

Crisis Prevention & De-escalation

Strategies for preventing and managing behavioral crises

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Prevention: Before Escalation

- ☐ Know student's triggers and warning signs
- ☐ Visual schedule in place and referenced
- ☐ Transitions previewed in advance
- ☐ Sensory needs proactively addressed
- ☐ Reinforcement systems active
- ☐ Environmental triggers minimized
- ☐ Relationship and rapport established

Early Warning Signs

Watch for precursor behaviors - signs that escalation may be coming. These vary by student but commonly include:

- Changes in voice (louder, faster, higher pitch)
- Physical tension (clenched fists, pacing)
- Verbal warnings ("I'm going to...")
- Withdrawal or avoidance
- Increased stimming or self-soothing

De-escalation Strategies

Environmental

- ☐ Reduce audience/remove peers if safe
- ☐ Lower lights/reduce stimulation
- ☐ Increase physical space
- ☐ Remove triggering materials

Communication

- ☐ Lower voice volume and slow pace
- ☐ Use simple, clear language
- ☐ Offer limited choices
- ☐ Validate feelings ("I can see you're frustrated")
- ☐ Avoid "why" questions
- ☐ Use student's name calmly

Physical/Behavioral

- ☐ Model calm body language
- ☐ Position yourself at student's level
- ☐ Give processing time (wait 5-10 seconds)
- ☐ Offer break or safe space
- ☐ Use prearranged calming strategies

What NOT to Do

Important

- Argue, threaten, or use sarcasm
- Invade personal space
- Touch without consent (unless safety requires)
- Raise your voice or match intensity
- Issue ultimatums
- Bring up past incidents
- Take behavior personally

Post-Crisis

- ☐ Allow full recovery time before processing
- ☐ Restore relationship when calm
- ☐ Reteach replacement behaviors
- ☐ Document incident objectively
- ☐ Debrief with team
- ☐ Review for prevention opportunities

Pro Tip

The goal is not to "win" - it's to help the student regain self-regulation. Your calm is contagious.

Track Incidents & Identify Patterns

Classroom Pulse helps you document incidents and identify triggers to prevent future crises.

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