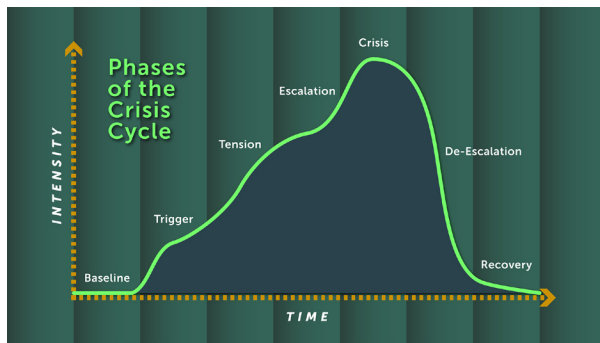


Introduction to the Crisis Cycle – Summary



The Crisis Cycle is a well-documented pattern of behavior people go through when they are experiencing an immediate emotional and behavioral crisis. Understanding the nature of crisis and the specific phases of escalation within the crisis cycle is important in developing trauma informed practices for several reasons –

1. Students with ACEs become dysregulated easily
2. The more you understand about escalation and crisis, the more predictable your behavior will be
3. You will have a better awareness of what students with ACEs need and how to respond in various stages of crisis
4. Knowing about the crisis cycle can help you feel confident in managing difficult situations

Baseline Phase - This is where a student typically functions. Every student's baseline is different.

Trigger Phase - This phase occurs when a student encounters something upsetting or stressful (i.e. a "trigger").

Tension Phase - In this phase a student is experiencing some level of emotional upset. This phase is a "crossroads" where the student could de-escalate or escalate into crisis.

Escalation Phase - In this phase a student's stress, behavior and emotions increase, and we may see more behavioral issues or signs of distress.

Crisis Phase - This phase is where a student in crisis reaches their emotional and behavioral peak. Behavior is poorly controlled and thinking is not clear. This phase is where there is the greatest risk of unsafe behavior.

De-Escalation Phase - This is when the student starts to calm back down but may still be agitated, unfocused and unavailable for problem solving

Recovery Phase - This is where the person begins to slowly return to their baseline level of functioning.



A Few Other Key Points

- The event that triggered the crisis may not always be apparent
- The exact phase of the crisis is not always be discernable
- Once you recognize a person is in crisis, what you do can moderate the duration and severity of the crisis.

Students With ACEs

Students with a history of ACEs and those who experience chronic stress may have a different crisis profile than other students, specifically -

- Students with ACEs have more trouble regulating behavior and emotions and are more easily triggered than typical students. Common escalation triggers can include –
 - Recollections of traumatic experiences: these triggers are not always obvious to an observer
 - Inaccurate perceptions of people or situations as potentially threatening
 - Unexpected changes in routines

Students with ACEs may spend more time in the tension phase than typical students. This is one of the reasons why these students struggle to manage emotions and can escalate quickly.

Remember -

Students with ACEs or chronic stress often go through their school day at a higher level of arousal than typical students. They may already be in the tension phase when they arrive at school. Develop preventative interventions such as morning check-ins, and include regulation activities in the daily schedule to support these students more effectively. Students with ACEs or chronic stress also may experience higher levels of emotional intensity and dysregulated behavior during the peak of the crisis phase and these students may take longer to work through the de-escalation phase and be more likely to re-escalate than typical students.