

ECHO IDAHO

**K12 Behavioral Health
in the Classroom**

Crisis Plan Development: From Prevention to De-Escalation

March 25, 2025

Gretchen Gudmundsen, PhD, Child Psychologist

St. Luke's Children's Center

&

Greg Bailey, PhD, Retired Superintendent

Moscow School District

None of the planners or presenters for this educational activity have relevant financial relationship(s) to disclose with ineligible companies whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients.



University of Idaho
School of Health and Medical Professions
College of Education, Health and
Human Sciences



Learning Objectives

- Review Prevention: Ways to maintain the “Calm”
- Considerations when planning a Crisis Plan
- Review the Crisis Cycle Phases:
 - What to Expect at each Phase
 - How it impacts both the student and care provider
 - Techniques useful during the Crisis Cycle
- Walking through a Crisis Situation – Example Case

Before Trigger: Prevention

- Basics:
 - Sleep
 - Exercise
 - Nutrition
 - Consistent routines
 - Clear & consistent expectations
- Front-load
- Help child be their best self

Considerations when planning a Crisis Plan

- Manage the physical environment
- Train ALL staff
- When to tap out
- Real time vs what is given
- Behavior is learned
- Know your limitations

Crisis Creates Major Changes:

Blood pressure

increases.

Heart rate

increases.

Respiration

increases.

Adrenaline level

increases.

Endorphin level

increases.

Reasoning skills

decrease.

Hearing skills

decrease.

Compromising skills

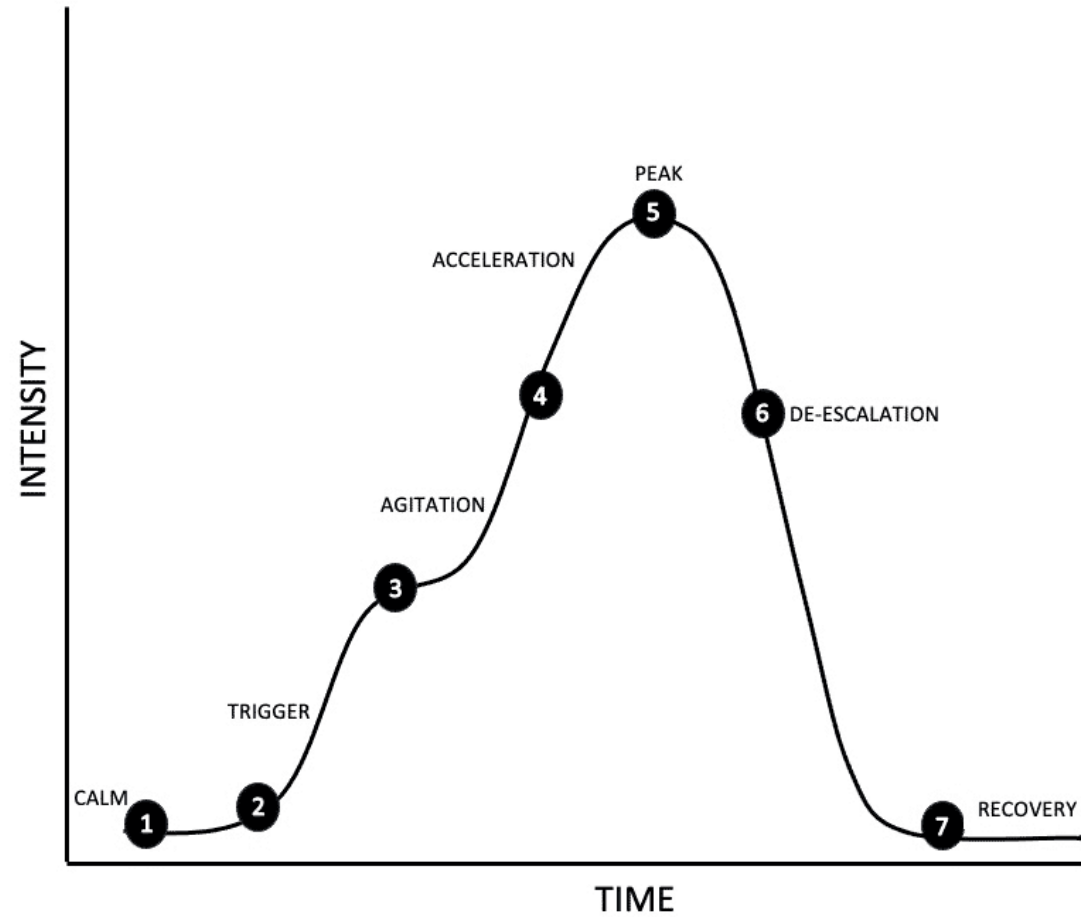
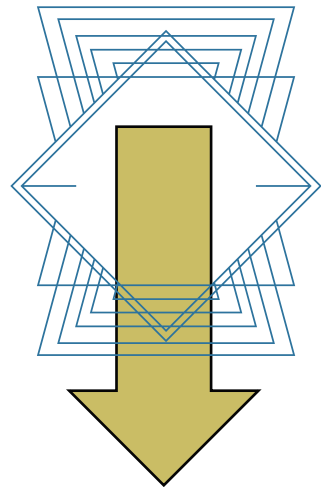
decrease.

Communication skills

decrease.

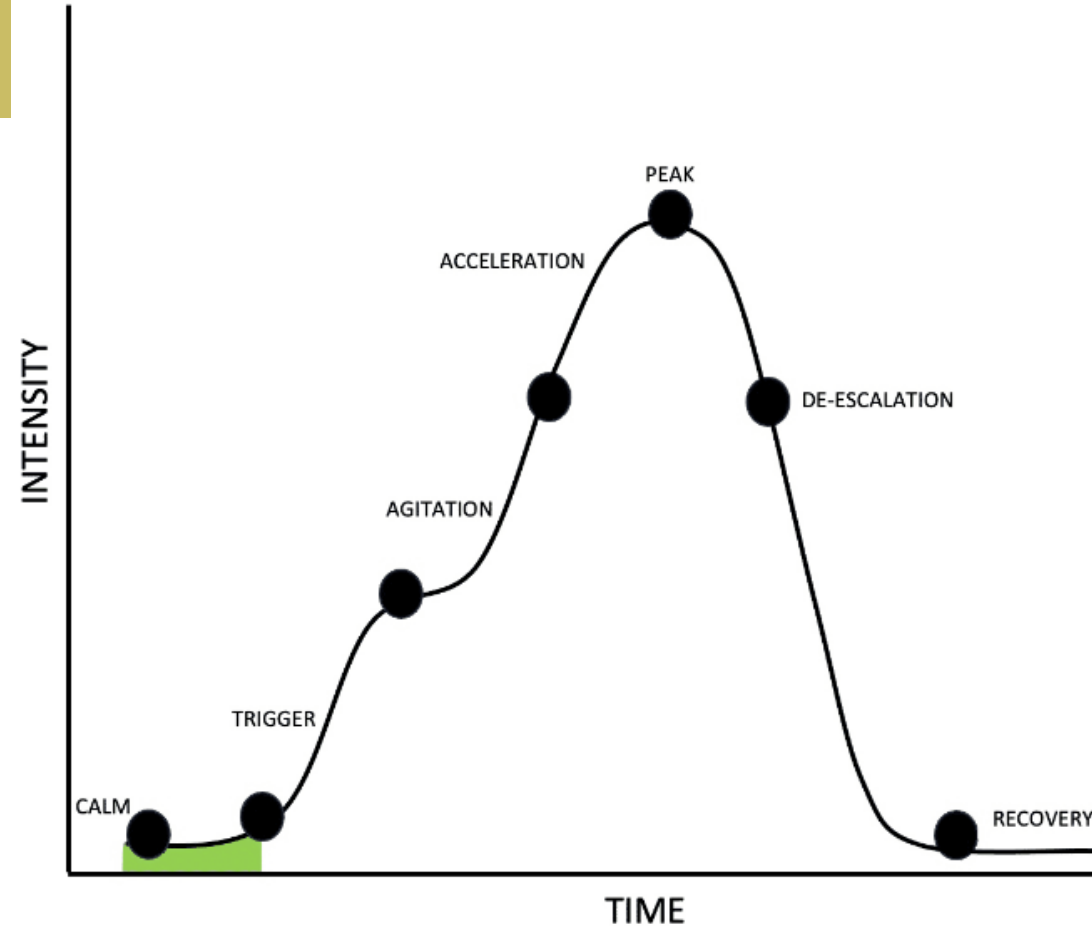
Responding to behavior

- The Escalation Cycle



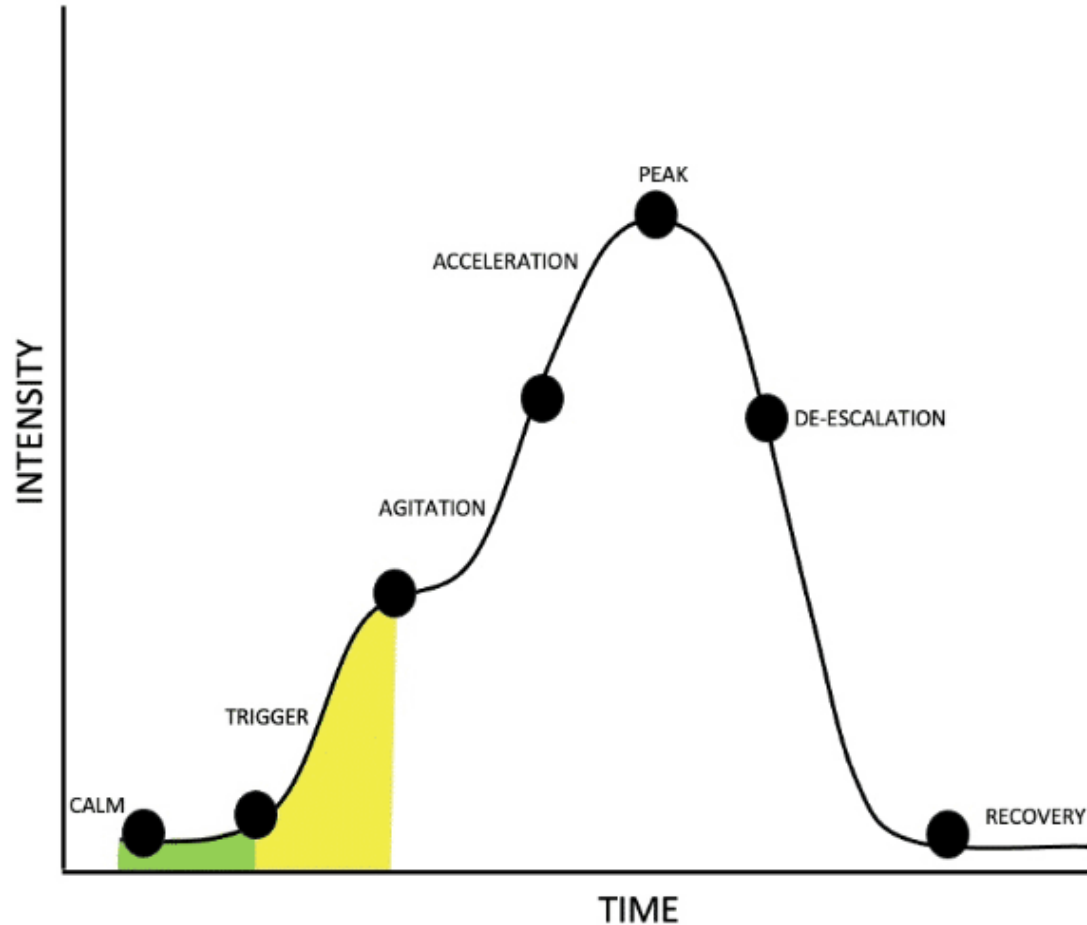
Calm (Baseline)

- ❖ Effective use of the physical space.
- ❖ Establish brief and clear situation expectations.
- ❖ Implement consistent routines.
- ❖ Utilize behavior management practices.



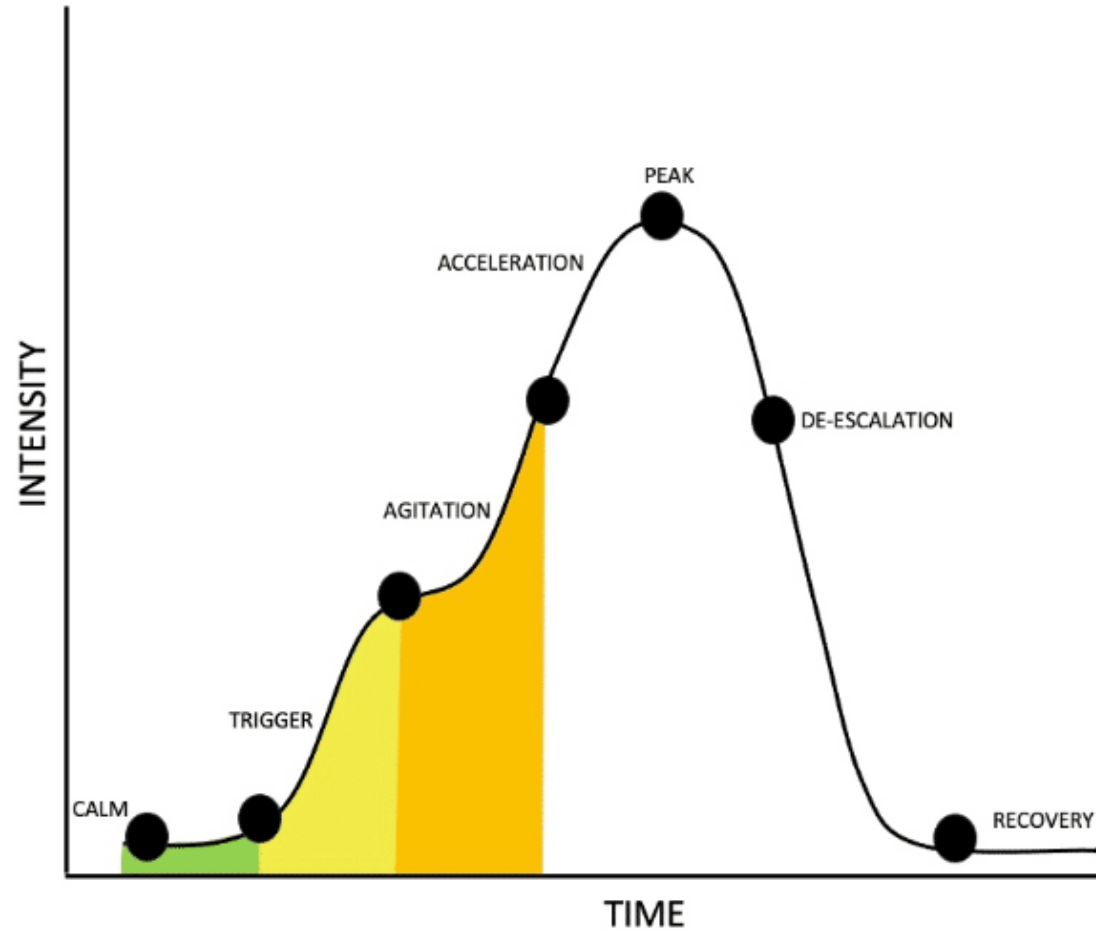
Trigger (Stimulus)

- ❖ Non-confrontational stance.
- ❖ Low, calm demeanor and voice.
- ❖ Let child be seen and felt.
- ❖ Redirect student's thoughts (distraction).
- ❖ Remind student of what you have taught them previously.



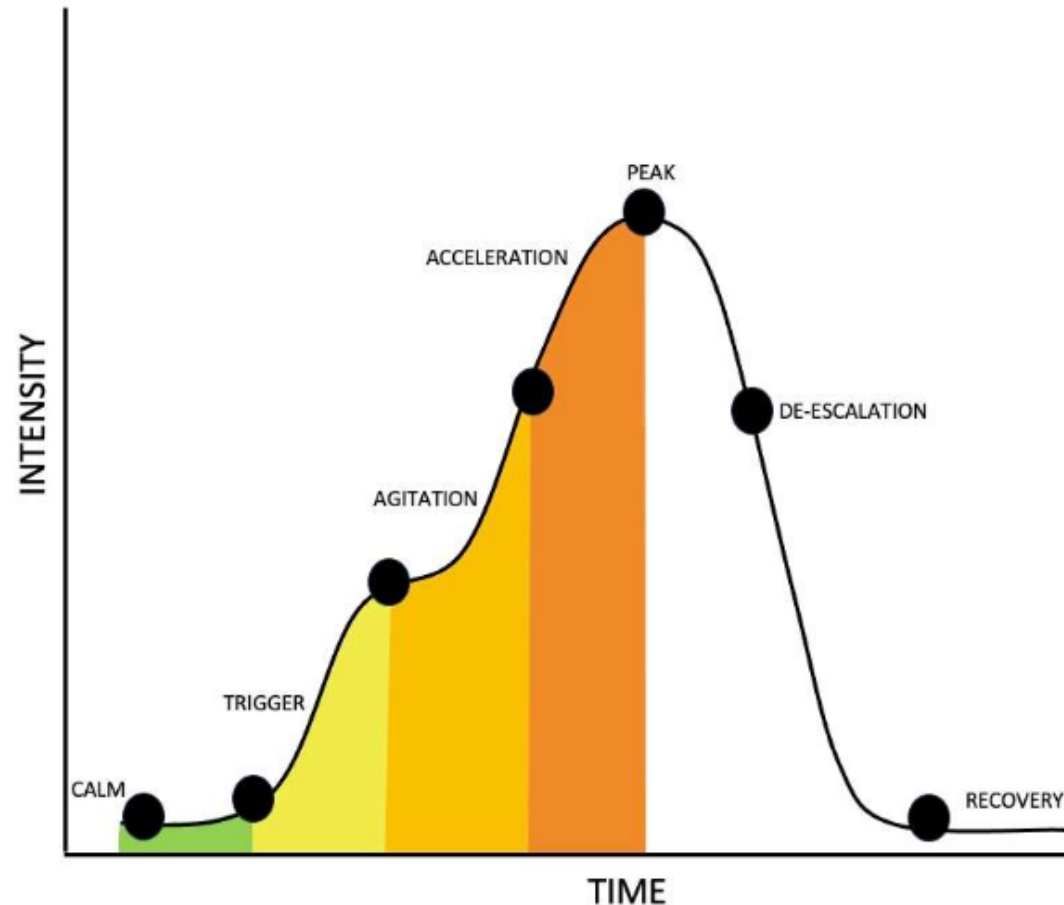
Agitation

- ❖ Minimize the situation by doing something different; distract the student



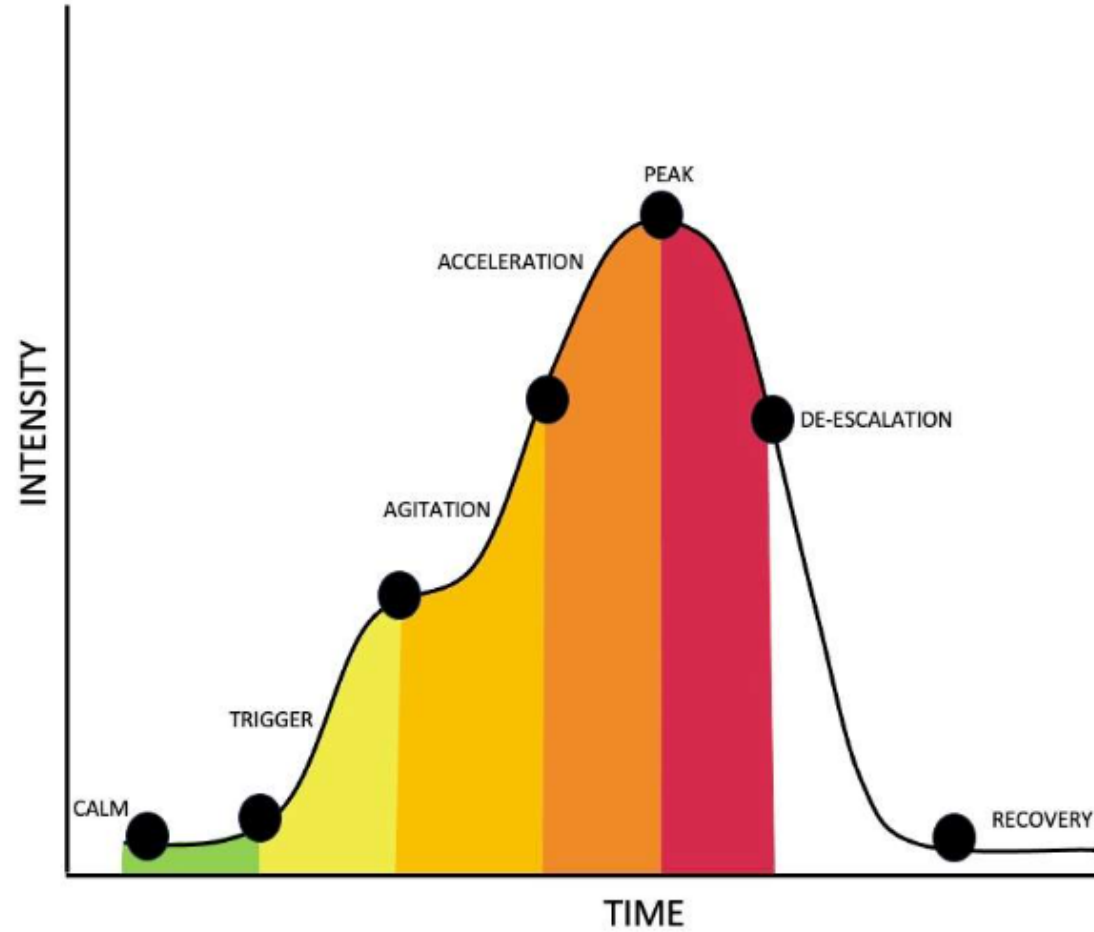
Acceleration

- ❖ Remove triggers that perpetuate escalation.
- ❖ Establish the bottom line (safety for student and others).
- ❖ Detach/disengage from student but remain neutrally supportive and available for safety.



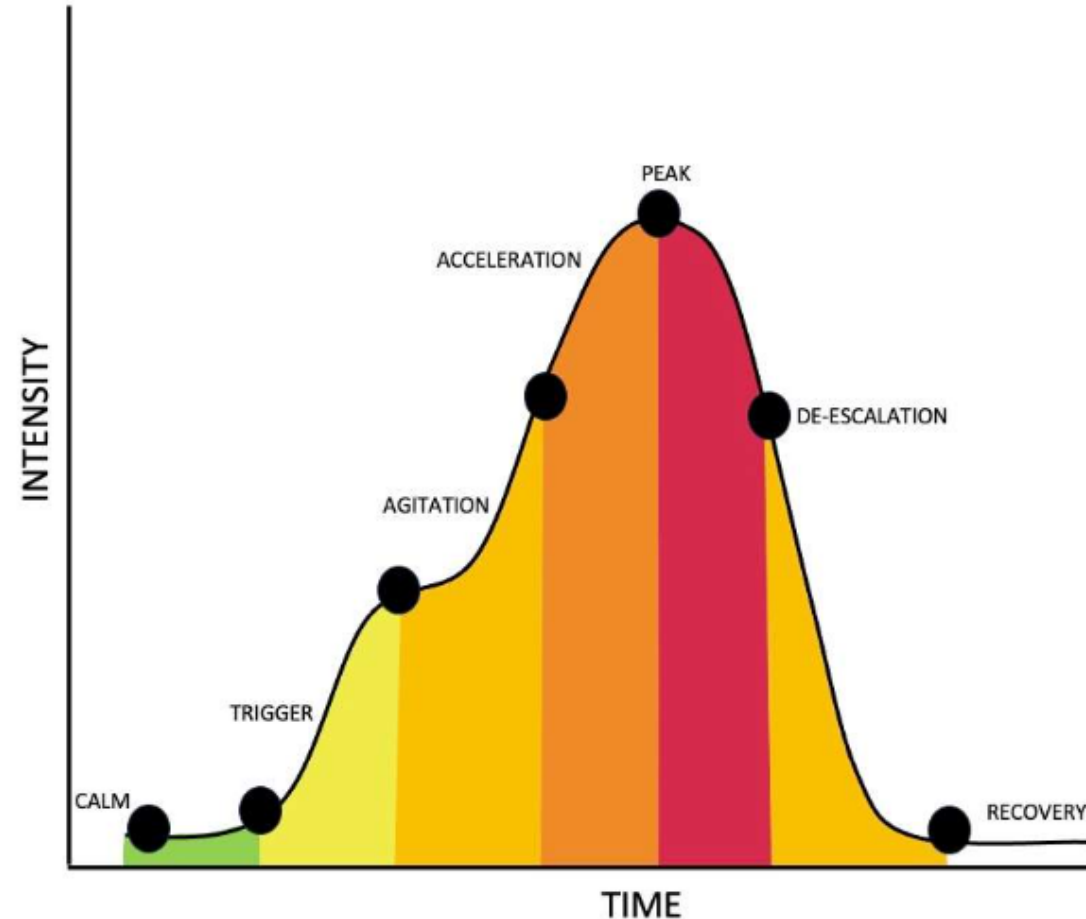
Peak (Crisis)

- ❖ Minimize peak and continue steps from acceleration.
- ❖ Focus on student and staff safety.
- ❖ Clear the area if not already done.



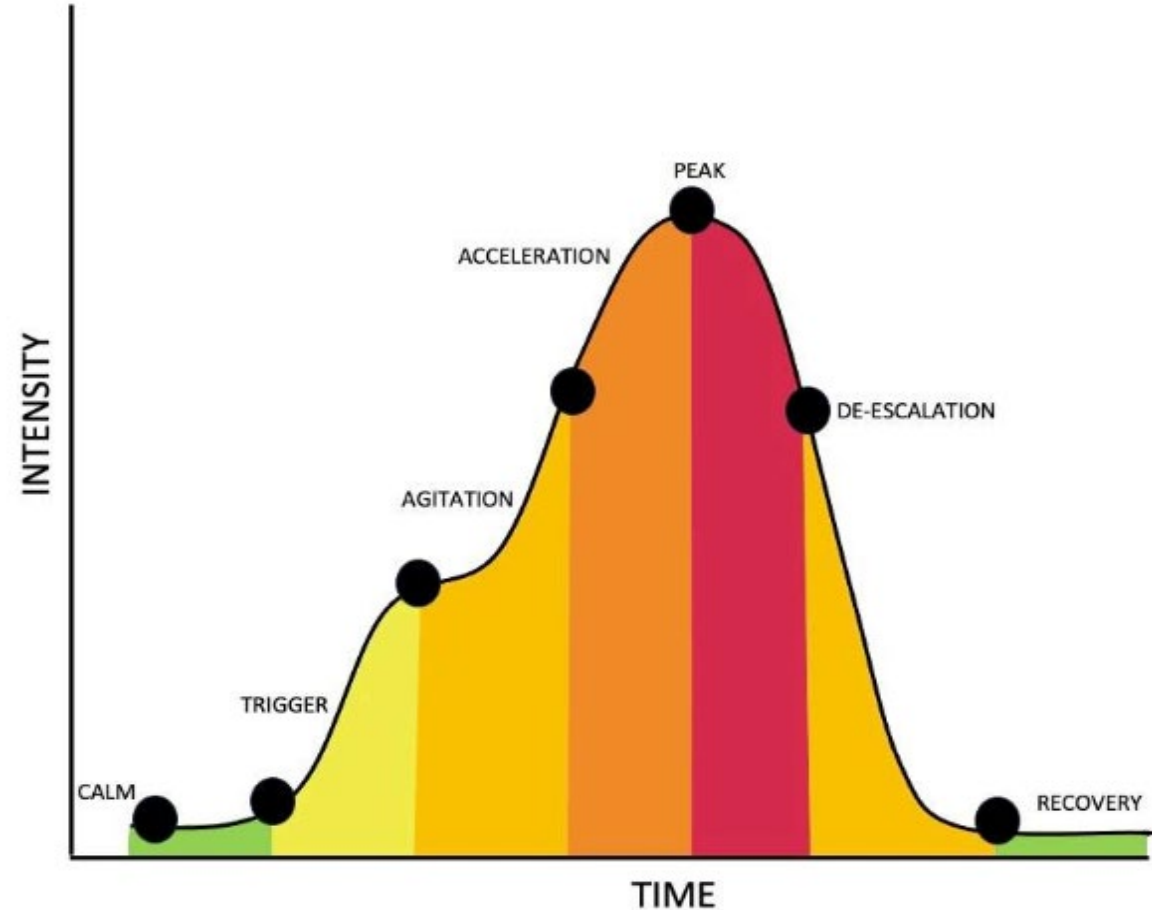
De-Escalation

- ❖ Minimal attention for peak crisis.
- ❖ Focus on removing excess confrontation.
- ❖ Not a time for debrief or consequences.
- ❖ Not a time to force a return to task/activity that trigger the escalation.
- ❖ Test calmness with requests for small motor movements.



Recovery (Stabalize)

- ❖ Provide focus on routine activities.
- ❖ Reinforce small displays of appropriate behavior.
- ❖ Active Listening
- ❖ Debrief later.



Back to Normal: Circle Back

- **An hour or week later, circle back to address incident**
- **Reconnect/repair the relationship. Apologize for your part**
- **Teach. Talk about healthy coping YOU use during crisis. Model and narrate healthy coping**
- **Repair. Collaborate to identify something to do to make things right in some way.**
- **Use your judgment.**

Example Case Scenario

- Calm (Baseline)
- Trigger (Stimulus)
- Agitation
- Acceleration
- Peak (Crisis) De-Escalation
- Recovery (Stabilize)

Key Points

- **Beware of the impact of the care provider during a major behavior situation**
- **Consider the stage of the escalation cycle with regard to how to best support the student and how to manage your own regulation**
- **Investment in prevention and coping ahead will reduce escalations and increase safety**

References

- Collaborate Proactive Solutions (CPS) - <https://drrossgreene.com/> (includes The Explosive Child; Raising Human Beings; Lost at School)
- Crisis Cycle: Special Education Support & Technical Assistance, Crisis Plan Module [Idaho Training Clearinghouse > Resources > View Resource \(idahotc.com\)](#)
- Crisis Creates Major Changes, [Ref: David Mandt & Assoc., Mandt Training Manual, (Revised May 31, 1998).]