

Imagine Challenges

When we understand the challenges our students face, we can recognize what is leading to escalated behavior. Review common challenges below and try to imagine how each would make you feel. Empathy helps us respond to behaviors with respect.

Communicating.

Students may not be able to tell you how they feel or what they need. This may lead to frustration.

What could lead to this feeling? Imagine being hungry or tired and not being able to tell others how you feel. Imagine having a headache, but no one understands your head hurts and that's why you're sad.

Understanding.

Students may have a challenging time following instructions or carrying over what they learned from one environment to another. They may lack social skills and not know the expectations of their peers.

Imagine being in a play and everyone knows their part except you. Imagine playing a game but not understanding the rules. How would that make you feel?

Processing sensory input.

Students may be hypersensitive which makes the world feel very overwhelming. They may also be hypo-sensitive and may seek out sensory input by running, squeezing too hard, throwing things, etc. Music, touch, hugs, people, lighting, and sounds have different effects on different people; they may be comforting or irritating.

Imagine listening to three people at a time during a rock concert in a thunderstorm. Imagine the lights surrounding you are twice as bright and flashing. Imagine it feels like your feet no longer touch the ground and you must grab on to the closest thing or you'll float away. How could this make you act?

Controlling impulses.

Students may not be able to process the results of their behavior before they act.

Imagine you have no control of words and sounds that come out of your mouth. Imagine you are scared, and you feel like the only way to escape is to run away. What are other examples?

Performing physical tasks.

Students may have trouble walking, holding a pencil, seeing the screen, or hearing the lesson.

Imagine someone asking you to nail two pieces of board together with a toy hammer. Imagine fixing lunch with your hands tied behind your back. How would you react? Would you hide or would you flee?

What are other challenges you experience with students and how can you better relate?