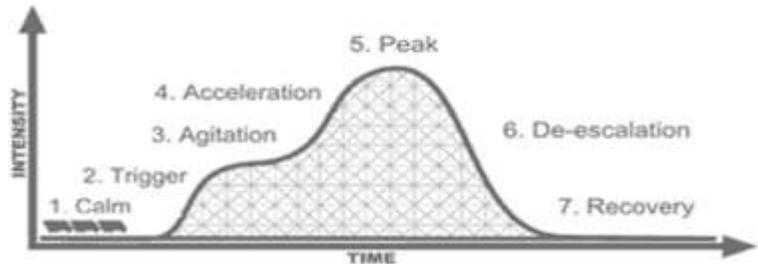




Acceleration Phase: Focus on Conflict Avoidance

Even though the agitation phase of the Acting Out Cycle is usually the longest, many teachers fail to notice and intervene to support students in managing their emotions and behavior until they escalate further and enter the **Acceleration Phase**. Once students enter the acceleration phase their behavior becomes openly disruptive and can no longer be ignored by their peers or the teacher. During this phase students also often begin to direct their acting-out behaviors to the teacher.

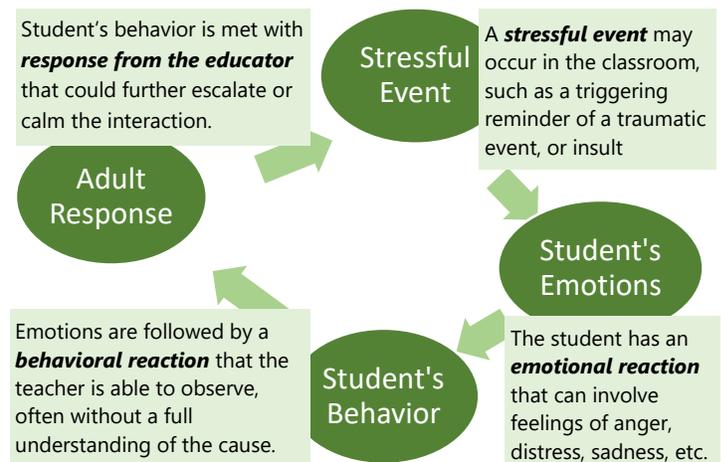


Teacher responses that will be effective in de-escalating an accelerating student include:

1. Avoidance of counter-aggressions that usually comes in the form of harsh statements and threatening body postures
2. Utilization of emotional neutrality in words, tone of voice, and body posture
3. Utilization of statements offering positive feedback in response to small successes in adhering to directives and classroom expectations

Avoiding Conflict

An accelerating student may engage in actions that will bring attention to their emotions and behavior. Unless you are prepared, it is easy to engage in adult counter-aggression. This often comes from an emotionally driven reaction to feeling threatened, undermined, and disrespected. Counter-aggression is often done as an attempt to gain or regain a sense of control. Unfortunately, counter-aggression has a high likelihood of escalating the conflict and undermines the sense of safety for the target student for all students observing your behavior.



Break the Conflict Cycle

Respond in an emotionally neutral way that communicates support: "How can I help you get started with the assignment?" Make clear and simple requests: "Put your name and the date on your paper and I will come talk with you in a few minutes." Offer meaningful choices and well-thought-out consequences, not threats: "Get started on the assignment or put your head down quietly for 5 minutes until I can come and talk with you."

Offer meaningful choices that are acceptable for you and for the student. Meaningful choices give the student options for what they can do that will get them to behave in ways that are acceptable for you without being punitive for the student. Later, you can revisit the situation and discuss consequences when both you and the student are calm.

Use positive statements in your directives and when they show any sign of compliance. When a student is engaging in disruptive actions they may be seeking and expecting negative reactions from you. Be on the lookout for any small successes to celebrate, in an attempt to (1) encourage the next positive action, (2) re-engage the student in more positive behavior, and (3) disrupt the potential for a behavior explosion. Ex. "Thank you for lowering your voice. Now, I can understand you better," and "Good job keeping your hands to yourself. I want you and everyone to be safe in our classroom."

Use Logical Consequences and Avoid Threats

Issuing a threat is an emotional reaction related to perceived loss of control and is meant to scare or dominate another into compliance. While **threats** tend to escalate student behavior, **a clear request with a consequence** can provide the student with both the necessary pathway and boundaries they need to navigate behavioral expectations in the classroom. If you want or need to add a consequence to your request, make sure you have thought it out in advance and it is not something you are pulling out of thin air in the moment. If you don't have a consequence ready, let the student know that there will be a consequence for this behavior and you will think about it and let them know what the consequence will be. This models for students the act of deliberately thinking through one's actions, rather than reacting emotionally in the moment.

THREAT	CLEAR REQUEST WITH CONSEQUENCE
<p>"Start your work right now or you will lose recess/open-gym for the rest of the week!"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the student refuses, is this a threat that you are willing/can follow through on? ▪ Ask yourself whether following through on this threat will increase their engagement in or improve their ability to do the assignment? 	<p>"Please get started with your assignment," and if the student does not self-correct, "Do you need help getting started with your assignment?" if the student says no and does not self-correct "Get started with your assignment or put your head down on your desk for 5 minutes and I will come back to you."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When you go back to help the student what consequence would support them in completing their assignment. For example a reduced lunch time to go to a supported study hall. ▪ Ask yourself what consequence can increase their engagement in or improve their ability to do the assignment?

Threats erode student-teacher relationships and have a high likelihood of escalating the student's behaviors. Authority and credibility are lost (**not gained**) with threats. Issuing a threat halts any productive dialogue with the student and the teacher has set themselves up for the following two losing scenarios:



Teacher loses even if the teacher "wins" the standoff by establishing dominance over the student, this victory is likely to be short-lived and costly in the long run. The student may feel humiliated in front of peers, harbor feelings of resentment, and continually look for ways to retaliate. Some students may fear the teacher which severely harms relationship building.

Teacher loses if the student "wins" the standoff and forces the teacher to concede, then the teacher's ability to manage the classroom may be severely damaged. Other students may lose respect for the teacher and may resent the fact that a single student, rather than the teacher, can essentially control the classroom.



De-escalation briefs are archived at TREPeducator.org/deescalation-microlearning. Please access and review as needed.