



Escalation Cycle

How to identify patterns in the child's behaviour

Escalation Cycle (example)					
 John - 9yo					
What child is like:	Calm	⚡ Triggers	Escalating	Survival mode	De-escalating
Appearance	Bright Alert Calm gaze	Contact with mum	Physically tense	Very tense Red face Tears	Stays tense for a while
Verbally	Chatty! Fortnite Pokémon Sports	Perceiving rejection by others Denied something he really wants	Swearing Abrupt/ agitated speech style "I'll kill them"	Yelling Screeching Swearing Disjointed sentences	Can't verbalise feelings or apologise for at least one hour
Actions	Play sport Run around The floss dance	Taken where he doesn't want to go	Pacing Stomping Damaging property	Hitting, kicking Biting Destroying items Targeting sister	Hiding in cupboard Playing games on phone
Demeanour	Joking around Energetic	When anyone mentions "the old house"	Controlling Threatening	Impulsive Unable to control body Shaking	Quiet, tired Easily re-triggered for some hours
To build safety:	Calm	Triggered	Escalating	Survival mode	De-escalating
In the child's mind	Attuned Checking in with facial cues Close attention	Stay attuned Change topic Narrate what's happening	Model calm movements Lower voice Touching is helpful	Calm voice Lower body position if safe Tight hugs preferred	Reassure he's not in trouble Use humour Chat about children's pop media
In the environment	8pm bedtime routine Have contact in park if possible	Reduce lights Blow bubbles	Move to different space Routines on hold	Look for ways he can cover his face if he wants Find water	Offer dark quiet environments Water with ice Screen time with carer ok
With other adults (teachers, etc.)	Other adults should avoid discussing families/mums Reassure "no" isn't personal rejection	Allow John to go to spare room if he asks Narrate what's happening	Suggest the spare room Support worker to assist Offer phone call with carer	Remove children Remove unneeded adults Allow time away from action	Highlight strengths Allow 2 hrs before any apologies or reparations
In the relationship	Use humour Indirect affection	Soothing voice Validate how he might feel	Keep him close Narrate his responses Validate feelings	Keep him close Narrate his actions Validate feelings	Reassure this changed nothing in the relationship Highlight strengths

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Appearance					
Verbally					
Actions					
Demeanour					

To build safety:	Calm	Triggered	Escalating	Survival mode	De-escalating
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In the child's mind

In the environment

With other adults (teachers, etc.)

In the relationship
