

DE-ESCALATION AND MANAGEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH
EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES BY USING TECHNIQUES
FROM THE CRISIS PREVENTION INSTITUTE AND THE RESPONSE
GOAL-ORIENTED INTERVENTION MODEL

Approved _____  _____ Date: 1/27/10 _____

De-Escalation and Management of Students with Emotional Behavioral
Disabilities by Using Techniques from the Crisis Prevention Institute
and the Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model

A Seminar Paper Research

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science

In

Education

By

Jason Weittenhiller

2009

Abstract

DE-ESCALATION OF STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES BY USING TECHNIQUES FROM THE CRISIS PREVENTION INSTITUTE AND THE RESPONSE GOAL-ORIENTED INTERVENTION MODEL

Jason Weittenhiller

Under the Supervision of Sue Alborn-Yilek

In schools across America, more and more students are displaying acting out behavior that is both dangerous to themselves and others. This behavior is not just a special education issue anymore. The regular education teacher is now seeing students acting out in his classroom. The problem is, most regular education teachers do not know how to handle students that have been labeled EBD. Because of this, schools are starting to send teachers to different training programs to be better prepared to handle these students.

The focus of this paper is comparing two different programs that deal with de-escalating students. The first program, Crisis Prevention Institute, is a nationally known training organization that has trained over five million human service providers dating back to 1980. Alexandria Windcaller created the other program, The Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model. Windcaller has worked as a certified emergency medical technician for sixteen years and is a chief instructor of Aikido, a martial arts discipline.

These two programs teach very similar concepts when it comes to de-escalating a student. Both programs stress the importance of the intervener keeping control of his emotions. One way the intervener can keep his cool is by controlling his breathing. The most important idea these two programs stress is the use physical restraint as a last resort. The intervener wants to exhaust every avenue before he physically restrains a student.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE	i
TITLE PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Delimitations of the Research.....	2
Method of Approach.....	2
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	3
A. Crisis Prevention Institute Model	
1. Crisis Development Model	
a. Nonverbal Behavior	
b. Verbal Escalation Continuum	
c. Empathic Listening	
d. Precipitating Factors	
2. The Coping Model	
B. Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model	
The Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model	
Preventing a Conflict	
Personal Safety	
Scene Safety	
Creating Order	
III. CONCLUSIONS AND COMPARISION.....	
IV. REFERENCES.....	

Chapter One: Introduction

One problem that is becoming more prevalent in schools today is students acting out in behavior that is both dangerous to themselves and others. This issue is no longer just in special education. It is occurring more frequently in regular education as well. In return, many teachers do not know how to deal with these students, nor do they have the training to properly deal with the problems. Many educators and specialists believe that a teacher needs to “crack the whip” and let the student know that this type of behavior will not be tolerated. Others believe that the teacher needs to sit down and talk with the student to find out why they are acting out.

Schools are sending teachers to various training programs to educate them on how to handle students with emotional behavioral disabilities (EBD). Two specific training programs are Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) and The Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model. Both programs give techniques on how to de-escalate a student who is acting out. Both programs teach educators how to act in response versus reacting.

These two programs have been applauded and criticized. Some critics believe that physically restraining a child is both wrong and dangerous to the student. Others believe that simply talking to a student and telling them to breathe is not enough. Other critics give great reviews saying that the programs have changed the atmosphere at their school. The programs have taught their teachers how to deal with difficult situations and to stay in control of their emotions (CPI 2009).

Statement of the Problem

One problem that is becoming more prevalent in schools today is students acting out in behavior that is both dangerous to themselves and others. This issue is no longer just in special education. It is occurring more frequently in regular education as well. In return, many teachers do not know how to deal with these students, nor do they have the training to properly deal with the problems. Throughout this paper, I will explain how to manage students with emotional disabilities in a safe and professional manner.

Delimitations of the Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, over sixty (60) days. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC and Academic Search Elite as the primary sources. Key search topics included “crisis management”, “CPI”, “Leading Chaos; An Essential Guide to Conflict Management”, and “behavior modification”.

Method of Approach

I reviewed literature on two programs designed to help teachers deal with students exhibiting negative and adverse behaviors in school – the CPI model and the Goal Oriented Intervention Model. I compared features of each program.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) is a program that many schools are implementing into their district. “The program is a safe, nonharmful behavior management system designed to help human service professionals provide for the best possible care, welfare, safety, and security of disruptive, assaultive, and out-of-control individuals-even during their most violent moments.” (CPI Participant workbook for the nonviolent crisis intervention-training program 2005, p. 6). One particular behavior that is seen is self-injurious behavior or SIB. This refers to “acts people direct toward themselves that result in tissue damage” (Fucilla-Ristic 2005, p. 3).

This program has trained over five million human service providers dating back to 1980. These human service providers come from a wide range of fields including education, security, law enforcement, mental health, and healthcare.

One goal that CPI seeks is to use physical restraint as a last resort and only when other methods of intervention have been attempted (CPI Refresher workbook for review of the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005). Studies have shown that when CPI is used properly by itself or along side another management program, seclusion and child restraints have greatly decreased (Witte 2007 and LaFond 2007). In return, CPI has helped create an environment that is safer for the intervener and the students.

Crisis Development Model

The first concept CPI teaches is the developmental process of a crisis. The first thing the intervener will notice when a student is losing control of his emotions is anxiety. Anxiety is a noticeable change in a person’s behavior (CPI Refresher workbook for review of the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005). This may

include, but is not limited to, pacing, biting pencils, biting fingernails, rocking, and changes in voice levels. At this stage, the intervener needs to take a supportive approach to the crisis. The intervener needs to be empathetic and nonjudgmental while attempting to alleviate the anxiety. One way the intervener can do this is by letting the student know that he notices that something is not right and that he cares (CPI Refresher workbook for review of the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005).

The intervener also needs to analyze the student's behavior. There are times when a teacher misinterprets one behavior for another. An example is watching a student not do anything at his desk. The teacher may assume the student is off task and not doing what he is supposed to. However, the student is simply taking a break from his work (Schubert 2008). As a teacher, the intervener needs to make sure he does not jump to conclusions and turn a simple problem into a crisis.

The next step the student will exhibit on the crisis development model is becoming defensive. Here the student will begin to lose rationality. The student may also become belligerent and challenge authority by shouting, using profanity, and being disrespectful (CPI Refresher workbook for review of the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005). At this point, the intervener needs to take control of a potentially violent situation by setting limits. The intervener needs to explain the consequences for the behavior and also give the student acceptable options.

The next step in the crisis development model is the acting-out student. This is when the student loses total control of his actions, which results in a physical acting out episode (CPI Participant workbook for the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005). The student also has no rationality. The intervener needs to use nonviolent

physical crisis intervention. This is a safe non-harmful control that uses restraint techniques to safely control a student until he regains control of his behavior (CPI Participant workbook for the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005).

The final step in the crisis development model is the tension reduction stage. This is when the student will show a decrease in physical and emotional energy, which occurs after a person has acted out and is characterized by regaining rationality. At this point, an intervener needs to use therapeutic rapport. The intervener will make an attempt to reestablish communication with an individual who is experiencing tension reduction (CPI Participant workbook for the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005). This is not the time to punish the student.

Nonverbal Behavior

About 60% of what we convey is done nonverbally. This is a very important thing for the intervener to remember when he is dealing with a student. The intervener may not be aware of it, but his body language might be conveying a message he is not trying to send. Things to keep in mind are facial expressions, gestures, postures, movements, and body motion (CPI Refresher workbook for review of the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005).

When dealing with a student, the intervener needs to honor the student's personal space. Each person has a different comfort zone. CPI teaches to stand one and one-half to three feet away from the student (CPI 1995). The intervener will take a non-aggressive stance with his feet turned at a 45-degree angle. This stance keeps the intervener safe by protecting his vitals, allows for easy escape, is non-challenging, communicates respect, and allows for safety for both the student and the intervener (CPI 1995).

Verbal Escalation Continuum

As the student starts to become agitated, he will exhibit behaviors that follow CPI's Verbal Escalation Continuum (CPI 1995). These behaviors need to be recognized by the intervener so the intervener knows how to proceed. The intervener also has to be aware that not every student will follow the steps one through five in order. The intervener may have a student skip a few steps and jump right into the release state.

The first sign of an impending crisis will be questioning. The student will start to question and challenge authority (CPI Refresher workbook for review of the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005). For example, the student may want to know why he has to do a particular assignment. At this point, the intervener needs to give rational responses. "Because I said so" is not a good response. The student is looking for a fight and the intervener does not want to add fuel to the fire. Another technique the intervener can use is redirecting the student's questions. It is important not to get into a power struggle with the student. (CPI Refresher workbook for review of the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005).

The next step on the continuum is refusal. The student will start to lose rationality, may ignore the intervener, or become noncompliant. The intervener needs to set limits that are clear, concise, and reasonable. This means that the punishment needs to fit the crime. The limits also need to be enforceable. The intervener does not want to make idle threats. The students will notice if the intervener does not follow through on his punishments. Another strategy the intervener can use is giving choices for the student to follow. When giving choices, the intervener needs to make sure to state the positive

consequence first followed by the negative (CPI Refresher workbook for review of the nonviolent crisis intervention training program 2005).

Following the refusal stage on the continuum is the release stage. This stage will be where the student will have a verbal and or nonverbal release of emotion. They will also have a loss of rationality. The student can kick, scream, swear, cry, or throw things. This stage requires the intervener to use his or her judgment and common sense. If the student is not in danger of harming themselves or others, the intervener can let the student vent. The student has a lot of bottled up anger and emotion that needs to be released. As the student is venting, the intervener needs to remove the audience. He or she needs to send the rest of the class to a designated area. With the audience gone, the student who is acting out has a better chance of calming down (CPI Participant workbook for the nonviolent crisis intervention-training program 2005). The intervener can also state non-threatening directives and give the student choices. The intervener needs to make sure to talk to the student in a calm and caring voice.

The next step on the continuum is the intimidation stage. At this stage, the student will verbally and or nonverbally threaten the intervener and or classmates. First and foremost, the intervener needs to make sure the audience is out of the room. Then the intervener needs to call for a team member for assistance. Once the team member has arrived, the team will use nonviolent physical crisis intervention on the student. The intervener needs to avoid using individual intervention if at all possible for the safety of the student and the intervener (CPI 1995).

The final step on the verbal escalation continuum is the tension reduction stage. Here, the student will have a drop in energy, which occurs after almost every crisis

situation. The student will begin to calm down and become rational again. The intervener needs to establish therapeutic rapport with the student (CPI Participant workbook for the nonviolent crisis intervention-training program 2005). The intervener needs to rebuild his relationship with the student by using communication. The intervener can ask what happened, why the student became mad, and give options that the student can use next time he feels himself getting upset (CPI 1995). This is however not the time to issue punishments.

Empathic Listening

A great quality of an intervener is being able to listen to what the student has to say. If a student is talking to an intervener, that is a great sign. It shows that he still is rational enough to listen and exchange in conversation. When talking to a student, the intervener must be non-judgmental. The intervener must come in with an open mind and allow the student to talk. The intervener also needs to give his undivided attention to the student. Looking around the room, at his watch, or talking to another person all broadcast that the intervener does not care and is not interested in what the student has to say.

An intervener needs to pay close attention to what a student is really saying. The student may be giving hidden messages about what is really wrong with him. Also, when talking to a student, the intervener should allow time for silence so the student can reflect on what was just said. Silence is not necessarily a bad thing. Some students will need time to process the thoughts in his head (CPI 1995).

Precipitating Factors

Precipitating factors are “internal or external causes of acting out behavior over which a staff member has little or no control over” (CPI Participant workbook for the nonviolent crisis intervention-training program 2005, p.11). This behavior could be caused by a person’s family, lack of sleep, pressure, stress, finances, drugs, and medication side effects. First and foremost, the intervener needs to use rational detachment and recognize that he is seldom the cause of the acting out behavior, just the target (CPI 1995). Rational detachment is the ability of the intervener to not take the attacks personally (CPI 1995).

Teamwork helps when dealing with precipitating factors. Teachers need to communicate with each other to help identify precipitating factors. If a student is in first grade and the first grade teacher notices that every time “Billy” comes back from dad’s he throws fits, that teacher needs to pass that information on to “Billy’s” second grade teacher. This way the second grade teacher does not need to reinvent the wheel. The second grade teacher can prepare and have a plan of action ready when “Billy” comes back from his dad’s.

Another strategy for an intervener to use when dealing with precipitating factors is to celebrate success. Students that have a troubled home life tend not to hear a lot of praise. The student often has people point out the negatives in his life. When the student comes to school and does something well, the intervener needs to reinforce the behavior and let the student know he did a wonderful job.

The Coping Model

In the past, post interventions tended to focus more on punishment as a means to correct student behaviors. According to Facilla, “The punishment fails to address the cause of behavior or to teach more appropriate means of communication” (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005 p. 45). CPI uses the Coping Model to help interveners and students learn more about why the behaviors are happening and what can be done to prevent the behaviors from happening again. CPI does not believe that punishing a student will help prevent the behavior from happening again. CPI’s goal for using the Coping Model is to “Assess current staff and organizational efforts and develop an effective plan for the future” (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005 p. 45).

The first step in the Coping Model is the control stage (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005). At this stage, everyone involved is given the opportunity to regain himself emotionally and physically before continuing with the intervention. When a student displays challenging behavior towards a teacher, the teacher can become agitated and frustrated. It is important for an intervener to have his emotions in check before continuing with the intervention. If the intervener cannot get control of his emotions, the intervener should remove himself from the situation. It is also important for other interveners to be watching team members for signs of frustration. If the intervener sees that another team member is still agitated, he should ask the team member to step out of the situation. A common way to do so is by telling the staff member that he has a phone call. This is basically a polite way to tell the teacher that is agitated that he needs to leave the room. It allows the team member a way out that will not be embarrassing in front of the student.

The next step in the Coping Model is the orient stage (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005). This is where the intervener establishes the basic facts of the situation. The intervener will make a list of behaviors that will be dealt with during the intervention. The list needs to be very specific and clearly written out. The description should explain “what is being done including information regarding the intensity and duration, who is doing it, to whom it is being done, and where and when it is being done” (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005 p. 46).

The next step in the Coping Model is the patterns stage (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005). Here, the intervener will take the information obtained in the orient stage and start to look for patterns of behavior. The intervener wants to look for possible triggers as well. Then the intervener will look at the teachers’ responses to the behavior. At times, a student will act out desiring a response. According to Fucilla, “it helps people avoid something undesirable or provides some type of self-stimulation” (Fucilla 2005 p. 4). If a student does not want to do a math worksheet, he may act out which will result in removal from the classroom. In return, the student then got what he wanted and did not have to finish the math sheet.

The next step is the investigative stage. Here the intervener will find other avenues he can try when dealing with the challenging behavior. Simply punishing a student is not an option. The idea of CPI’s Coping model is to prevent not punish (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005). The intervener will also find resources that would be beneficial in assisting with the challenging behavior. There are a variety of services and organizations out there that can bring something in that a school cannot provide.

The fifth step in CPI's Coping Model is the negotiation stage. Here the intervener will negotiate changes that will improve future interventions (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005). The first step for the intervener is to set-up reinforcement strategies. "In order to positively support the established behavior intervention plan" states Fucilla, "Family and team must select reinforcers that are meaningful and individualized" (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005 p. 49). This means that the intervener will sit down with the student's family and identify different things that will help the student succeed. The reinforcement strategies need to be aligned with the student's interests. The same types of things will not motivate every student. Even if the intervener finds something that sparks an interest in a student, the reinforcer may still lose its effectiveness. Re-evaluation is key to running a successful intervention (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005).

The final step in CPI's coping model is the give stage (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005). In this stage, the intervener will give encouragement and support to the student. Many times, the behavior will get worse before it gets better. The intervener will need to be patient and allow time for the intervention plan to work. The intervener can also take time to celebrate minor achievements. When a student and an intervener are both working hard, it is important to acknowledge when progress is made. As the student slowly starts to have more success, the intervener will raise the expectation level and start to encourage the student to become more independent (Fucilla-Ristic Spring 2005).

Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model

The Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model is another program model to assist with the de-escalation of student behaviors. Alexandria Windcaller, who is a conflict management specialist, created this program. Windcaller has worked as a

certified emergency medical technician for sixteen years and is a chief instructor of Aikido, a martial arts discipline. Her conflict management program is taught to schools, law enforcement agencies, military personal, and juvenile treatment facilities throughout the country (Windcaller 2002).

The Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model teaches an intervener to act to a particular situation rather than react (Windcaller 2002). This program also teaches the intervener to stay in control of his emotions and avoid the get even attitude. It is essential for the intervener to remain calm and avoid further escalation of the conflict.

According to Windcaller, “Miscommunication, fatigue, and stress are everyday factors that can fan the flames of dispute...When a conflict escalates to the point that confusion, lack of direction, or loss of self-control are experienced there is chaos...Instead of moving through a dispute and seeking resolution, people in conflict tend to get stuck in crisis mode...It is all too common for people to use conflict as an excuse for their failure to exercise self-control” (Windcaller 2002, p. 7). This is why the intervener needs to keep his emotions under control and not further escalate the problem. The intervener needs to get the student calm and semi-rational so the student can be reasoned with and given options.

The Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model is broken down into five different goals. They are the Crisis Prevention Goal, the Personal Safety Goal, the Scene Safety Goal, the Conflict Management Goal, and the Physical Management Goal. During the Crisis Prevention Goal, the intervener wants to prevent any conflicts from occurring. The intervener will identify potentially dangerous indicators and try to eliminate the conflict before it escalates into a crisis. The second goal is the Personal Safety Goal. At

this point, the intervener wants to insure his own personal safety. The intervener does this by keeping his self-control, calling for back up, having someone else intervene if he cannot control his emotions, or not intervening at all. If a student is displaying a release of emotion and is not in danger of harming himself or others, the intervener may allow the student to vent. During the Scene Safety Goal, the intervener will make the scene safe for both himself and the student by separating the conflicting parties, removing physical objects, moving away from spectators, creating an alliance with the student, and containing the upset student. During the Conflict Management Goal, the intervener is going to help the student regain a sense of self-control. The intervener needs to get the student into a semi-rational state so he can think more clearly. The final goal is the Physical Management Goal. The idea behind this goal is to cause no harm (Windcaller 2002). When an intervener is forced to use physical restraints on a student, it is imperative that the intervener's emotions are completely under control. This is easier said than done. It takes great will power to avoid the "get even" attitude after a student has punched, kicked, spit on, or verbally abused the intervener.

Preventing a Conflict

The first step an intervener wants to use in de-escalating a student is to use the look, listen, and feel approach. "The feel, look, and listen approach to identifying warning indicators" states Windcaller, "Is quick and easy to use...Recognizing indicators of an imminent conflict is an essential crisis prevention and conflict management skill" (Windcaller 2002 p. 10). When the intervener uses the feel approach, he or she listens to his or her gut instincts and intuition to detect trouble. Many times a person's body can sense that something is not right or out of sorts.

When the intervener uses the look approach, he is visually looking for indicators or threats. One key to look for is how a student is posturing himself. The posture will tell the intervener what approach he should take with the student. If the intervener witnesses a defensive posture, such as clinched fists or chest out, the intervener knows he is dealing with a student who is agitated. The intervener may also witness a student displaying fear. Here the student may have his head down, can be shaking, or have his arms crossed. The intervener then knows he is approaching a student that needs to be reassured and comforted (Windcaller 2002).

Another key part of the look approach is scanning the crowd when a large group is present. When an intervener makes eye contact with everyone, he can usually figure out who is involved in the conflict and who is just a spectator. Making eye contact also assures everyone that the intervener is in charge and in control of the situation (Windcaller 2002).

The last approach is the listening approach. Here the intervener needs to listen to the student. What is the tone of the student? What are they really trying to say? The intervener needs to attentively listen to what the student is saying. Many times, a student will give clues to what is really bothering them when he or she is speaking to you.

A student's breathing pattern may also indicate an impending crisis. If a student is angry, he will breathe with great force and his nostrils will flare. A student that is displaying frustration will breath with heavy sighs and may blow air through his teeth. A student that is displaying fear will generally hold his breath or take quick shallow breaths. By paying close attention to a student's breathing patterns, the intervener will have a better understanding of the situation he is about to deal with.

A very critical technique in preventing a conflict is the use of active listening (Windcaller 2002). By listening to a student, the intervener can engage the student into conversation and help prevent a simple problem from escalating into a crisis. The intervener can use leading statements such as “Please go on” and “Could you say more”. These simple sentences say to the student that the intervener cares and is interested in what he has to say. The intervener can also use nonverbal cues to let the student know he is listening. These can be as simple as a head nod.

Repetitive behavior is the cause of many conflicts. Repetitive behavior can be anything from a student who constantly disrupts class and distracts others to a student who is constantly getting into fights at recess. When a teacher feels that a student is displaying repetitive behavior, the teacher can create an action plan for that student. This plan will educate the student on how to deal with his or her emotions or particular behavior. The student that is getting into fights at recess would learn techniques and strategies for different ways to vent his anger. The plan gives the student options to work with rather than just raising a fist.

When an intervener sits down with a student to work on an action plan, the student needs to be able to listen and understand what is being said. The intervener does not want to create a plan with the student while he is in an agitated state. When the student is in an agitated state, the student generally is thinking about what made him upset and is not able to take in new things. Once the student has calmed down, then the intervener can begin with the action plan. “Learning to take responsibility for our actions is an important life skill” (Windcaller 2002 p. 24).

When creating an action plan, the intervener and the student need to collaborate on goals. They need to agree what would be considered a successful outcome. At first, the intervener needs to set the goals at a minimal level. The intervener will want to find something the student can accomplish so he can celebrate the small victories. As time goes on, the intervener can start raising the bar so the student can start working towards self-reliance. If the intervener sees the student who fights at recess walk away from an altercation, the intervener can walk over and congratulate that student for making great steps in his plan.

Personal Safety

“The thing to remember is that crisis intervention and crisis resolution are two separate and distinct steps that typically happen in sequence-they are rarely simultaneous” (Windcaller 2002 p. 34). “Expecting a person to think coherently when in distress only generates more frustration” (Windcaller 2002 p. 35). The first thing an intervener needs to do when approaching a conflict situation, is first and foremost make sure the scene is safe. After personal safety is established, the intervener needs to separate the individuals involved. This allows everyone a chance to calm down and to start thinking clearly again. To many times, a teacher comes running over to a conflict and yells out, “Who started this”? In this case, the teacher tried to resolve the problem before calming everyone involved. Trying to jump right to resolving can further escalate a conflict into a crisis.

One common mistake an intervener can make is the use of the “I can take care of myself attitude” (Windcaller 2002 p. 39). The intervener is placing himself at risk when he has to physically restrain a student. The intervener should evaluate the potential

dangers before entering a conflict alone. When in doubt, the intervener should wait for a team member to arrive before entering a conflict. If a team member is not near, the intervener may cautiously enter the conflict making sure to ensure personal safety.

When entering a conflict, an intervener must have complete self-control. This ensures safety for both the intervener and the students involved. Windcaller defines self-control as “The ability to exercise restraint over your own impulse, emotions, or desires” (Windcaller 2002 p. 39). One way to help ensure self-control is to use the pause and exhale method (Windcaller 2002). If an intervener is standing in the hallway and hears yelling coming from a classroom, the teacher will not simply rush into the room. The intervener needs to stop in the doorway and take in a deep breath, hold it, and then exhale. While the intervener is doing this, the intervener can check his body language. Common signs of tension and anger are having the chest stuck out, shoulders pulled up, or fists clinched. Any of these signals can further agitate a student and convey the message that the intervener is a threat not an ally. Once the intervener has paused, taken a deep breath, and exhaled, he may enter the room. By taking five seconds to pause and exhale, the intervener has ensured that he has self-control and is ready to handle the situation.

Once the intervener has entered the room and approached the individual, the intervener will assume the neutral stance (Windcaller 2002). This stance helps protect the intervener and displays a neutral non-threatening position. With a right-handed student, the intervener will put his or her left foot forward and turn himself at a 45-degree angle. The knees should be slightly flexed so the intervener can move quickly if need be. The hands should be level with the waist. The intervener may want to loosely cross his

hands. When the intervener is positioning himself, he needs to make sure the student has been given an escape route. Blocking the student into a corner can result in the student lashing out. Also, take into consideration the student's sense of space. The intervener does not want to get too close to the student, which can make the student feel uncomfortable.

Scene Safety

“Once personal safety is attained, the next step is to appraise the level of safety in the surrounding environment” (Windcaller 2002 p. 47). One quick way to assess scene safety is to use the feel, look, listen approach. Feel refers to the intervener's gut feelings. Look refers to observing the entire scene and looking for potential dangers. Listen refers to listening to the tone of the students' voices. Does the intervener hear fear, anger, or students simply messing around?

If an intervener is dealing with more than one student in a conflict, the intervener can secure scene safety by separating the conflicting parties. The intervener can say, “Billy come with me,” or “Let us get out of here and take a break” (Windcaller 2002 p. 48). By separating conflicting individuals, the intervener is allowing the student time to clam down and become rational.

Another way to establish scene safety is to remove any objects that could pose a threat. Any thing a student can throw or tip over is dangerous and should be removed if possible. If chairs or tables block an exit, they should be moved so the student does not feel trapped and so the intervener can escape if necessary.

When an intervener is dealing with a conflict and bystanders are watching, the intervener has two different choices. The first choice is to move the onlookers away from

the scene. This will keep the onlookers safe and removes the audience for the student who is acting out. The other option for the intervener is to move the student that is acting out away from the group. This will ensure the safety of the student that is acting out and the bystanders.

When an intervener is working with a student, the intervener needs to create an alliance with that student. The student needs to feel that the intervener is looking out for his best interest. One thing an intervener wants to avoid is standing face-to-face in a confrontation with a student. By standing toe-to-toe with a student, the intervener can become the target for the student's anger. "Creating an alliance helps me to achieve scene safety quickly because I am working with the group instead of trying to control the group" states Windcaller (2002 p. 52).

As an intervener is approaching a student, the intervener needs to have a "battle plan" in mind. The first few words spoken at an intervention are extremely important. Those words will set the tone for the rest of the intervention. According to Windcaller, "Avoid using interpretive statements like, I understand that you are angry" (Windcaller 2002 p. 52). An intervener can never fully understand what the student is going through. It also makes the student feel like the intervener is belittling his problem. A better comment would be "I would like to understand" (Windcaller 2002 p. 52) or "I would like to hear all about it" (Windcaller 2002 p. 54).

Creating Order

"The goal, once personal and scene safety is ensured, entails helping a person in crisis regain a sense of self-control. Body language reveals fear in the form of tight shoulders, wide eyes, shaking voice, a flushed or sweating face, and speech like, "Uh,

Hmmm, well..." (Windcaller 2002 p. 68). When dealing with a student who is agitated, the intervener needs to use a calm neutral approach. One method used to create a calm attitude is the pause and exhale method. "When you are emotionally involved in a crisis or feeling threatened, it is easy to lose yourself in the conflict" (Windcaller 2002 p. 70). It is important for the intervener not to be drawn into the argument or become part of the crisis. The intervener needs to be the calm neutral party.

"As a conflict management technique, creating an exit can be both visible and verbal (Windcaller 2002 p. 73). If a student who is agitated is not harming himself or others, an intervener can allow the student to walk away and calm down. There is no reason to corner a student and further escalate the situation. The intervener can also give the student verbal escapes. Here the intervener gives the student different options throughout the conflict. When the student makes a choice, he feels like it was his decision and on his terms.

One thing the intervener wants to avoid is confrontation. Confrontation does not give the student an exit. More times than not, it will further agitate the student. According to Windcaller, "Confrontation is focused on stopping behavior rather than helping those involved in the conflict feel safe or gain skills" (Windcaller 2002 p. 73). By confronting a student, no lesson or skill is learned. The intervener may have temporarily stopped the behavior but not fixed it. The student did not learn how to deal with his emotions and what to do the next time he or she feels angry.

When a student who is agitated first approaches an intervener, the intervener may be caught off guard. Many times, the intervener will respond with a wordy response or get defensive. A technique that can be used here is to say a lot by saying a little

(Windcaller 2002). When caught off guard, the intervener can respond, “Good morning Tim.” This assists the intervener in becoming a neutral party in the conflict and gives himself time to collect his thoughts. It is important for the intervener to remember that students who are worked up have trouble hearing and understanding a lot of words. The intervener needs to keep his responses short and to the point. The intervener does not want to try to resolve the problem right way. The key step right now is to restore order and calm the student (Windcaller 2002).

Another technique that an intervener can use is silence (Windcaller 2002). When a student is venting, the intervener can simply listen. At times, it may be difficult to listen especially if the intervener thinks the student is in the wrong. The intervener needs to remember that it is healthy for the student to release his emotions rather than just bottling it all up. Actively listening to a student and showing you care can go a long way when attempting to de-escalate a student.

“Changing a reputation is hard enough to do, but it becomes nearly impossible when everyone surrounding him expects failure. Instead, the intervener should create an opportunity for a ray of hope that people can change for the better” (Windcaller 2002 p. 94). The intervener must be non-judgmental and believe in the student. Every person deserves a fresh start and a second chance. When starting a new year, the intervener needs to use a positive attitude and give the student every chance to succeed. There are times when a teacher tries to lay the law down on day one even though the student has not done anything yet. This does not start the year off on a positive note. This also does not assist in building a positive relationship where the intervener shows that he has the student’s best interests in mind.

Chapter Three: Conclusions and Comparisons

The Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model and CPI are two comparable de-escalation programs. Both use similar techniques and principles. The first key principle in both models is self-control. The intervener needs to have his emotions under control before he enters any conflict situation. An effective way to control ones emotions that both programs teach is the use of breathing. Focusing on breathing calms the intervener down and allows him to think more rationally. It will allow the intervener to make better and more thought out decisions.

Another similarity between the two programs is attempting to identify a crisis before it begins. There are many different warning signs and indicators a student display before having a blow-up. It is the intervener's job to decode these warnings. Many times, an intervener can diffuse a problem before it starts by paying close attention to a student's body language, words, or behaviors.

A base principle for both CPI and the Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model is safety. Before any intervention begins, the intervener needs to ensure he is personally safe. The intervener also needs to make sure the scene is safe. This means removing any potential dangers and obstacles. This also means separating the student who is agitated from any bystanders. Finally, the intervention should be a team effort whenever possible. This helps assure the safety of the student and the interveners. Any time there is too much danger and safety becomes a concern, the intervener should terminate the intervention.

As a strict guideline for these two de-escalation models, physical restraint is used as only a last resort. The only time an intervener is to use physical restraint is when all

other avenues have been exhausted. When using physical restraint, the intervener should use a teammate whenever possible. This helps insure the safety for both the student and the interveners.

“Interveners who project confidence and self-control present a convincing authority and a can-do attitude. People in the middle of crisis are more likely to submit to a person who appears levelheaded than to an intervener who is frantic.” (Windcaller 2002 p. 58) The Response Goal-Oriented Intervention Model and CPI teach the intervener that it is his attitude, behavior, and decisions that will either de-escalate a problem or make it worse. At all times, the intervener needs to be in control of his actions and emotions.

References

Crisis Prevention Institute (2009). *Success Stories/ Testimonials*.

http://www.crisisprevention.com/program/successstories_testimonials.html

Crisis Prevention Institute (2007). *CPI's Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training Program General Information and Empirical Support*.

<http://www.crisisprevention.com/research/pdf/07-CPI-INT-005.pdf>

Crisis Prevention Institute (2005). *Participant workbook for the nonviolent crisis intervention-training program*.

Crisis Prevention Institute (2005). *Refresher workbook for review of the nonviolent crisis intervention training program*.

Crisis Prevention Institute (1995). *Participant workbook nonviolent crisis intervention*.

Fucilla-Ristic, R. (2005). *Self-injurious behavior in people with developmental disabilities*. http://www.crisisprevention.com/research/pdf/Fucilla_SIB_article

Fucilla-Ristic, R. (Spring 2005). Post-crisis intervention for individuals with autism spectrum disorder. *Vol. 14*(Issue 1), p44-51.

LaFond, R. (2007). *Reducing seclusion and restraint for improved patient and staff Safety*. <http://www.crisisprevention.com/research/pdf/Lafond%20from%2007-JSM-JOU-002.pdf>

Schubert, J. (Winter 2008). The Meaning of Behavior. *Reclaiming Children & Youth*,
Vol. 16(Issue 4), p17-18.

Windcaller, A. A. (2002). *Leading chaos: An essential guide to conflict management*.
Athol, MA: Haley's.

Witte, L. (2007). *Using training in verbal skills to reduce the use of seclusion and
restraint*. [http://www.crisisprevention.com/research/pdf/Witte%20from%2007-JSM-
JOU-002.pdf](http://www.crisisprevention.com/research/pdf/Witte%20from%2007-JSM-JOU-002.pdf)