

De-Escalation Techniques

When trying to de-escalate a student, we should follow three broad techniques:

1. Intervene
2. Listen
3. Reflect

Intervene

- Intervene **early**
- Engage non-judgmentally
- Show support: “How can I help you?”
- Provide options: “Do you need a break?”
- Provide the access or escape the child seeks as early as possible

Listen

- Allow silence
- Ask open-ended questions: “Can you tell me more?”
- Avoid telling them how **you** feel
- Acknowledge and dignify expression of emotion

Reflect

- Be brief
- Respond calmly
- Repeat what the student has said
- Avoid interrupting or assuming
- Modulate our response based on where the student is in the escalation cycle

Here are some phrases you may find helpful as you are intervening, listening, and reflecting:

Adult Behavior	Useful Phrases
Be aware and attentive	<p>“I see you are balling your fists. Are you angry?”</p> <p>“Are you feeling sad? It’s ok to cry.”</p> <p>“It’s ok to feel mad. I’m here to keep you safe.”</p>
Acknowledge the difficulty with empathy	<p>“It’s very frustrating when your friend takes your toy.”</p> <p>“I know waiting can be hard.”</p> <p>“You’re feeling so angry right now. I sometimes get angry, too.”</p>
Encourage more information	<p>“Tell me more about what happened.”</p>
Make a statement guessing the meaning	<p>“Were you angry when John took your train?”</p> <p>“Were you frustrated when you had to wait to go to dramatic play?”</p>
Take action	<p>“Let’s try taking some deep breaths together.”</p> <p>“When you are ready to talk, I will be right over here. Then, we can find a solution together.”</p>