CARE and TCI resource

Practice tool. The TCI Stress Model of Crisis.

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

CARE principles

Relationship Based

Developmentally Focused

Trauma Informed

Family Involved

Competency Centred

Ecologically Oriented

How it helps us help them

The Stress Model of Crisis from Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) is a useful way for us to reflect on:

- How each child responds to stress
- The different phases of a crisis.

How we can help and respond in each phase. Children's behaviour and responses to stress can generally be mapped against 5 key stages:

1. **Baseline** – is the child's normal level of functioning or level of arousal.

2. **Triggering Event** – when something like a frustrating event or stressful interaction causes them to become agitated or frustrated, increasing their stress.

3. **Escalation** – when the child becomes less able to manage their emotions, their emotional brain (the Amygdala) starts to take over. We see a loss of control, such as yelling, withdrawing, demanding or destroying property.

4. **Outburst** – this is when the child has hit survival mode (fight, flight or freeze) and can respond in a way that is dangerous to themselves and others.

5. **Recovery** – after an outburst they begin to calm down. Sometimes, a child will be tired, exhausted, experience remorse, shame or embarrassment. Recovery is an opportunity for connection, learning and growth.

The good news is...

We can intervene to reduce stress and risk, and to help the child learn better ways to cope.

Create a healing environment | Develop trusting relationships

Provide a sense of safety | Practice new skills

Reduce Stress and Anxiety. Keep Everybody Safe. Learn From What Happened

Degree of stress

Violence

Aggression

Agitation

Time/duration

|—— Baseline ——|— Trigger —|— Outburst —|— Recovery
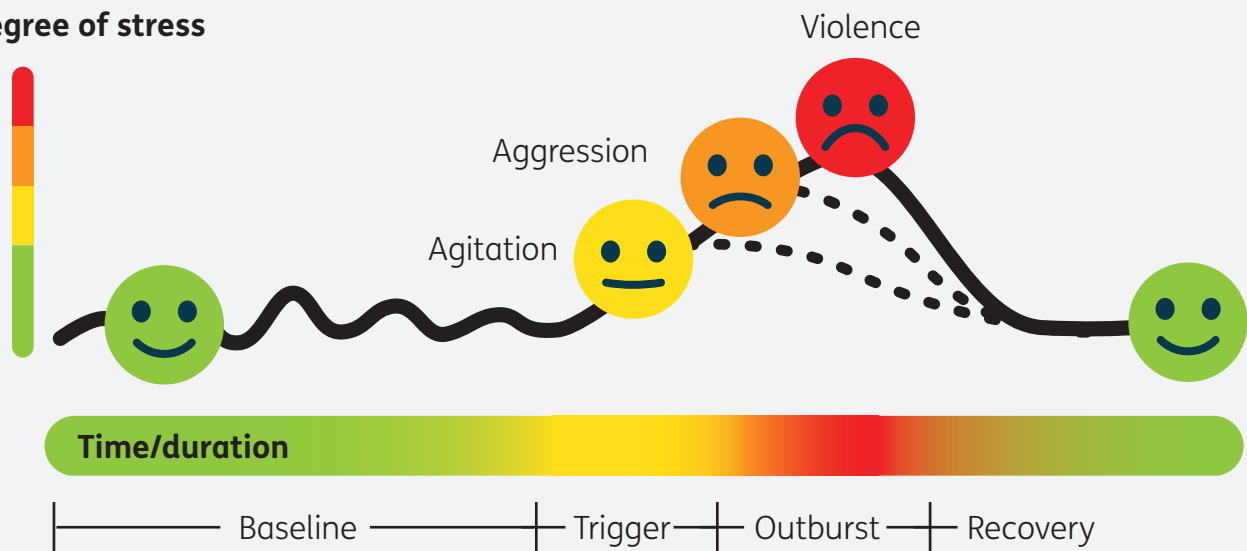
Preventive Strategies

- Change setting conditions and avoid triggers
- Provide support

De-Escalation Strategies

- Active listening
- Behavior support techniques
- Emotional first aid
- Avoiding power struggles

Managing the Crisis

- Nonverbal
- Communication
- Crisis co-regulation

Activity

Think about a child you know.

1. **Their baseline**
   - What do they look like when they are at baseline?
   - What do you see?
     What do you hear?

2. **Their triggers**
   - What are some events or situations you know that cause the child to become stressed or agitated?
   - How do you know they are feeling anxious or frustrated?
   - What do you see or hear that tells you they are becoming agitated?
   - What responses from you help the child?

3. **Their escalation phase**
   - • How do you know the child is becoming more and more escalated?
   - What do they say or do that tells you they are finding it hard to cope with their emotions?
   - Are there signs of aggression?
   - What are things you can do to help them cope?
   - Are there things you need to do to help them and others be safe?

4. **Their outbursts**
   - What types of behaviours do you see at outburst?
   - What do you need to do to keep everyone safe?
   - What can you do to help reduce risk and the length of the outburst?

5. **Their recovery and calm**
   - How do you know the child is starting to calm?
   - What helps them to avoid becoming stressed again?
   - What are some ways you can help to make sure they feel secure and that their relationship with you is ok?
   - How can you help them to understand and learn from what occurred?

Practice tip

'I draw the Stress Model of Crisis in team meetings to help staff work together to come up with strategies to support the child through the varying stages of a crisis. Identifying what 'baseline' looks like for that child and what triggers them toward an escalation is my starting point. Then the team come up with responses using TCI techniques to help support the child back to recovery.' (Andrew Johnstone, Team Leader #MyLaunchPad Tasmania)

References

Holden M.J et al. (2020) Therapeutic Crisis Intervention 7th Edition, Residential Childcare Project, Cornell University