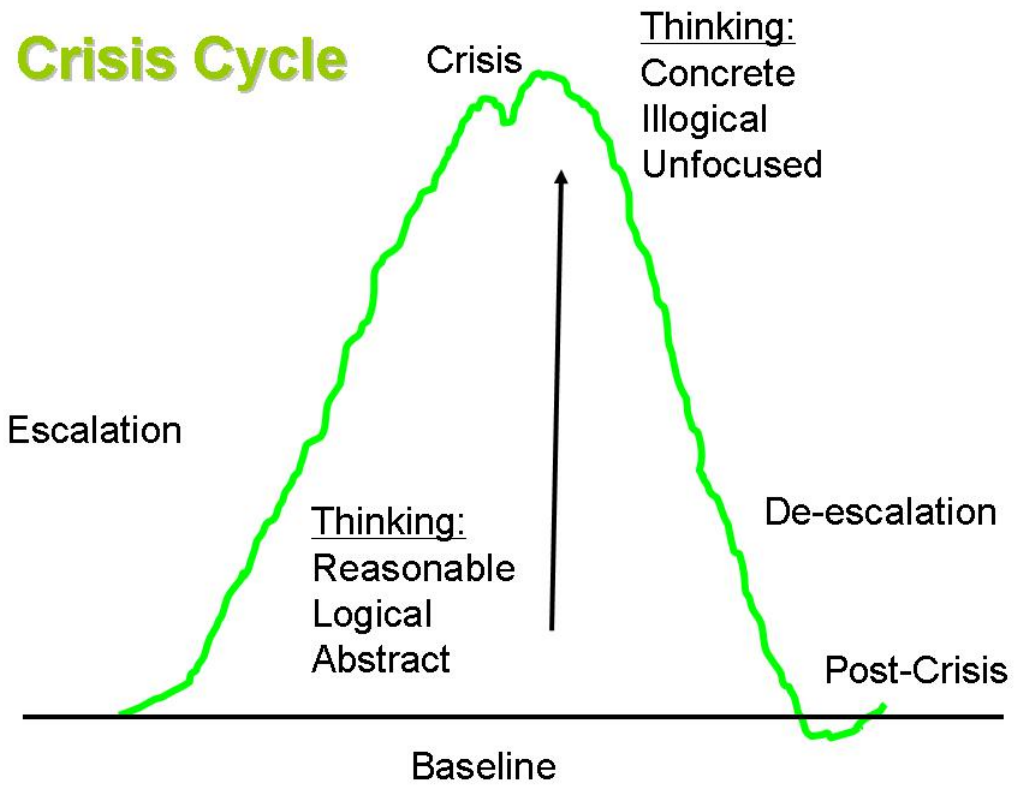
Stress Model of Crisis



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Identify Early Signs of Agitation

- Examples: Balled fists, fidgeting, shaking, ‘eye-balling’ another student, head thrust forward or clenched jaw
- Changes in voice (example: more rapid or high-pitched)
- Attempts to make adult angry to justify own hostility.

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Non-verbal techniques for the Adult

- Appear calm and self-assured.
- Maintain a neutral facial expression.
- Allow space.
- Control your breathing.

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Verbal Strategies for the Adult

- Keep verbal interactions respectful.
- Use simple, direct language.
- Remember the fight-or-flight reflex: Use distraction and diversion to engage the thinking brain.
- Give choices.
- Acknowledge the student's feelings.
- Identify points of agreement.

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Verbal strategies to avoid

- Do not make threats you cannot carry through.
- Do not be defensive or take it personally.
- Do not use humor unless you are sure it will help.
- Do not use sarcasm or humiliate the student.

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The "MUST DO's" for the Adult

- Remain in control of yourself.
- Appear calm, centered and self-assured.
- Be aware of the resources available for back-up.
- If you have time, remove necktie, scarf, hanging jewelry in a manner not noticed by the student.
- Do not be verbally defensive against insults directed at you.

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The "MUST DO's" for the Adult

- Never turn your back.
- Always be approximately at same height.
- Allow extra physical space between you and student.
- Do NOT place your hands in your pockets.
- Stand at an angle so you can side-step if needed.
- Do not maintain constant eye contact.
- Do not point or shake finger. Do not smile. Do not touch.
- You have the right to feel angry BUT you can not respond angrily.

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Time for the De-Escalation Discussion

- Do not get loud or try to yell over a screaming student. Wait until the student takes a breathe; then talk.
- Answer all informational questions no matter how rudely asked. Do NOT answer abusive questions.
- Explain limits and rules in an authoritative, firm, but ALWAYS respectful tone.
- Empathize with feelings but NOT with the behavior.

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Time for the De-Escalation Discussion

- Do NOT solicit how a student is feeling or interpret feelings in an analytic way.
- Do NOT argue or try to convince.
- Understand what the student wants you to know. Allow the student to teach YOU what is causing distress.
- Give the consequences of inappropriate behavior without threats or anger.
- Represent external controls as the school NOT personal.
- Trust your instincts. You will know within 2-3 minutes if de-escalation is working. STOP once you access or feel the techniques or not working.

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De-Escalation

There is nothing magic about talking someone down.

You are transferring your sense of calm and genuine interest in what the student wants to tell you.

You are providing respectful and clear limit setting in the hope the student actually wishes to respond positively to your respectful attention.

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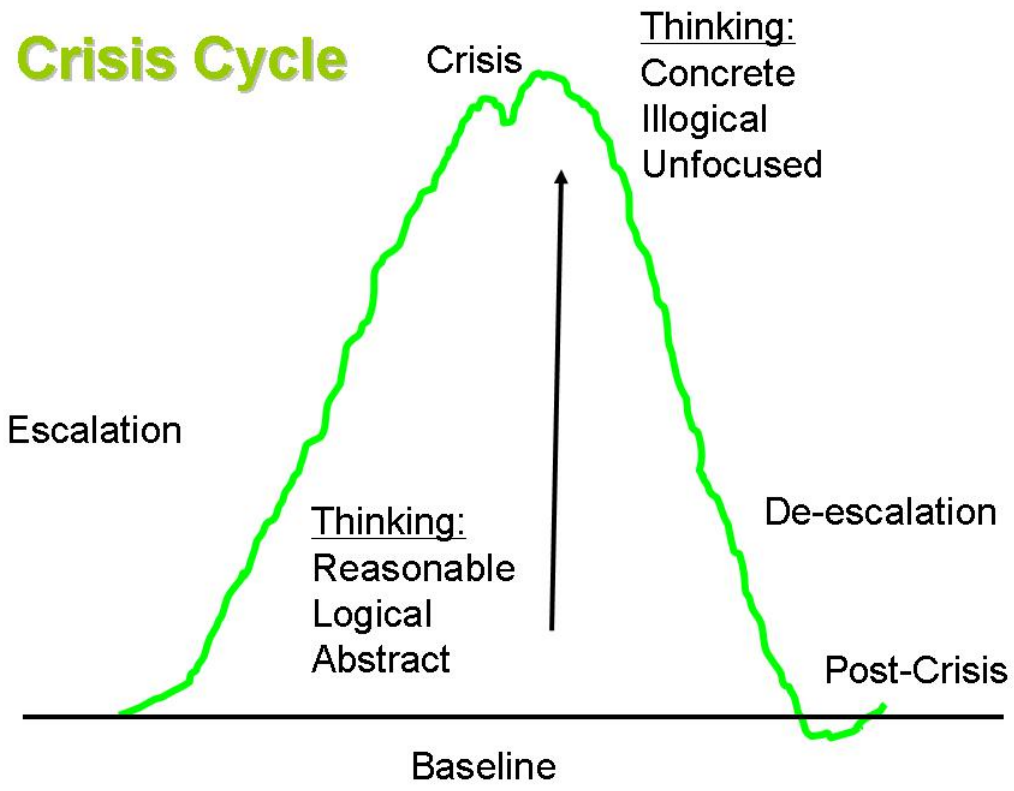

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Resources

Holden, M.J. (2001). *Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, Edition 5.* Ithaca, NY: Family Development Center, Cornell University.

National Association of Social Workers-Massachusetts Chapter. (2014). *Verbal De-Escalation Techniques for Defusing or Talking Down an Explosive Situation.* Boston, MA.

Optimus Education. (2012). *Using De-Escalation Techniques Effectively.*

University of Phoenix. (2013). *How To: Calm the Agitated Student: Tools for Effective Behavior Management.*

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Resources

- The Commission on Seclusion and Restraint
  - http://www.doe.in.gov/srcommission
- SEA 345 & Rules
- Training
  - Commission developed resources at low or no cost
  - CPI for specific personnel
- General Resources
  - USDOE https://www2.ed.gov/policy/seclusion/restraintsandseclusion:resources.pdf

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Questions

- This is an ongoing process; the plan will be reviewed annually. Therefore, staff input and thoughts are valuable throughout the year.
- You may send questions to members of the commission including myself. We hope to develop a Q&A document in the future.

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