

# Today's Key Points

## KEY POINT #1



Professionalism requires self-control, and the essence of self-control is self-awareness. By understanding and acknowledging our anger traps, we know what we are responding to in a crisis -- kids' issues, or our own.

## KEY POINT #2



Troubled youth, when triggered, sometimes set up power struggles with adults by reacting to simple requests in outrageous ways. If these situations set off our own anger traps, it can be easy to slip into no-win power struggles which ultimately reinforce their negative expectations.

## KEY POINT #3



Challenging students often perceive the world in distorted, self-sabotaging ways. At times, their emotional and behavioral issues may trigger some of our own "psychological baggage," leading us to overreact personally to problems. In moments like these, it is essential that we remember our training and regain our professional perspective.

For further information about staff development in these concepts, contact:

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# What's in YOUR Wallet?



Acknowledging Our  
Own Issues in Crisis

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# Workshop Topic

Troubled children and youth often push problems to the limits, and are expert at pushing buttons on staff as well. As educators, parents, and support staff, we may sometimes find ourselves taking problems too personally, needlessly escalating problems. This eye-opening workshop with Dr. Steve Parese examines reasons for adult anger, and offer strategies and insights essential to maintaining a professional perspective in challenging situations.



## Worst Case Scenario

1. How to ESCAPE A MOUNTAIN LION ATTACK:
  - a. Open your coat, making yourself bigger and more threatening.
  - b. Run away as quickly as possible in a zigzag pattern.
  - c. Mutter "Nice kitty" while setting out a can of tuna fish!
2. How to TREAT FROSTBITE:
  - a. Rub snow onto affected area to increase circulation.
  - b. Immerse in lukewarm water to rewarm slowly.
  - c. Take two shots of tequila and call the doctor in the morning!^
3. How to JUMP OFF A CLIFF INTO A RIVER:
  - a. Jump feet first, openings arms and legs after entering water.
  - b. Curl into a cannonball, rolling to your back before hitting water.
  - c. Wave your arms and smile for the camera!



## Me and My Anger

Write about an upsetting situation involving youth. Describe only the trigger situation, not your behavior.

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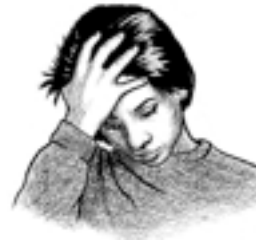


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# Things to Remember When Entering Crisis



## 1. About STUDENTS in crisis:

- a. Remember that stress acts like a magnifying glass, making small problems seem larger than they are. Be aware of the stressors in your youth's lives. Avoid putting extra stress on a child whose coping skills are already maxed out.
- b. Remember that a child's past experiences give him a very different way of perceiving events than you have, especially if he has experienced childhood trauma. However unreasonable or unfair this perception seems to you, it is very REAL to him. Try to see things through his eyes before reacting to his behavior.
- c. Remember that during conflict, a troubled child may be her own worst enemy. She will defend, deny, blame, rationalize, and regress from owning her feelings or taking responsibility for her behavior. Don't try to reason with her when you can see she is highly agitated. Back off, and give her time to cool off first.

## 2. About ADULTS during crisis:

- a. Remember that outside stress can make it harder to tolerate the situational stress of a conflict. Be aware of the stressors acting on you, and be able to tell what you are reacting to in a crisis. Reduce your stress if possible before entering tense situations.



- b. Remember that everyone has sensitive issues that set them off. Know your hot spots and anger traps before problems occur. Admit to yourself when you are getting upset. Take a deep breath and slow down, walk away for a minute, or ask for help from others.
- c. Remember to catch yourself using sarcasm, belittling comments, or accusations when you are angry. Trying to beat emotional children at their own game lowers us to their level, and reinforces their negative perceptions of adults. Apologize if necessary (without expecting one in return) and make a habit of letting go of grudges. Every day is a new day, another chance to start fresh!

# Psychological Fit

It is unreasonable to expect that we will build a close bond with EVERY student we work with. Knowing which students push our buttons -- and why they do -- can help us stay professional when things begin feeling personal.



In any group of 10 students, there are likely to be:

THREE (30%) with whom we have a \_\_\_\_\_ FIT

FOUR (40%) with whom we have a \_\_\_\_\_ FIT

TWO (20%) with whom we have a \_\_\_\_\_ FIT

ONE (10%) with whom we have a \_\_\_\_\_ FIT!



Think about an unlikable youth from your past or present who REALLY pushed your buttons, one who brought up strong feelings in you. Write 10 words describing this student. (Do NOT write his/her name, or even mention it to others.)

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

# Five Anger Traps

We are all human, and can find ourselves reacting counter-productively when our Anger Traps are triggered by a youth's misbehavior.

## 1. Outside Stress

Leftover stress from other home or work problems makes it easy to overreact angrily to a minor situation involving a youth.

Telltale Emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Embarrassment

We feel helpless or inadequate trying to handle a challenging situation, then turn embarrassment into anger.

Telltale Emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Shock or Fear

We feel a natural sense of shock or fear in response to a threatening situation, then turn anxiety into anger at the youth.

Telltale Emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Values Violation

A core value is violated by a young person's offensive behavior, sparking feelings of righteous anger.

Telltale Emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

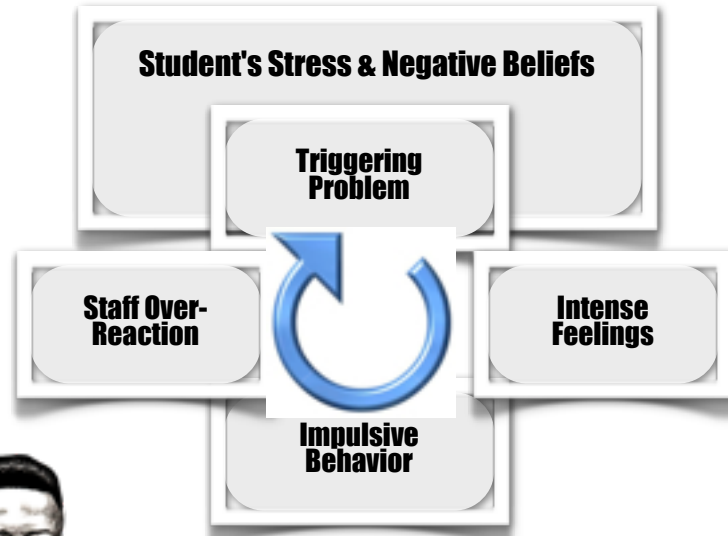
## 5. Authority Challenge

We engage in an angry power struggle to establish control or dominance over a defiant youth who just won't listen.

Telltale Emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

# Dynamics of Conflict

The Conflict Cycle (Dr. Nicholas Long) explains how a stressed out youth can engage in a self-defeating power struggle. It ALSO illustrates how a staff member's "natural reaction," can escalate a minor disagreement into a true crisis, and feed into a student's low self-esteem and expectations of failure.



Andy is a 16-year old student who seems like he is ALWAYS angry about something. Staff who know him best understand that he was severely neglected as a child, and realize that he takes being overlooked by adults or rejected by peers very personally.

Today, his teacher Mr. Johnson is handing out McDonald's gift cards for students who earned 80% of their points this week - a reward he pays for out of his own pocket. Andy just barely made the cut this week.

Johnson (embarrassed): "Oops! Looks like I'm one short, Andy. Don't worry. I'll swing by Mickey D's tonight and bring yours in tomorrow, okay?"

Andy (hurt): "@#\$% it, Johnson. Don't do me any favors, you know? It's not like I need your damn Big Macs, anyway. I'll get my own."

Johnson (stunned): "If that's how you feel about it, fine! I'll save my money."

Andy (infuriated): "I knew it. Whatever, you fat piece of @#\$%."

Andy is convinced his teacher left him out on purpose, and gets up to leave. But Mr. Johnson is offended, and doesn't want to let him have the last word.

Johnson (stubbornly): "Smart-@\$\$\$. See how you feel when you miss Friday's movie for that comment."

The two engage in a power struggle, neither one willing to let the other get the last word...

# Four Self-Defeating Patterns

Troubled youth often slip into one or more of four self-defeating patterns which allow them to maintain an illusion of control in their lives, but actually sabotage situations and relationships over time.

Which of these is easiest for you to manage? Which is most difficult?



## Aggressive

Feeling: ANGRY  
Behavior:

When I see these behaviors I feel:

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## Passive Aggressive

Feeling: RESENTFUL  
Behavior:



When I see these behaviors I feel:

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## Avoidant/Depressed

Feeling: HOPELESS  
Behavior:

When I see these behaviors I feel:

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## Dependent

Feeling: ANXIOUS  
Behavior:



When I see these behaviors I feel:

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