

Managing Meltdowns



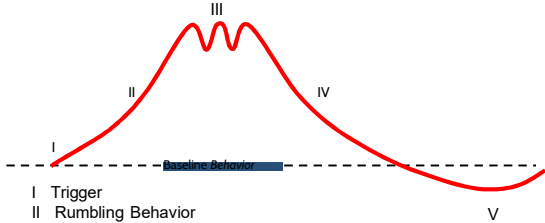
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Objectives

- The Escalation Cycle
- Thinking & Social Emotional Needs during each phase of the Escalation Cycle
- Caregiver's Response

THE ESCALATION CYCLE



I: Trigger
II: Rumbling Behavior
III: Crisis
IV: Post Crisis
V: Recovery

Baseline Behavior

Baseline behavior can be described as the behavior a person exhibits when he or she is calm.

It is individual and specific to the person.

For some, baseline behavior may be rocking back and forth. For others, it may be keeping their body still

Baseline behavior is when an individual is best able to learn

What is your child's baseline behavior?

Focus on what's observable.

Triggers

Triggers are anything that escalates a person's anxiety and can lead to challenging behavior.

Triggers are different for everyone. It may be loud noises; being asked to complete a task or a specific person

Common triggers for your child:

Rumbling Behavior

Behavior begins to move away from baseline.

May be mild such as non-compliance, fingernail biting, tensing muscles, tapping foot, walking back and forth, complaining they are not feeling well, rocking and back and forth, etc.

May be more severe, yelling, threatening, knocking items over, kicking or pounding on table, etc.

What are Your Child's Rumbling Behaviors?

Focus on what's observable.

Crisis or Explosion Phase

Behavior is impulsive & explosive

Behaviors may including screaming, throwing one's self on the floor, hitting, kicking, or completely non-reactive etc..

The crisis phase will vary from individual to individual

Post Crisis and Recovery

Post Crisis:

Behavior is still escalated, although child may no longer exhibit physical or verbal aggressive behaviors.

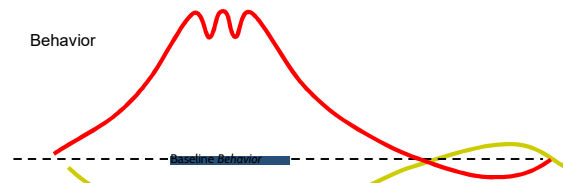
*** Children at this phase can easily be triggered again

Recovery:

Behavior may appear sullen, withdrawn, denial of inappropriate behavior. Sometimes children are so physically exhausted that they may even fall asleep.

As behavior escalates, thinking is significantly reduced.

Behavior



Phase I: Trigger
Phase II: Rumbling Behavior
Phase III: Crisis
Phase IV: Post Crisis
Phase V: Recovery

- As child's behavior moves from baseline, and they experience fight or flight, the ability to hear, understand, and respond to complex communication is compromised.
- As behavior moves further from baseline, cognition is further impaired.

Thinking Behavior:

AT BASELINE

Often reasonable and logical for the particular individual.

Example of your child:

ONCE TRIGGERED

Often unfocused and more concrete.

Examples:

Thinking Behavior:

AT RUMBLING PHASE

Beginning phase of illogical, unreasonable and unfocused

Examples:

DURING CRISIS

Completely illogical and unreasonable

Examples:

Thinking Behavior

During Post Crisis

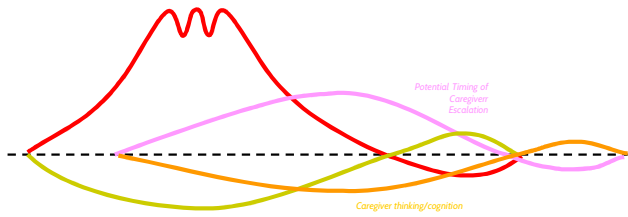
Slowly moving towards reason but still escalated so thinking continues to be illogical and concrete.

Thinking and behavior are unstable even though child may appear to be calm. Child can easily be retriggered at this time.

Recovery

Thinking is still concrete. Many children may experience a post-crisis depressive state where they might cry, appear sad, want to lie down etc.

Escalation Cycle and Caregiver Response



Caregiver's Behavior

Understanding that as we grow more upset, our cognition is lowered. It is important to identify what are common triggers for us.

Examples...

We cannot de-escalate our children unless we are able to de-escalate ourselves

In order to do this, we create a self-control plan

Critical Features of Self-Control

- Self-assessment: allows you to quickly check your own physical and emotional state
- Regaining immediate self-control: create a plan that includes a rote practice with immediate, simple and specific steps

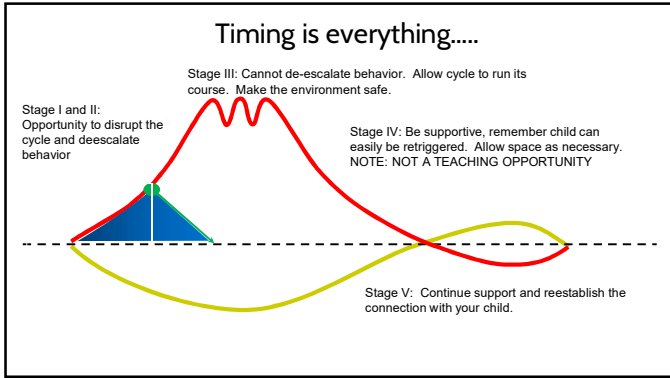
Critical Features of Self-Control

- Restoration and Healing: unresolved stress has long term negative effects. It is important to plan and employ methods for restoring physical and emotional balance.
- Failure to consciously experience symptoms of distress is a primary symptom of burnout. Burnout is dangerous.

Take a Few Minutes & Develop your Own Self Control Plan

Remember it should be a 2-3 step process that you can do in the moment...

The escalation cycle is
predictable
but not inevitable.



- ### De-escalation Strategies
- Basic Needs
 - Redirecting
 - Reducing demands
 - Change Location
 - Defusing tension through humor

Basic Needs

All of us have basic needs: food, water, sleep,
 When your child is escalating it is important to ask yourself:
 "Are my child's basic needs being met right now?"

Redirecting

Turn your child's attention to something other than the task at hand.

Acknowledge what your child is feeling and provide your child with alternatives.

Reducing Demands

As children move away from baseline, behavior can be perceived as noncompliant. It is important to be flexible and reduce demands that may be triggering behavior.

Examples: give choices, use I statement, etc.

Change Location

Changing a location involves removing a child in a non punitive fashion from the environment in which he/she is experiencing difficulty. For example, if you are at a restaurant and your child begins to escalate, you could take him or her out to the parking lot or walk with him/her to the car. This gives the child (and you!) time to calm down, and removes "energy" from the situation.

Defusing Tension through Humor

This technique involves a joke or humorous remark in a potentially tense or eruptive moment. Care must be taken to ensure that your child understands the humor and does not perceive him/herself as the target of the joke

Final Thoughts...

As a caregiver, you and your child's social emotional well-being is an integrated experience. In other words, their behavior & emotions affects your emotions and vice-versa.

By accessing your self-control plan, you can respond in a reasonable manner to de-escalate behavior and avoid a crisis.

If challenging behavior occurs continuously, you need to develop a plan to teach alternative appropriate behaviors. This plan would be implemented systematically & consistently at baseline
