

Scenario #1:

Without use of Verbal De-Escalation

Setting: 9th grade art class. Emily is the student who the art teacher sent to the office last week for throwing pencils in class.

Stage 1: Calm

Student: [Looks calm and ready to work. Teacher waiting for class to sit.]

Stage 2: Trigger

Teacher: “Ok, class, today you will draw your favorite pet. If you don’t have a pet, just draw someone else’s pet and underneath the drawing, write why you like to spend time with this pet.”

Student: [Emily looks upset, angry, and sighs deeply.]

Teacher: “Emily, I don’t like that look on your face, and I am certainly not going to stand for more of your inappropriate behavior and acting like a child like you did last week, do you HEAR ME?”

Student: [Stares at teacher.]

Teacher: “DID YOU HEAR ME? Are you ignoring me? Now get drawing and follow directions this time EMILY!”

Student: “I’m not drawing a stupid pet!”

Teacher: “OH YES YOU ARE, or you’re losing privileges again and maybe even taking a trip to the principal’s office.”

Stage 3: Agitation

Student: [Emily knocks over the pencils.]

Teacher: “Now look what you did!!! Pick those up right now!”

Student: [Emily puts her hands on her head, confused as to what to do.]

Teacher: “I’ll give you until the count of 3 to PICK THOSE UP. 1, 2, . . .”

Student: [Emily slowly begins picking up the pencils.]

Stage 4: Acceleration

Teacher: [Teacher points at Emily.] “You are acting like someone half your age!! Maybe you’d like to join the 1st grade class at the elementary school! You should be ashamed of yourself!”

Student: [Emily picks up a pencil and waves it at the teacher, and screams:] “LEAVE ME ALONE!!”

Stage 5: Peak

Teacher: [Teacher gets right in Emily’s face.] “YOU BETTER CALM DOWN! I’m sure the entire class is sick and tired of your ridiculous behavior – now APOLOGIZE TO THE WHOLE CLASS RIGHT NOW!!!”

Student: “I HATE YOU!!!” [Emily throws a pencil at the teacher, knocks the table over, and runs out of the room.]

Teacher: [Yelling at the student down the hall.] “YOU GET BACK HERE RIGHT NOW!!!! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU’RE GOING? YOU BETTER BE HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE!!!”

Stage 6: De-Escalation, and **Stage 7: Recovery**, take place in the principal’s office. Not pleased, the principal realizes that an inordinate number of students from this particular teacher’s class end up in his office. He believes that this teacher would benefit from some training in verbal de-escalation strategies.

Scenario #2:

Verbal De-Escalation Implemented

Setting: 9th grade art class. Emily is the student, who the art teacher sent to the office last week for throwing pencils in class.

Stage 1: Calm

Student: [Looks calm and ready to work.]

Teacher: “Hello everybody! Welcome to Art Class! I see some students, like Emily, are in their seats with their pencil cups and tablets out and ready to go. Thank you for that!”

Stage 2: Trigger

Teacher: “Today, I thought we would draw and write about our favorite pet.”

Student: [Emily looks upset, angry, and sighs deeply.]

Teacher: “Emily, is something wrong?”

Student: “No.”

Teacher: “OK, class, please get started and I’ll be coming around the class to see how you’re doing.” [Teacher goes over to Emily, and sits about three feet away to speak privately.]

Student: “WHAT DO YOU WANT??!!”

Teacher: “Emily, I can tell something is bothering you. I wish you would share it with me.”

Student: “I’M NOT DRAWING A STUPID PET!”

Teacher: “I know you like to draw and you are a really good artist. Can you tell me what you are upset about?”

Student: “Nothing.”

Teacher: “Is it the assignment?”

Student: [Student puts her head in her hands and nods.]

Teacher: “What is it, Emily?”

Student: “My dog died last week. I loved him so much.” [Puts her head down on the desk and starts to cry.]

Teacher: “I am so sorry to hear that, Emily. I can certainly understand why this assignment would really upset you. I love my dogs, and I know how horrible it is to lose one. I would like to talk about this later in private if you want. For now, would you like to try to draw something else?”

Student: “I guess so.”

Teacher: “Ok, great. Have any ideas of what you might want to draw?”

Student: “Well, we are going on vacation this summer, and I have been thinking about that to make me feel better. So maybe I can draw the beach or something.”

Teacher: “I think that’s a wonderful idea. If you feel ok now, I’m going to check on the rest of the class. Please let me know if you need me, ok?”

Student: “OK, I will.”

Teacher: “Thanks for sharing with me what you are going through! I am very proud of you!”
