Book Study
Prepared by the
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) Project

Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior in the Classroom
Geoff Colvin
(Behavior Associates, 2004)

Book Description:
This book describes strategies for classroom teachers to use in interrupting or managing the cycle of acting-out behavior for students with serious behavior problems. The book has three sections. The first describes a seven-phase model that explains the successive interactions of an escalating behavior chain. Section two describes strategies for addressing each phase of the acting-out cycle. The third section provides a summary and a case study of how to develop a behavior intervention plan to address every stage of the acting-out cycle.

Target Audience:
- **Structuring Teams**
- **Implementation Teams**
- **Behavior Specialists**
- **Building Leadership Teams**
- **General Staff**
- **Tier 1 Teachers**
- **Tier 2 Teachers**
- **Tier 3 Teachers**
- **Elementary Teams**
- **Secondary Teams**

Section One: A Model

Chapter 1: Analyzing Acting-Out Behavior

Brief Overview:

This chapter provides an example of escalating behavior ending in serious acting-out behavior. The importance of considering prerequisite academic skills is discussed, and the influence of successive interactions in an escalating behavior chain is described.

Discussion Questions:

1. The author says the example of acting-out behavior is a *behavior chain*. What do you think he means by that?

2. Why do you think it is important to focus first on prerequisite academic skills when looking at acting-out behavior?

3. What are some signs of agitation?

4. Why is it important to look at an escalating behavior chain as successive interactions between teacher and student that are a series of "my turn—your turn" events?

Chapter 2: A Seven-Phase Model for Describing Acting-Out Behavior

Brief Overview:
This chapter describes a seven-phase model for acting-out behavior, where the phases first increase in intensity to the peak phase, then decrease in intensity to recovery. The behavioral characteristics of each phase are provided, along with an illustration.

Discussion Questions:
1. What are the seven phases of the acting-out cycle?

2. Describe some school-based and non-school-based triggers.

3. What are compound triggers?

4. What are some <u>increases</u> in behavior that reflect agitation? What are some <u>decreases</u> in behavior that reflect agitation?

5. What is the difference between agitation (phase three) and acceleration (phase four)?

6. What are the characteristics of the de-escalation phase?

7. What are the characteristics of the recovery phase?

8. Have members of the book study group fill out Form 2.2 in Appendix B on page 38, using a student with whom they experienced an escalating behavior chain. Discuss how each teacher's reported experience was similar to or different from the example on page 40.

Section Two: Strategies

Chapter 3: Proactive Strategies for Maintaining Calm Phase

Brief Overview:
Students with acting-out behavior often have times of calm, when they function adequately in the classroom. This chapter describes proactive strategies for nurturing and maintaining the calm phase.

Discussion Questions:

1. How is the design of the physical space of the classroom related to maintaining the calm phase?

2. How is a schedule related to maintaining the calm phase?

3. What are the steps of an instruction plan for teaching classroom expectations?

4. What are the advantages of establishing classroom routines? What classroom routines have you developed for your own classroom?

5. In what way are instructional practices important for maintaining the calm phase?

Chapter 4: Precorrection Strategies for Triggers Phase

Brief Overview:
Triggers set the occasion for inappropriate behaviors that may escalate. This chapter describes first-level strategies for addressing triggers through the combined use of correction and precorrection. These strategies address both antecedents and consequences, but the focus is on antecedents in the hope that the problem behavior can be preempted and replaced.

Discussion Questions:
1. What are the differences between first-level and second-level strategies?

2. What is precorrection? What are the differences between correction and precorrection?

3. What are the seven basic steps for the combined use of correction and precorrection?

4. Describe an important characteristic or practice for each of the seven steps.

5. Discuss the case study on page 70. How would you evaluate the answers to the example precorrection checklist?

Chapter 5: Teaching Social Skills for Managing Triggers Phase

Brief Overview:
Teaching social skills is a second-level strategy for managing triggers that set off problem behaviors. This chapter describes the importance of social skills development, social skills assessment, social skills instruction, and intense individual programming.

Discussion Questions:
1. Why is social skills development important?

2. What are some social skills assessment procedures?

3. As a group, discuss the seven major assumptions underlying social skills instruction. Do you agree or disagree with these assumptions? Why?

4. Review the critical questions for selecting a social skills curriculum. Does your district/building use a social skills curriculum? If the members of your book study group don't know, whom could you ask? See if another staff member might help your group answer the critical questions about the social skills curriculum in use in your building or district.

5. What are the components of intense individual programming? Who in your district might help carry out these practices?

Chapter 6: Calming Strategies for Managing Agitation Phase

Brief Overview:
This chapter described strategies for managing student agitation. These strategies are essentially accommodations, which are designed to reduce agitation and avoid further escalation of the acting-out cycle. They have the added benefit of enabling students to re-engage in instruction.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do a jigsaw activity, where each person in the book study group selects one of the strategies for managing agitation and describes it to the rest of the group.

2. As a group, discuss which of these strategies you have used in your own classroom and the outcomes you experienced with that strategy.

3. What are the two possible problems described in this chapter? What are the remedies? Do you agree that those remedies would be useful in addressing these problems?

Chapter 7: Defusing Strategies for Managing Acceleration Phase

Brief Overview:
During the acceleration phase, the focus is on the way teachers respond. The strategies require the adult to have a calm, planned, respectful, and detached manner. It is important to present information in a way that puts the responsibility on the student. The chapter also describes the importance of follow-through (giving students feedback on their choices) and debriefing.

Discussion Questions:
1. What are escalating prompts? Why are they so difficult to avoid in this phase?

2. Discuss the examples of escalating prompts. Have you ever found yourself engaging in these behaviors? If so, what was the outcome?

3. What is the most powerful response that staff can engage in? How do you achieve calmness?

4. Why are respect and detachment so important?

5. What are the guidelines for approaching a student in a non-threatening manner? Do you think you can remember and engage in those behaviors when the student is in the acceleration phase?

6. Describe the steps for the limit-setting strategy. What is the key to managing these situations?

7. Why is debriefing important? What are the steps for debriefing?

Chapter 8: Safe Management Strategies for Peak Phase

Brief Overview:
This chapter describes how a school can develop written emergency procedures, including attending to prerequisite steps, developing a crisis team, preparing an action response plan, and identifying important follow-up activities.

Discussion Questions:
1. What are the critical components of a school emergency plan?

2. Review your school's emergency plan. Does it include all the critical components?

3. What are the guiding principles in dealing with safety issues?

4. Does your school's emergency plan include debriefing?

5. What are the necessary prerequisites to prevent emergency situations? Are these in place in your school? With administrative approval, complete Form 8.2 (page 121) and/or Form 8.3 (page 122) as a part of your school's emergency plan evaluation.

Chapter 9: Reintegration Strategies for De-escalation Phase

Brief Overview:
This chapter describes a series of steps to bring students down from the serious acting-out behavior of the peak phase to resume normal activities. These steps include: (a) isolate the student; (b) decide whether to send the student home or retain the student; (c) engage in independent work with clear criteria; (d) complete exit paperwork, as appropriate; (e) restore the environment, as applicable; and (f) resume the regular schedule. The primary purpose of these steps is to help the student regain composure and focus on cooperation.

Discussion Questions:
1. What are the guidelines for implementing the step of isolating the student? Why is it important that the student be supervised?

2. What are the guidelines for ensuring that the independent work assignment will assist the student in recovery?

3. Review the debriefing form examples provided (Form 9.1 and Form 9.2 on pages 129 and 130). Does your school use a form similar to either of these forms? In what way are debriefing forms helpful?

4. Discuss the supervisor behavior described on page 131. Why do you think adequately completing item #1—"What was your behavior?"—is so important?

5. Discuss steps five, six, and seven. Why do you think they are important for moving the student from the peak phase to the recovery phase?

Chapter 10: Resumption Strategies for Recovery Phase

Brief Overview:
The main objective for the strategies described in this chapter is to continue the transition from the de-escalation phase to full participation in classroom activities. A debriefing process is described to help the student problem solve, as well as increase the likelihood they can respond appropriately to future events.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are potential problems when the student returns to the regular classroom setting?

2. What are the transition steps? What is their purpose?

3. How should a debriefing plan be used? When should it be used?

4. Review Form 10.1 on page 139 and the example on the next page. Do you think the form should include other questions? Why or why not?

5. How is the debriefing described in this chapter different from the one described in Chapter 9? How are they the same?

Section Three: Conclusion

Chapter 11: Summary and Case Study

Brief Overview:
This chapter provides a summary of the previous chapters and a case study that illustrates the acting-out cycle and how the strategies for each phase of the cycle might be applied.

Discussion Questions:
1. Review the summary on page 144. Do you think any of the strategies or forms would be useful in your school? How can you ensure that those strategies and forms are put into practice?

2. Discuss the case study. Do you agree with the strategies selected? How would you change the example behavior support plan?