



NIM
CCS
New Mexico
Coalition for
Charter Schools



Deescalating Disruptive Student Behaviors

Hilary Heyl, LISW
EAP Development Consultant
Outcomes, Inc.

Rising Up!
Taking Charters to New Heights

2017 Annual Conference









Is a rigid, on going pattern of hostile, defiant behaviors towards adults of authority. ODD kids usually have other disorders, like Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD).

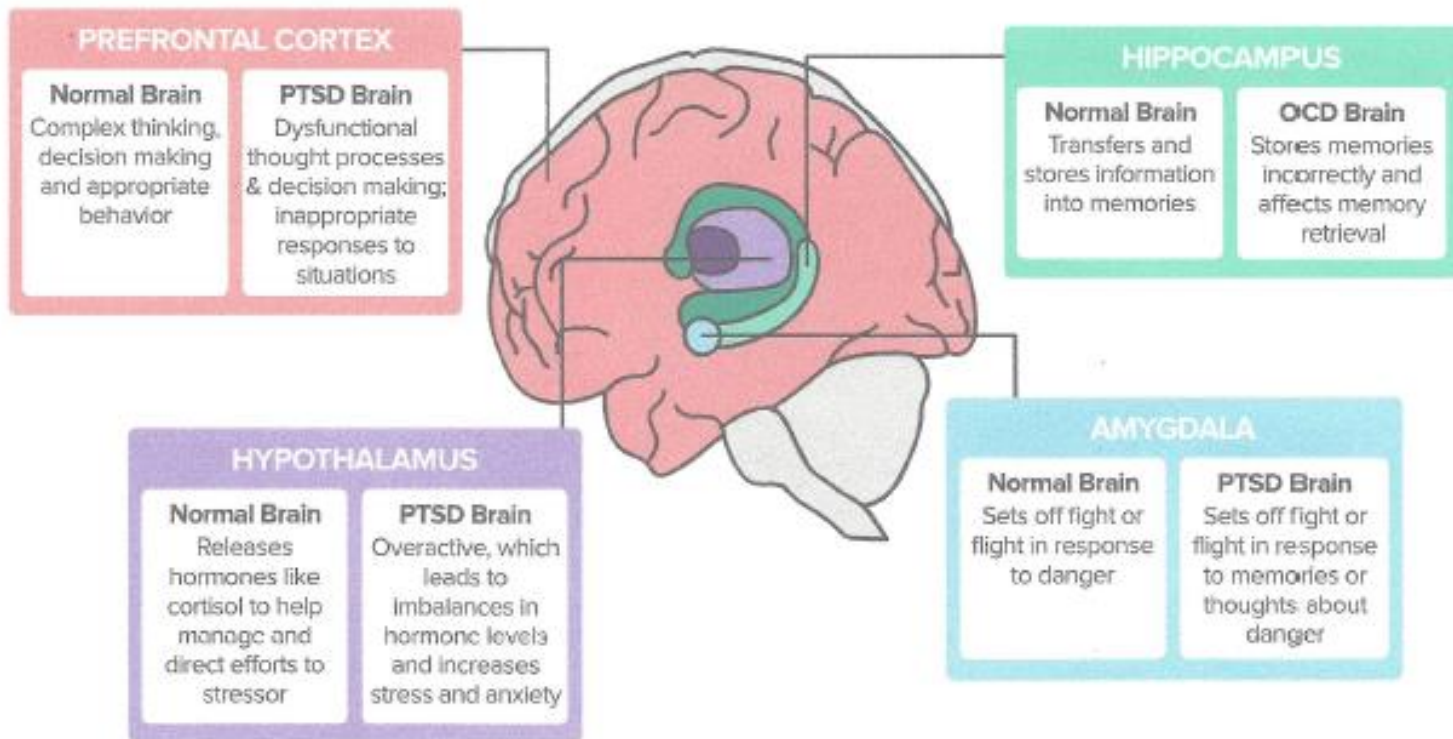
Prevalence of ODD

- The adolescent National Comorbidity Study provided estimates of lifetime prevalence [of Oppositional Defiance Disorder] with 12.6 percent with ODD and 6.8 percent positive for Conduct Disorder [the usual outgrowth of ODD] [**19.4%**]
- The median duration of symptoms was 5 to 6 years. ([Merikangas et al., 2010](#))

ADHD and PTS(D) Mess with the Brain!

From Khanacademy.org on PTSD, and American Academy of Child Psychiatry on ADHD

NORMAL INFORMATION PROCESSING AND PTSD MALFUNCTIONS IN THE BRAIN





Pity:
I acknowledge
your suffering.

Sympathy:
I care about
your suffering.

Empathy:
I feel your
suffering.

Compassion:
I want to relieve
your suffering.



Infographic by Robert Shelton, psychologist in a Californian high school

De-escalation takes place **EARLY**, before physical aggression

Spot early signs of agitation such as:

- balled fists
- fidgeting
- shaking
- 'eye-balling' another student
- head thrust forward
- clenched jaw
- speech becoming more rapid or high-pitched
- brow furrowed in anger

Five Non-Verbal Techniques of Deescalation

- **First, check in on your own flight/fight/freeze response, as well as your compassion level for what you know or imagine of the student's root causes for this behavior.**
- **Appear calm, even if you are not!**
 - Make sure you are not displaying the same signs of agitation that can be seen in the child: relax your fists, drop your shoulders down, do not hold eye contact and avoid standing square to the student
- **Maintain a neutral facial expression**
 - Even our eyebrows can indicate we are surprised or angry, and similarly our mouths can betray our emotions unwittingly. Another natural reaction we often have when under stress is to smirk or giggle, which must be avoided.

5 Non-verbal Deescalation Techniques, con't.

- **Allow space**
 - When someone is agitated, moving into one's personal space can be perceived as aggressive and escalate the situation. Staying some distance away will also help keep you safe should the student become physically aggressive
- **Control your breathing**
 - When we are stressed, angry or tense, our breathing becomes more shallow and rapid. Deeper, slower breaths are known to calm the nervous system. Often, a student will begin to match our own breathing pattern.

Three Verbal Deescalation Techniques

- **Acknowledge the student's feelings** shows that you have listened to them, and can be crucial when deescalating a situation; for example, "It must be really difficult for you ... thank you for letting me know."
 - Use words and phrases that de-escalate, such as:
 - “I wonder if...”
 - “Let’s try...”
 - “It seems like...”
 - “Maybe we can...”
- **Practical, positive, professional verbal interventions**
 - Lower your voice, keep your tone neutral and even.
 - Tell the student what you want them to do rather than what you do not want them to do; for example, “I want you to sit down, please” rather than “Stop arguing with me.”
 - Give the child take-up time following any direction and avoid backing them into a corner, either verbally or physically.
 - Give choices that are not threats, but realistic.

Three Verbal Deescalation Techniques (con't.)

- **Distraction and diversion can extremely useful, depending on age and the individual student**
 - When a student is aggressive, s/he is responding with his/her own fight-or-flight instincts and not thinking about his/her actions.
 - Distract him/her and engage the thinking brain, perhaps by changing the subject or commenting on something that is happening outside the window.

Things to Avoid Doing

- Do not make threats you cannot carry through, such as threatening to exclude the student.
- Do not be defensive or take it personally. What is being said may seem insulting and directed at you, but **this level of aggression is not really about you.**
- Do not use humor unless you are sure it will help and you have a very good relationship with the child.
- Do not use sarcasm or humiliate the child.

Contact Information

Hilary Heyl, LISW

Developer of YOUR EAP thru partnership with NMCCS

Outcomes, Inc.

hilaryhey@gmail.com 505-873-8683

