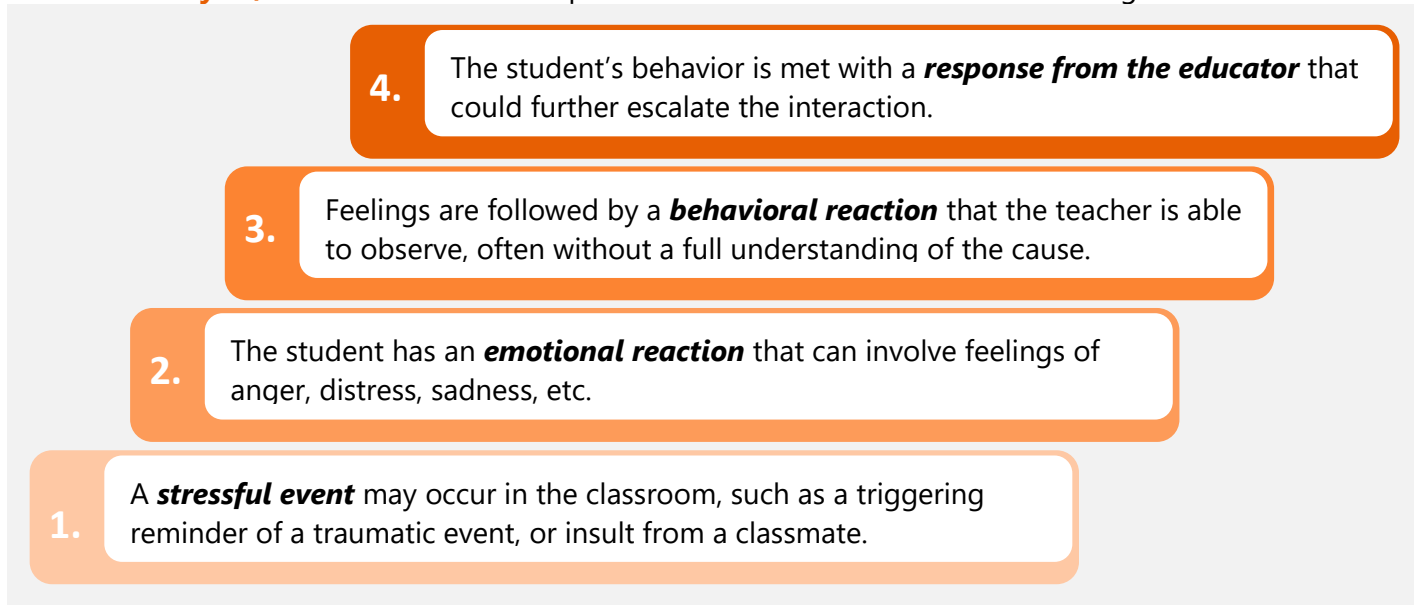
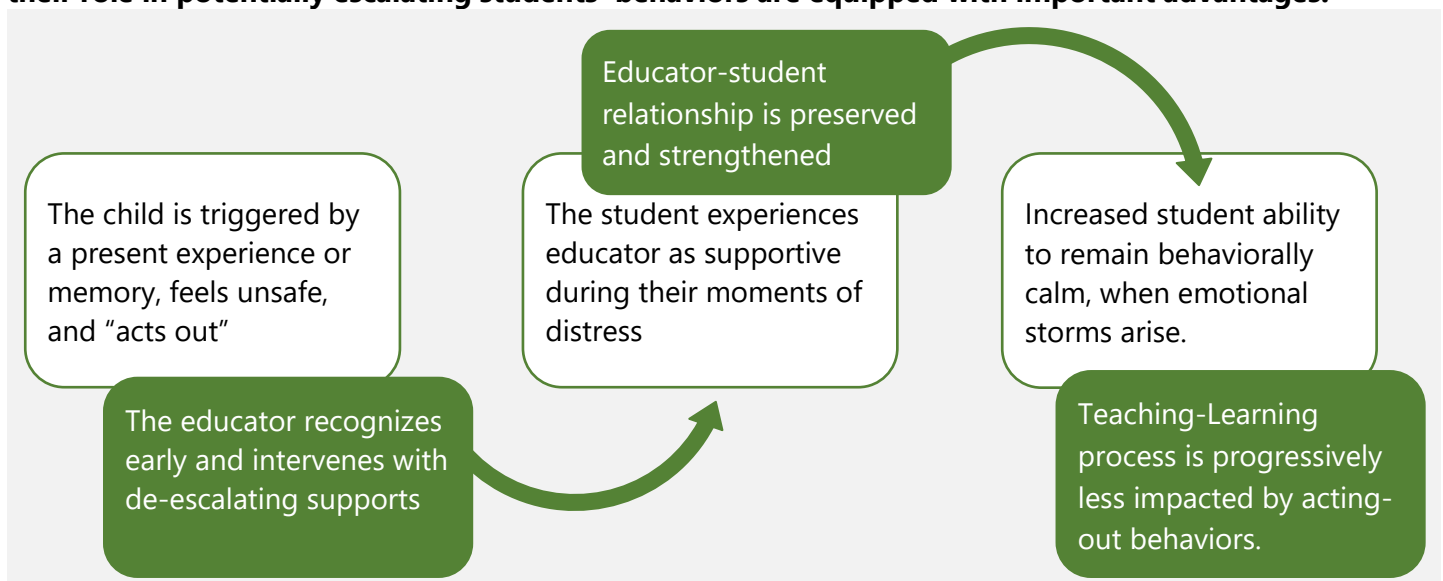


Before moving into focusing on student behaviors and what to do in the midst of an escalating interaction, we will spend some time on prevention. Teachers and students each bring something to their initial interactions. The experiences and perceptions of each other that results from those initial interactions can create a downward or upward spiral of reciprocal interactions. Heading off a damaging cycle of negative interactions is crucial because research shows that students challenging behaviors such as aggressive, angry, anxious, asocial, dependent, and/or defiant behaviors are significantly more impactful on teacher-student relationships than exhibiting positive and prosocial behaviors.

**The Conflict Cycle**, which has four distinct phases describes teacher-student escalating interaction.



This type of ineffective management of acting out behaviors, during instructional time can be one of the largest barriers to a positive, productive classroom environment. **Educators who can anticipate and adjust their role in potentially escalating students' behaviors are equipped with important advantages.**



## Proactively Interrupting the Conflict Cycle

(Immediately Implementable Practice)

To support students coping with trauma educators need a toolbox of practices that will enable them to:

- ✓ Read and respond to children's emotional states as signaled by their behavior
- ✓ Offer acceptance and warmth as well as accurate and appropriate feedback
- ✓ Support children in learning how to tolerate frustration during the learning process
- ✓ Provide limits on the boundaries of acceptable behavior while providing space for individual expression

Learning how to proactively interrupt the conflict cycle at critical moments is one more strategy in the toolbox. The choices educators make in their interactions with students can either contribute to escalating student behaviors or be supportive in preventing escalation.

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>SET LIMITS</b>              | Set limits that are clear, simple, and enforceable: Offering acceptable and respectful choices and consequences remind the student of the boundaries and lets them know they are safe.   |
| <b>COACH</b>                   | Coach the student in moderating their own behavior. E.g. "it's hard for me to understand what you need when you are raising your voice and slamming things. If you would take a breath and calmly say tell me what you're trying to say, I think I can help."  |
| <b>CONNECT</b>                 | Identify some point of agreement or understanding, while reinforcing Expectations. E.g. "I can see how you would be upset by...", "I'll bet other students would feel the same way if...", "A better way of handling it so you won't get in trouble and no one gets hurt, is...". This builds rapport and preserves your role as a guide or helper.  |
| <b>SET GOAL</b>                | Frame an outcome goal. This reassures student and can help to diffuse agitation. In some cases, this will help to reinforce the message that you are not the enemy. E.g. "I'm trying to help you stay out of trouble." "I just want you and the other students to stay safe." "I want you to have what you need, but in a way works for everybody involved."   |
| <b>TAKE SOLACE IN SILENCE</b>  | Allow space for silence: Silence can slow things down and give you and the student a chance to reflect on what is happening. It can help you re-gain composure and self-control. It also gives the student time for calming and decision-making: When a student is upset, they may not be able to think clearly. Give them a few moments to think through what you have said and time to make a choice. The choices you have offered within acceptable limits can help the student feel less out of control. |
| <b>LIMIT ADULTS RESPONDING</b> | Limit the number of adults involved at one time. This aids in avoiding mixed messages being sent, while helping the child feel less of a need to defend themselves. If there is more than one adult, one should be engaged with the agitated student and the other should attend to the needs of the other students, such as giving them a task to work on or simply distracting their attention from the intense situation and reassuring their safety.   |

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