Understanding the Cycle of Acting-Out Behaviour

The Escalation Model

The Intervention Strategies

Based on the work of Geoff Colvin
Introduction
This presentation is based on the work of Geoff Colvin (2004). In his book 'Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behaviour in the Classroom', Colvin details the conceptual model of Acting-Out Behaviours into seven stages, with attention to descriptors of the stages while providing strategies for each stage. He links the strategies to classroom management, with an emphasis on the teaching of skills and the use of preventative strategies.

As mentioned in the Escalation Model power point, there are seven stages that Colvin uses to manage, to plan for and provide strategies for attending to behaviour concerns.

He states that behaviour can be effectively managed in the Early Stages, interrupting the behaviour chain (pg 43) and therefore preempting the later stages when the more serious behaviours happen.

The Early Stages (calm, triggers, agitation and acceleration) the emphasis is on 'teaching and prevention techniques.'

The Later Stages (peak, de-escalation and recovery) the emphasis is on 'safety, crisis management, re-entry and follow-up procedures.'
Strategies for Managing the Acting-Out Behaviour Chain

Early Stages
Emphasis is on teaching and prevention techniques

Later Stages
Emphasis is on safety, crisis management, re-entry and follow-up procedures.

1. Calm
2. Triggers
3. Agitation
4. Acceleration
5. Peak
6. De-escalation
7. Recovery

Intensity
Time
Purpose of this presentation

- To expand the understanding of the conceptual model of Acting-Out Behaviour by developing interventions for each stage.

- To be able to identify the descriptors that contribute to the behaviour so proactive strategies can be introduced.

- And, to detail through analysis of acting-out cycle, be able to intervene early and replacement behaviours taught.

- Therefore, there is more opportunity to use strategies that will be efficient in changing the behaviours, and reduce the risk of further escalation.
1. Calm

The overall aim is to keep the students productively engaged, interested in the task at hand.
Calm

“Quality instruction is assumed to be a crucial preventive measure to controlling problem behaviour (Colvin and Lazar, (1999) pg 44)

There are five core ingredients to classroom set-up that supports the previous statement. These encourage and stimulate proactive behaviour management as they support quality instruction and give students with difficult behaviours support.

The five core ingredients are -

- Incorporating physical space and knowing the dynamics of your classroom
- A practical classroom routine
  - Instruction and discipline are greatly enhanced when the physical arrangement of the room is understood and planned for by the teacher.
- Having classroom expectations
  - If a teacher expects students to achieve, succeed, behave, they will.
  - Then, if these expectations are in place, the students with the difficult behaviours have a greater chance of behaving appropriately.
- A regular timetable that meets the learning needs of the students
- Quality instruction that is well planned, meeting the needs of its learners. This is called 'instructional efficiency.' (pg52)
Kauffman (2001), stated that academic underachievement and inappropriate behaviour go hand in hand.

Therefore, if students are actively engaged in their learning, there is less likelihood of them misbehaving.

Students who have difficult behaviours do have moments of calm. These periods are enhanced when the classroom environment nurtures this stage.

‘Teachers who can create stable, positive and predictable classroom with a strong focus on quality instruction and learning usually are more successful in serving students with problem behaviour.’ (pg58)

The strategies described are called proactive strategies.

Once these have been effectively implemented there is increased likelihood of students remaining in the Calm Stage, and decreased the opportunity for acting out behaviours developing.
Triggers

If triggers are identified and effectively resolved the student has more of a chance to returning to the norm of behaviour and calming down.
Triggers

There are two main steps in managing behaviour at the trigger stage.

- Identify the triggers that set off the behaviour
- Develop strategies to manage the triggers, resolve conflicts and get appropriate behaviour responses from the student.

There are two ways to address the behaviours at the trigger stage.

- **Level One Strategies** - called *Precorrection Strategies*
- **Level Two Strategies** - known as *Teaching Social Skills*

When managing strategies at the level one stage, awareness between *correction* and *precorrection* needs to be clearly defined.

*Correction techniques* are consequent manipulatives developed to stop the behaviour *after* it has occurred.

*Precorrection techniques* are antecedent manipulations developed to prevent the occurrence of problems and get the correct response.
**Triggers**

- **Level One Strategies** - called *Precorrection Strategies*
  - Precorrection strategies are the most simplest and effective
  - The context is targeted before the behaviour occurs.
  - Triggers are *anticipated* and strategies are actioned *before* the problem behaviour escalates.
  - The teacher identifies the setting, time, context in which the problem behaviour may occur, and then responds to reduce any opportunities of misbehaviour.
  - These precorrection strategies manipulate the context so to weaken the effect the triggers have in escalating the problem behaviour.
  - These strategies are low impact interventions that can be implemented with little teacher time and effort.
  - Behaviour patterns can be established by manipulating the antecedents. This allows for the behaviour to be predicted and then replaced with the appropriate behaviours.
Triggers

- **Level One Strategies** - called *Precorrection Strategies*

  - When precorrection strategies are used with correction strategies it provides an avenue for managing a wide range of behaviours that is effective and efficient.

  - Using both these strategies involves seven basis steps -
    - Identity the context (trigger) and the predictable problem behaviours
    - Specify the expected behaviour
    - Modify the context
    - Develop opportunities for behaviour practise
    - Provide positive and strong reinforcement when the expected behaviour is observed
    - Provide ongoing prompts of the expected behaviours
    - Continue with ongoing monitoring of the behaviours
Triggers

- **Level Two Strategies - Teaching Social Skills**

  - There are some students who are deficient in social skills so an effective social skills programme is needed to help de-escalating their behaviour.
  
  - Social skills are the resource that by which students develop and scaffold skills so to maintain quality interpersonal relationships.
  
  - When certain situations arise those students lacking in some social skills find it difficult to respond appropriately.
  
  - For those students who are lacking in social skills then those skills need to be systematically taught, within the same structured approach for academic areas.
Observations throughout any social skill intervention provide objective information for programme development.

Ensuring that the information gathered is valid and reliable is paramount, so a system of data collection is needed.

- Keep the recording process simple
- Develop precise definitions of the target behaviours for observations so it is known if the target behaviour has occurred.
- Record the aspect of the behaviours - frequency, rate, durations, intensity.
- Limit the number of behaviours that are being observed.
- Decide upon the number of observations to be completed.
- Continue to refine the data process so the observations are relevant to the purpose.
Sugai and Lewis (1996) identified that there were many descriptors of social skills and social competence.

When developing a social skill programme it is necessary to understand the differences so an understanding of the purpose, the direction and assessment can be made.

Social Competence
- "An evaluative term based on the judgments that a person has performed a social task competently", in comparison to a normed behaviour which is made by significant people in the instruction. (Gresham, 2002)

Social Skills
- The emphasis is on the actions or behaviours shown by the students in a specific context resulting in a social outcome and a positive change in application.

Social Skills Instruction
- Sugai and Lewis (1996) defined that as “Direct and planned instructions designed to teach specific social behaviours ......results in positive judgements of social competence form peers and adults’
Agitation

The main goal here is to use strategies to calm the student down, regain control before they escalate further.

3. Agitation
Agitation

**Strategies for Managing Agitation**

- **Teacher empathy**
  - Recognise that the student has a problem and communicate the concern with the student
  - Use of this strategy is more effective is the working relationship is established between the teacher and the student

- **Assisting to student to focus and refocus on the task at hand**
  - Often starting the task distracts the student and behaviour gets out of control, so if the teacher can assist the student in the early stages of the task, then the student will feel that they can achieve it.
  - The student’s agitation towards the task is then reduced.

- **Provision of space for the student**
  - Students are less likely to be distracted or annoy others if given space
  - Students can settle more quickly and refocus, and then feel comfortable about participating in the class activities

- **Give assurance and extra time for work to be done**
  - Students who become agitated do not have good problem solving and time management skills, which is why they redirect their focus through their behaviour.
  - Provide them with time and assurance so they remain clam and continue to believe that they can achieve the task.
Agitation

- **Strategies for Managing Agitation continued**

  - **Allow for student choice of activity**
    - When a student is becoming agitated a choice on their preferred work option may assist them to calm down.
    - Parameters for this need to be discussed carefully with the student.
    - Have more that one preferred activity so the student does not get bored with the one choice and the strategy backfires on the teacher.

  - **Use of teacher proximity**
    - the teacher stands near the desk when speaking so the student remains calm
    - Making passing comments with the student as the teacher roves around

  - **Independent activity time**
    - Provide the structural work that agitated students enjoy
    - Allows them to calm down but still save face as they are working without being distracted or losing focus
Agitation

- **Strategies for Managing Agitation continued**
  - **Passive activity time**
    - After a time of great activity time for reading a book, teacher read time allows these students to have the opportunity to quieten down
  - **Movement activities**
    - The student is getting restless so a change of pace and activity will help to get rid of excess energy
  - **Student self management of the problem behaviour**
    - this is the ultimate goal for student intervention programmes; involvement of the student and parent is essential to the success of any strategy developed
    - Help the student to their own agitations and triggers, so they can identify their own immediate need and respond accordingly
    - develops strategies with them that they can use when in this situation
    - Ensure that other staff members know of this arrangement
Acceleration

The last opportunity to avoid a peak behaviour outburst. Management strategies are very important during this time.

4. Acceleration
Acceleration

- The last opportunity to avoid peak behaviour.
- The steps to take to avoid this escalation of behaviour are:
  - Avoid escalating prompts
    - Accelerating behaviour is designed to engage the staff who then spend time with the unacceptable behaviour, which in turn leads to a reinforcing of the behaviour as the staff are engaged in attending to the undesirable behaviour.
  - The behaviours that staff need to avoid are:
    - Shouting
    - Cornering the student
    - Engaging in power struggles ie 'This is my room and you will ....’
    - Moving into the student’s space or leaning in.
    - Touching the student
    - Sudden or very quick responses
    - Making discrediting statements ie 'This is a high school not a pre school'.
    - Becoming defensive in your manner and arguing
    - Showing anger and frustration through your own body language
  - Avoid displaying any behaviour that is reactive towards the student.
Acceleration

The steps to take to avoid this escalation of behaviour are-

- **Maintain calmness, respect and detachment to the behaviours being seen**
  - Calmness - the most powerful response is no immediate response - PAUSE
  - Respect - focus on the student’s behaviour and not the student
  - Detachment - do not show anxiety yourself when talking with the student

- **Approach the student in a non-threatening manner**
  - Move slowly and quietly towards the problem situation, show no panic.
  - Speak privately with the student.
  - Speak calmly.
  - Be as still as possible - minimise your own body language.
  - Keep a reasonable distance from the student but too far that you lose contact.
  - Speak respectfully and maintain the calm.
  - Establish an eye level position but do not expect eye contact as the student may be experiencing a feeling of shame and cannot give eye contact.
  - Be brief and to the point.
  - Stay on the agenda and deal with the main issue only.
  - Avoid power struggles.
  - Acknowledge cooperation from the student.
  - Withdraw if the situation continues to escalate.
  - **USE COMMON SENSE AT ALL TIMES AND GET ASSISTANCE IF NEED BE.**
Acceleration

The steps to take to avoid this escalation of behaviour are:

- **Use non-confrontational limit setting directions**
  - The key is using this strategy lies in the delivery of the directions.
  - Establish initial set up of the plan:
    - Practise the steps with the class
    - Establish a list of negative consequences with the class, prior to an event
  - Present the information as a decision - the purpose is to present the focus of the discussion or interaction towards the expected behaviour
    - Present the expected behaviour and the consequence as the choice for the student to make
    - Allow some time for the student to make that choice ie 1 to 2 minutes
    - Withdraw form the student and attend to other student or do something else
  - Follow through on what is said.
Acceleration

The steps to take to avoid this escalation of behaviour are:

- De-brief
  - The focus of a de-brief is to *problem solve* and *prepare the student* so they will be able to make the best choice next time when another situation happens.
  - (Sugai & Colvin, 1997)
  - There are four basic steps for this process -
    - Identify the sequence of events that happened.
    - Isolate the decision moments during that sequence of events.
    - Evaluate the decisions made.
    - Identify acceptable decisions opportunities for future events.

- Ask the student four simple questions to help them focus -
  - What did you do that got you into trouble?
  - What was the effect on those around you?
  - What could you do next time?
  - What do you need to do now?
School procedures need to be developed to ensure the safety of all in the environment.
The best way to deal with a peak behaviour outburst is that schools have an action plan which details the duties of staff when such an outburst happens.

The main aim is to ensure that the environment remains as safe and supportive as possible.

Guiding Principles when developing a school action plan are -

- Safety is the number one priority of the plan.
- Remember that escalations will run their own course, even if they are frightening for those around at the time.
- Follow up all situations and have a team de-brief, after the student de-brief.
- Track the behaviour of students who demonstrate serious outbursts.
- Maintain communication links with whanau.
De-escalation

A series of steps to guide the student down from the peak period to a return of normal activities
De-escalation

- This is a transition stage from the peak stage to recovery for the student.
- The student is returning from a period of out-of-control behaviour where anger, rage, emotional upset dictate the behaviour to resuming normal emotional control, being able to function in their learning and become part of the class again.
- The timing of strategies use is important so a successful support and implementation can be achieved.
- The main purpose of this stage is to:
  - Provide support to the student so they can regain their composure.
  - Provide focus on cooperation.
  - The support is provided in a defined series of support steps.
De-escalation

- The support steps for this stage are -
  - Isolate the student
    - Select location
    - Provide suitable supervision
    - Allow for a cool-down time
    - Consider the length of time to cool down
  - Consider if the student needs to be sent home or remain at school
  - Engage them in independent work which they can experience success at by having clear learning criteria and intent
  - Complete the paperwork needed as per the school’s procedures
  - Determine the consequences
  - Return the environment to normal
  - Continue with regular activities

- When the support steps are followed in order there is more chance of the student will return to a calm and focused attitude, and resume classroom duties with success.
Recovery

The student regains their composure as they begin the transition back to the normal routine.
Recovery

- The strategies used for de-escalation are further used but are strengthened to provide the student with more composure, focus and cooperation.

- These steps to achieve the above are recommended -
  - Provide a continuance of focus on routines.
  - Do not negotiate the consequences for the serious behaviour - stick to the plan.
  - Provide recognition for when things go well, whatever the context.
  - Communicate a supportive outlook and expect that the student can succeed.
  - Establish a plan if necessary to support the student through this stage.
  - Record the debrief session for future reference, with copies to all parties.
Appendices  
(pages 150 to 164)

- Summary and Checklist for Acting Out Behaviours Cycle
- Behaviour Support Plan
- Sample Checklist for School Emergency Action Response Plan
- Behaviour Form for De-briefing
- Incident Debriefing Behaviour Form
- Debriefing Form

Reference Source
- Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behaviour in the Classroom
- Google Search - Geoff Colvin; George Sugai: many papers available.