De-escalating Intense Behavior
Part One

Presented by Dr. Rona Novick, PhD
November 6, 2008
Conference Call Etiquette

• Remember to mute your phone by pressing *1.

• Press *1 again, when you would like to speak, this will un-mute your phone.

• Do not use your phone HOLD or mute button. If you do, your music will be broadcast to all of us on the call.
Dr. Novick is the Director of the Fanya Gottesman Heller Doctoral Program at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University as well as a Clinical Professor of Child Psychology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Dr. Novick also serves as one of two Educational Directors for Hidden Sparks program, providing consultation to 28 day schools and Yeshivas. Additionally, Dr. Novick has delivered numerous presentations at national and international conferences. Her research interests focus on positive behavior support, parenting and parent-school partnerships, child anxiety disorders, social-emotional learning and the behavior and development of young children. She is also the author of a book for parents: Helping Your Child Make Friends, and editor of the book series Kids Don’t Come With Instruction Manuals.

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Overview of the Seminar

Session 1
• Understanding Intense Behavior
  • Common types/situations
• Understanding Antecedents – key to prevention
  • Teacher, Student and Situational Antecedents
  • Promoting Tension Management

Session 2
• Reactions and Consequences
  What to Do During and After Intense Behavior

• Re-grouping/re-connecting after intense behavior

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When was the Last Time You Were Confronted With Intense Behavior ........

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<th>What did you see?</th>
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<th>What did you feel?</th>
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Understanding Intense Behavior- Scenarios

• 3rd grader refuses a task . . . Becomes more disruptive . . . Task request is repeated . . . Becomes aggressive

• 8th grader bolts out of lunch room. Heard slamming lockers in hallway

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Intense Behavior – Common Elements

• Clear progression from lower intensity to higher intensity behavior

• Start to finish in same setting

• Intervention is directive, or mildly challenging/confrontative, and is unsuccessful

• No clear escalation

• Seem to come from nowhere

• No intervention offered/possible

That the antecedents aren’t obvious, doesn’t mean they aren’t there.
ABC’s of Student Behavior

Antecedents

Behavior

Consequences

Proactive

Reactive

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Common Antecedents

- Fear (I'm going to be called on, I don't like buses, etc)
- Failure
- Loss of personal power (I am being forced to do it your way)
- Attention seeking
- Displaced anger
- Physiological issues (hunger, fatigue, physical restlessness)
- Need to maintain self-esteem

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Teacher Behavior Types that Escalate Intense Behavior

- Intense
  - Yelling, nagging
  - *Pick up that trash, come on, pick it up, let’s go, come on . . .*

- Power Assertive
  - Insisting on the last word, using physical force
  - *I’m the boss in this classroom, don’t think you can . . .*

- Disrespectful
  - Humiliation, sarcasm, character attack, double standard
  - “It’s just like you to mess this up, for once surprise me and . . .

- Expansive
  - Drawing others into conflict, dredging up past or unrelated events
  - “*So like your sister, you did this last week too, and why don’t you also . . .*

- Other
  - Preaching
  - Pleading

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<th>Offer . . .</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
<td>Calm, reasonable rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power Assertiveness</td>
<td>Objectivity, be human, be consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrespect</td>
<td>Genuine interest and caring Collaboration</td>
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<td>Expansiveness</td>
<td>Early response to small issues Focus on the present</td>
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Types of Antecedents

• Slow Triggers
  • Things that slowly and sometimes continually affect the student.
    Can you think of examples?

• Fast Triggers
  • Those interactions or events which, often within moments, create an intense response.
    Can you think of examples?

• Situational Triggers
  • Those situations that, in many people, have greater likelihood to prompt intense behavior
    Can you think of examples?
Examples

• On the week of standardized testing, it will be more likely that fights will occur in the cafeteria.

• If Casey gets less than four hours of sleep the night before, it is very likely she will throw herself on the ground and cry as soon as she gets off the bus.

• If 7th graders are asked to participate in an assembly with the 8th graders, it is more likely that major disruptions will occur.

• If Jeff sits next to Stuart during small group activities, it is very likely Jeff will shout insults and leave the classroom.

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General Strategies for Situational Antecedents

- Catch them being good
- Ask students to look before listen
- Proximity rule
- Foot in the door technique
- Be simple, be straight, be specific
- Give it time

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Strategies for Other Antecedents: Tension Management

- Barrel theory of intense behavior

- What skills do you teach students to manage and decrease tension? (**)

- What skills could you teach students to manage and decrease tension? (**)

- Can you help students develop meta-cognition and behavior to understand their escalating tension, determine when they need to manage it, and use appropriate means to decrease tension?
Teaching Tension Reduction

- Let’s Explore the three types of tension reduction techniques
- All approaches require didactics, practice, and time, for students to develop skills
- All approaches best done collaboratively and transparently, promoting students’ metacognitive awareness
  - Physiological Tension Reduction
  - Cognitive Tension Reduction
  - Emotional Tension Reduction

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Physiological Tension Reduction

- Breathing – diaphragmatic (book on stomach technique)
- Relaxation – (progressive muscle vs. passive)
- Stress balls/clay
- Auditory
- Other soothing techniques
Cognitive Tension Reduction

- Imagery
- Thought replacement/thought stopping
- Distracting cognitive tasks
- Positive self-statements
- Soothing self-statements

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Emotional Tension Reduction

• Affective labeling

• Affective rating

• Learning to chill-out early

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Next Steps

• Three important learning points to remember:
  • All behavior has antecedents
  • Teacher language and behavior is important
  • All students can be taught skills to help them moderate and prevent intense behavior.

• What will you bring back to your teaching/classroom to help PREVENT intense behavior?

• Our next session will focus on what to do to ADDRESS intense behavior when it occurs.

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Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

The Role of Memory in School Success- Nov 18., Nov. 25
with Claire Wurtzel

Language, Learning and Literacy – Dec. 3, Dec. 10
with Claire Wurtzel

Course on Attention – Dec. 9, Dec. 16
with Naomi Weiss

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