Key Points

KEY POINT #1
Youth often act in distracting or disruptive ways when they are bored (deliberate) or stressed out (emotional). Skillful staff look for underlying issues and respond accordingly, rather than rigidly applying strict negative consequences to all misbehaviors.

KEY POINT #2
When students are deliberately “acting up” to meet their social needs at others’ expense, behavior management using consequences is a good response. However, when students are emotionally “acting out” because of high stress or low self-esteem, emotional counseling is often a better option.

KEY POINT #3
Most emotional crises go through a series of predictable escalating phases, and can be de-escalated if staff use the right strategies. A simple acknowledgement of feelings can be a powerful beginning. We can often prevent emotional problems by teaching students how to calm down and better manage their own stress.

For more information about certification-based training in “Therapeutic Aggression Control Techniques” (TACT2) or “Therapeutic Behavior Management” (TBM), please contact Dr. Steve Parese (SBParese@aol.com)

“Stop That!”

Therapeutically Managing Misbehavior in Schools & Homes

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“I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather.

As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a student’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a student humanized or dehumanized.”

Dr. Haim G. Ginott
Workshop Description

School safety depends on staff who can make good judgment calls and act as teams during critical situations. However, when staff have different personal and professional expectations of behavior, finding common ground can be quite challenging. To be effective in crisis, staff need a therapeutic but practical model to guide our decisions and interventions.

This workshop explores two psychological sources of problem behaviors, one deliberate and the other emotional, then offers strategies for both preventing and managing each.

Puzzlers

Work with people at your table to decipher the following word puzzles, each of which is a common phrase.

De-Escalating Emotional Problems

Skill of Acknowledging Feelings

Emotional problems can often be prevented when staff recognize the warning signs of stress before a crisis explodes. A simple acknowledgement of students’ feelings can often help them de-escalate.

“After what just happened, I can understand why you’d be __________.”

“You look like you’re really _______ right now.”

“I can see how ______ you are. Do you need a minute?”

1. Patty is a new student who is already getting picked on by the school bullies. Yesterday, Charmaine took a picture of her on the toilet, and within minutes posted it to Facebook with the title “Patty on the Potty.”

   “Now everyone is calling me ‘P- P- Potty!’” she stammers, in tears. “I’ll never fit in here. I just wish I could go back to my old school!”

2. Exams begin in just 3 days, and Peter is frantic.

   “I’ve paid attention in class, and I’ve been studying for weeks, but I just don’t seem to learn. What’s wrong with me? Am I STUPID or something? I’m going to mess up on the exams Friday, I know it, and then my parents are going to flip out….”
Understanding Emotional Problems

**Escalation Model**

Most emotional crises are highly predictable... at least when we know the signs and symptoms. Dr. Steve Parese's Escalation Model illustrates the four phases of crisis, and outlines staff goals and strategies for each.

### Responding to Each Phase of Crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong></td>
<td>Phase</td>
<td><strong>Main task is:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td>Phase</td>
<td><strong>Helpful adult responses include:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>Phase</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td>Phase</td>
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### Therapeutic Behavior Management

When deciding how to manage non-dangerous behaviors, it is helpful to separate intentional, deliberate problems from irrational, emotional crises.

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<tr>
<th>Diagnostic Cue</th>
<th>DELIBERATE</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Pattern?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Body Language?</td>
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<tr>
<td>State of Mind?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside Issues?</td>
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Dr. William Glasser’s model of social needs suggests that deliberate behavior is FUNCTIONAL. It meets students’ short-term social needs, though often at the expense of other’s rights and even their own long-term well-being.

Deliberate Misbehaviors often meet students’ social needs. Although there is often a long-term price, the short-term payoff may seem worth it:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Love • Belonging</th>
<th>Power • Importance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun • Pleasure</td>
<td>Freedom • Choice</td>
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Emotional misbehaviors are often influenced by high stress, low self-esteem, and/or prior trauma in a student’s life. Dr. Nicholas Long’s Conflict Cycle model explains how these elements can be triggered by minor events and quickly escalate into major crises, especially when staff react punitively instead of calmly.