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***Watson Takes a Close Look At…….***

***The What and the Why of Stress and Behavior***

***Part 3***

 ***In the Moment***

How do you react when a student is near a door threatening to leave the building; when a child is climbing on a desk, when he/she has just hit a peer? The wrong adult reaction may increase the “fight/flight” response and the “acting out” behavior. The 1st priority in these cases is to de-escalate the situation. Part 1 of this series provides understanding of what is physiologically happening to a student under stress. Part 2 identifies numerous stress reducers for students. Many of these strategies are described as preventative strategies or tools to use when students are first agitated or anxious. When a student reaches a level of stress that is high enough to produce the above listed behaviors, it is more difficult to intervene. Adults need to continue to understand and support the student who is now dealing with escalated emotions and consequent confusion. A combination of strategies can be used, with de-escalation the priority.

* Ask the student open questions, empathize or agreeing, and/or reframe the problem.
* Next, begin asking questions in a choice format. (see *Watson Takes a Closer Look – Children Making Choices to Increase Positive Behavior*) This can immediately give the student control over his/her uncontrollable situation
* Write the issues down with the student and add a plan to solve the problem
* If the plan cannot immediately be carried out, use choice questions as a re-directive activity.

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Think of the sequence as a formula:

**Agree + Plan + Choices = Diffusion = Calming Feeling of Control.**

The following is a real situation with a paraprofessional and a student: (intervention strategies are highlighted in yellow)

Carol, a student diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, had completed an exam in a Learning Support Room. She wanted to enter her regular classroom and immediately use the computer. The other students still had 20 minutes to complete the test and the teacher wanted her to wait.

Carol screamed that she wanted the computer now and would wear headsets. When she was told she had to wait, she ran down steps and stood by an exit door stating she was leaving the building and going home. (The word PARA indicates Paraprofessional)

PARA: **Tell me** what you want again so I totally understand (*serves as opening question)*

CAROL: I want to use the computer and I’ll use the headsets (very loudly)

PARA: **That makes sense to me***. (agreement)* I think we should ***write* that down** to be sure everyone understands and we can show Ms. Smith (principal). Do you want me to write it or do you want to? *(Choice option)* (The paraprofessional walks over to a small table away from the door and sits down w/paper and pencil)

CAROL: (walks over with the paraprofessional, sits down) You write it.

PARA: Ok now say it again and I will **write** it. (The paraprofessional writes what Carol dictates) At this point, trying to explain why Carol should wait would probably escalate the situation. Right now, de-escalation is still a priority. Carol is still stressed although starting to calm down.

They both go to look for the principal. She is not available and Carol falls to the floor.

PARA: **Should we** wait for the principal or go to your room to show your teacher, Ms. Jones your plan? *(choice)*

CAROL: Show my teacher.

Carol gets up and they walk towards the room but the door is still closed and students are still taking the test. Immediately the para utilizes a *redirection and choice strategy with knowledge of the child’s other motivators.*

PARA: They look like they are almost done, (*stays positive*) **do you want** me to get your favorite book or do you want to draw a fashion line while you wait? *(redirection/choice/motivators)*

CAROL: Oh! I’ll draw my fashion line.

As Carol draws, the paraprofessional intermittently *comments, asks questions, and* *converses*. The paraprofessional also checks in with the teacher to explain that when the students are finished Carol can get on the computer. (*Carry through with plan)*

In this situation the paraprofessional was faced with numerous situations including one that could have been harmful to the student. The paraprofessional *kept the conversation positive used questioning, agreement, writing, choices, redirection, and student motivators as combination strategies. In addition, she made sure the “plan” could be carried out. This also builds trust*. In the future the student may not resort to such a high level of reaction to her stress.

**ADULT VISUAL CUE – MIDDLE SCHOOL**:

One classroom created a visual reminder of the “formula” for the team. The formula reminder listed an example of a situation they dealt with in middle school. One student was to get on a computer when his work was completed. When he finished his work he got up and saw another student on the computer. He yelled, and positioned himself to throw a chair. The team utilized questions, agreement, choices and other motivators. Below is the visual reminder they then used to encourage use of the formula in the future:

**Formula**

1. CONCUR – showing empathy: “I would want to do that now too…”

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1. Help student make a plan: “Let’s figure out how you can do this. We can set the timer and make sure when it rings you can [be on the computer]”

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1. Give choices: “Do you want to set the timer or do you want me to?” “Do you want it set for 7 minutes or 10? While you’re waiting do you want to draw or look at a magazine?”

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1. Be sure student can carry out the plan

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