De-Escalation/Calming Strategies

I. Observe & Analyze
- What is happening?
- Is this challenging behavior common?
- Are they injuring themselves or others?
- Is there a potential for danger?
- Is the challenging behavior impacting the environment?

II. Intervening vs. Not Intervening
- What will happen if you intervene?
- Is there a NEED to intervene?

III. Strategy #1: The Help Strategy
- Use in the beginning stage of escalation
- Provide choice of options *immediately* available
- Ask open-ended question (e.g. how can I help you?, what can make it better?, etc.)
- Prompt specific request (e.g. I want to take a break, etc.)
- Following asking for help, provide encouragement (e.g. praise, give access to "help", etc.)

IV. Strategy #2: The Prompt Strategy
- Prompt *specific* calm down behavior (e.g. "take a deep breath" vs. "calm down")
- Calm down behavior should be incompatible with the challenging behavior (i.e. challenging behavior is impossible to do when incompatible behavior is occurring)
- Incompatible Behavior Examples: yelling-deep breathing, hitting-putting hands in pocket, pacing around the room-sitting down
- Prompt high-probability behavior: "simple" behavior, behavior they are likely to follow the direction to perform
- High-Probability Behavior Examples: answer a personal information question, identify a body part, sit down/stand up, etc.
- Following engaging in "calm" behavior, provide encouragement

V. Strategy #3: The Wait Strategy
- Can be used when behavior has escalated
- Waiting: giving person space (maintain everyone's safety), limit verbal attention/directives, limit eye contact
- "Wait" until behavior begins to de-escalate
- De-escalation examples: sitting down/remaining in 1 area for extended duration, sitting quietly, putting hands in lap, etc.
- When behavior begins to de-escalate, provide encouragement

- More effective than intervening & inadvertently providing reinforcement

VI. Summary

- Determine if intervention is needed
- Use strategy depending on stage of escalation
- De-escalation will occur in steps
- Can change strategy during process