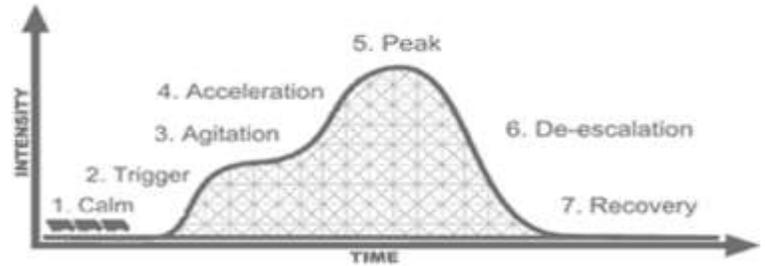




## Agitation Phase: Focus on Re-Direction and Re-Engagement

The Agitation Phase, which builds after the trauma response is triggered, is the third phase of the **Acting Out Cycle**. Agitation builds when there is no adult intervention to support the students to getting back to calm. Students entering the agitation phase will need more targeted supports and intervention to prevent behavioral escalation.



### Recognizing Early Signs of Student Agitation

The key to effective early intervention is recognizing early signs of student agitation. Educators often ignore the beginning signs of agitation because it is somewhat manageable, and with the hope that it will go away, if ignored. Often, educators are also concerned that acknowledging agitation will cause it to increase. However, it is best to intervene at early levels of agitation when the student may still be able to have a conversation about what is making them upset, and can process and respond to directions on the actions they can take to calm their body and mind.

**Get to know your students and take notice** of any significant changes in emotion and behavior as potential signs of agitation. Here are some behavioral cues to pay attention to.

SIGNS OF EARLY AGITATION			
<p><b>Change in Behavior</b></p>	<p><b>Change in Physiology</b></p>	<p><b>Change in Teacher Interaction</b></p>	<p><b>Change in Peer Interaction</b></p>
Loud to withdrawn, respectful to disrespectful, relaxed to pacing	Sweating, fidgeting, tapping, rocking, distressed expressions	Strong expressions of disinterest, dislikes, or negative emotion	Argumentative or rude to peers, ignores others, diminished engagement

### Start With An Emotional Check-In

An emotional check-in is your emotionally neutral acknowledgment of the student's emotional state, which (1) helps them to become aware of their emotional state, and (2) gives you the opportunity to provide co-regulation support. An emotional check-in is supportive attention that communicates to them that they are seen and supported. This quick, private check-in has 3 parts: **validate, redirect, and re-engage**

	VALIDATE	REDIRECT	RE-ENGAGE
	Share your observation	Provide support/guidance	Include a re-entry plan
<b>EXAMPL ES</b>	"I see that you appear to be ___."	"What can I do to help?"	"I really want you to be able to join us."
	"It looks like you may be feeling___."	"You could try a few minutes in the calming center..."	"...before you start your math practice."

## Preparation Is The Best Prevention

Prevention starts with planning:

- **Physical layout** that creates adequate space in the classroom for students to move around with as little potential for conflictual interaction as possible.
- **Lesson plans** that are differentiated for the range of student needs in the classroom.
- **Routines** that are set up to keep students safe, organized, and as comfortable as possible.
- **Student input, opinions, and interests** are respected and used to plan classroom expectations, instructional activities, and everyday interactions.
- **Behavior plans** are in place and taught to students for the actions that you will take for **encouraging positive behavior** and **responding to off-task behavior**.

Advance your preparation by creating pre-arranged classroom modifications such as:

- ✓ A designated quiet area and safe space for calming.
  - These spaces in in the classroom that allow students to remove themselves from over-stimulation, so that they can regain calm without having to leave the classroom. This might look like having a separate desk or beanbag, away from others. Designating a calming space also enables students to signal to you that they need to have a conversation, without interrupting instruction.
- ✓ A protocol for taking brief instructional breaks for when you need to quietly and privately attend to an individual student need.
  - Have a designated area stocked with engaging worksheets for when you may need to stop instruction to attend to a student(s) for several minutes. Teach students that when you say \_\_\_ you need them to follow your self-work protocol until you give them the next set of instructions.
- ✓ Classroom agreements about acceptable movement activities to support behavior self-regulation.
  - If you have students who struggle with containing their energy or anxiety it can be helpful to make a **movement wall** where students can go and follow the stretching activities posted on the wall.
- ✓ Visual aids/anchor charts with a variety of strategies that students can use to manage difficult emotions.
  - Each calming strategy on the anchor chart should be taught to the entire class. When students are agitated, the teacher can use the anchor chart to remind them of tools they can use without having to completely stop instruction. Strategies may include counting backward, deep breathing, getting a drink of water, journaling, drawing, and coloring.

## Attending to student agitation during whole-class instruction

The next page has a supportive self-regulation card that you can use to support individual students when it is difficult for you to provide individual attention. **First**, discuss the cards with the whole class or privately with a student. **Second**, when you notice early signs of agitation, at a time when you cannot attend to the student one-on-one, as you circulate around the classroom, silently place this card on the student's desk, to reassure and support them. **Third**, follow-up individually as soon as you are able.

Supportive Cards For Attending To Student Agitation During Whole-Group Instruction

 <p>I see you and I want to help.</p>	 <p>I see you and I want to help.</p>
 <p>I need a few minutes to finish up. I will come talk to you soon.</p>	 <p>I need a few minutes to finish up. I will come talk to you soon.</p>
<p>Try these strategies to help, until I can come talk to you.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="129 882 267 1066">  <p>Color Or Draw</p> </div> <div data-bbox="332 892 511 1066">  <p>Think Happy Thoughts</p> </div> <div data-bbox="576 913 738 1066">  <p>Take Deep Breaths</p> </div> </div>	<p>Try these strategies to help, until I can come talk to you.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="836 882 974 1066">  <p>Color Or Draw</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1039 892 1209 1066">  <p>Think Happy Thoughts</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1274 913 1437 1066">  <p>Take Deep Breaths</p> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="138 1239 284 1423">  <p>Set Timer And Take A Break</p> </div> <div data-bbox="341 1249 544 1407">  <p>Read A Book That You Like</p> </div> <div data-bbox="584 1249 755 1417">  <p>Look At The Nature Photos</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="836 1239 982 1423">  <p>Set Timer And Take A Break</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1047 1249 1250 1407">  <p>Read A Book That You Like</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1291 1249 1461 1417">  <p>Look At The Nature Photos</p> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="105 1585 267 1753">  <p>Write In Your Journal</p> </div> <div data-bbox="341 1585 462 1753">  <p>Get A Quick Drink Of Water</p> </div> <div data-bbox="592 1617 771 1879"> <p>10, 9, 8, 7...</p> <p>Slowly Count Backwards From 10</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="812 1585 974 1753">  <p>Write In Your Journal</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1047 1585 1169 1753">  <p>Get A Quick Drink Of Water</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1291 1617 1469 1879"> <p>10, 9, 8, 7...</p> <p>Slowly Count Backwards From 10</p> </div> </div>

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