

Developing Strategies to Restore Calm for Adults

Joyce Escorcio: Hello, everyone. Welcome to the Coaching Corner webinar. We're so glad you're joining us and chose to spend this hour with us. This is our last webinar of the season and we're so glad you're here. Today, we're going to be discussing how to use a strategy called neutralizing routines to support adults to stay calm when children's behaviors occur that challenge adults. Thank you, thank you, again, for joining us. I am Joyce Escorcio from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning.

As always, I am joined by my colleague and friend, Sarah Basler, and you're going to hear from her in just a few minutes. We are so excited to have a special friend with us today. We're joined by our guest expert, Dr. Lise Fox, and Lise has helped develop some great things like the pyramid model, as well as a practice-based coaching model. We are so, so excited to really dig into some strategies that adults can use to stay calm and to respond to challenging behavior in ways that are productive and intentional.

As a coach, you can support coachees to use these strategies. If your coachee is a home visitor, then they can use these strategies to support parents in those moments, as well. Lise, can you introduce yourself to maybe some of our new Coaching Corner folks out there and tell them a little bit about yourself?

Lise Fox: Sure. I'm so excited to be here, so thank you. I'm here at the University of South Florida, and my full-time day job is to be a professor and a department chair of Child and Family Studies at the University of South Florida. But the work I love is the technical assistance work and training work I do. I am the principal investigator for the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. That's challengingbehavior.org. You've probably seen some of our resources there. And then I get to also do a little bit of work with the Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning Center, as well. Thanks so much for welcoming me.

Joyce: Thank you, and we are so looking forward to just kind of getting the conversation started with you in just a few minutes. Before we begin, we just want to draw your attention and remind you about our Viewer's Guide. You're going to see that in your resource widget, so be sure to take a moment and download that if you haven't done so already. It really includes a lot of great information, reflection questions, and a full resource list that can support you in your work.

As we're talking today, and resources come up, and you're like, "Man, I didn't get to catch that," don't worry. You could just go to the Viewer's Guide and take a look at the resource list. All resources that we talk about today will be in that list. Be sure and download that if you haven't already. On our agenda today, we've got quite a few things we want to talk about. One, we're going to be discussing factors that impact how adults respond when challenging behavior occurs.

This is really important for you as a coach because then you can support coachees and bring awareness to coachees that you support. If coachees aren't aware of like different factors and things that impact their own response, they could react in the moment of a challenging behavior instead of responding in a way that's productive or intentional. You, as a coach, can help by supporting coachees with different strategies that we're going to be talking about today. We're also going to be defining the term "neutralizing routines," and what they are, and when and how they can be used.

We're going to dig into that and play with that new strategy that you can walk away with as a coach to utilize. And then we're going to be discussing ways that coaches can develop those neutralizing routines like we just talked about. When you're thinking about supporting home visitors, then these are strategies that home visitors can work with parents to develop with their children, as well. That's kind of some of the things that we're going to be talking about today. And let's just keep things moving. Many of our webinars last season and this season have really focused in on pyramid model practices.

As a quick reminder, the pyramid model is a framework of evidence-based practices that are used for promoting young children's social and emotional development. That's been a big topic of conversation for us last year and this year, and we're just going to keep the conversation going today. While it's really essential for a coach to support a coachee to build those strong relationships to help them to create those inclusive, high-quality environments and to teach things like social-emotional competencies, even when all those things are happening perfectly in a place, we know that adults are going to find themselves in moments where they have behaviors that challenge them from young children. That's what we're going to be talking about today. We know that when adults remain calm during those challenging moments, it can help prevent child behavior from escalating.

As a coach, you can observe and support coachees to respond to those challenging moments in ways that are culturally sustaining and in ways that will hopefully keep those behaviors from escalating. For coachees for home visitors, you may be supporting them in how to talk with and share strategies with parents and identifying ways that parents can use these strategies in their homes. We framed our discussion for today ... We wanted to start just by revisiting an activity that you may or may not be familiar with and that's the hot button activity.

This activity can be helpful just to get coachees reflecting on children's behaviors that may challenge them or push some of their hot buttons. As we think about that, we invite you to reflect on a few questions that we've got for you today and then just pop your responses in the chat if you're comfortable with doing so. I guess the first question is, "Can you share some of the challenging behaviors that push your coachees' buttons?"

Think about your caseload and the coachees that you're supporting and what are some of their hot buttons or the things that really just push their buttons? We're going to give just a few minutes, or not just a few minutes, just a few seconds for a chat to kick in. While we're waiting for that, Sarah and Lise, I just want to check in with you. What do you think some of those hot buttons can be, or in your experience, what have some of those been?

Sarah Basler: Well, currently, a coachee that I'm working with, one of her big things is safety, of course. Whenever anything happens related to like hitting or a safety concern, that can really push her button.

Joyce: Yes, definitely, and our chat is lighting up now.

Lise: It sure is.

Joyce: Things like hitting, noise. Yes, Lise?

Lise: Oh, I said it sure is, and it's lighting up with the intense ones that frighten us like that a child could get hurt or they're hurting other children, but also the ones that just really annoy us like spitting, which really in the scheme of things is fairly harmless but could be a big trigger.

Joyce: Yes, definitely. Definitely. Well, keep those things kind of coming in. No eye contact, all of those things. One thing to note here that it's important to note that not all – not everyone interprets the same thing in the same way. Basically that's things that bother or trigger, say Sarah, that would be her hot buttons may not be mine. I saw excessive noise be one of those.

I can remember I was supporting a teacher in a classroom, and her room could be considered loud by some. But for her, it was her happy place and she ... Her classroom thrived in that. It was fine. It didn't trigger her. It wasn't her hot button. But when others would come into that room, they were, "Man, it's just so loud." But again, some things that may be a hot button for me may not be a hot button for others.

There's some things to think about with that, as well. Our hot buttons can come from our own past experiences, our own past trauma, our culture, values, all of those things come together to give us those hot button moments, as well. All right, next question, as our chat is continuing to come in, is, "How do these behaviors make coachees feel?" When we're ... We just identified some of these hot buttons, including ... I see Diana put that laugh – that someone's laughing at them.

Definitely. Now think about, "How do those behaviors make coachees feel in those moments?" How have they expressed to you how those things have made them feel? Powerless, frustrated, lack of control? Alison says out of control. Lisa says annoyed. I just want to thank you for your honest and transparent answers here, as well, and responses in the chat. Tired, definitely.

It can make you feel all the things. And again, thank you for all of those things coming in. Overwhelmed, frustrated, definitely. All of those feelings can happen. And it made me one or all those feelings at the same time. Now let's think about ... We talked about what are those hot buttons ... How are they making coachees feel? Now let's think about how are coachees responding to these hot button behaviors? What are the responses that you see once you see that hot button, how they're reacting, and what are you seeing afterwards as their response?

Disengaged, confused, sad for the other children that are learning that behavior. Overwhelmed. Yelling. Getting into power struggles. Just shut down. Definitely. All the things are coming up

here in the chat. Again, thank you, thank you for all your responses. Amanda, I see you're asking is there any way to silence the chat. For you, if seeing the chat, if that's a bit of an overstimulation for you, if that's one of your hot buttons, at this moment, feel free just to minimize that – that widget.

You can choose to bring that up and to put that down as you need. If you want to focus in on the conversation and not the chat. You can definitely customize that to whatever experience that you want to have while we're here all together. I just want to say thank you, thank you so much for sharing. The purpose of this activity was to acknowledge how difficult it is to deal with those behaviors that challenge us as adults. It's really helps us to reflect on how our own life experiences, our own temperament, our own personality, or how we're feeling that day can really play into those times when children's behavior seems to push our buttons.

Those moments can really challenge our ability to be present and really supportive of children. Sometimes it's just difficult to see beyond that challenging behavior, beyond that moment. But the impact of both the behavior and the adult's response really plays a role in the relationships with coachees, with children, with families, and with peers. As well as just the quality of instruction that's happening within those learning environments.

It's important for a coach to reflect on their own feelings about behavior while you're supporting coachees. What are your own feelings and beliefs about those challenging behaviors? When coachees share their thoughts and feelings about behaviors, it might also bring up some own thoughts of your own, of your own past experiences. All of those things come together. And again, we have a link for this activity in your Viewer's Guide, but we thank you, again, for opening up and being so transparent from the very beginning with this.

It helps to put us in the right frame of mind to get the conversation started. We know that when children engage in those behaviors that challenge us as adults and then adults respond in ways that are dysregulated, chaotic, angry, or even harsh. All of those things can really impact a whole lot of different things – things like the adult's relationship with the child and/or the family, the child's relationship with their peers, again, the quality of instruction and the stress and the mood of the coachee or family.

That's really what we want to unpack today is how to support coachees to respond in calm and productive ways that don't damage those relationships and those connections that they've worked so hard for and then impact the quality of the learning that's happening there. And to really just help reduce stress of the coachee of the children and families. With that being said, I'm so excited to pass it over to Sarah, who's going to take us into our Mindful Moment.

Sarah: Awesome. Thank you. Now we're going to move into the Mindful Moment segment, and this is where we get to interview our guest expert, Lise. We're so glad that you're here, and we're going to get started. We want to start out by thinking about what are some of those factors that impact how adults respond to challenging behavior.

Lise: Great. Let's talk about that. There are three things that we planned to talk about today that can have an impact on how we respond. We're going to be talking about something that's kind of sensitive. It's like how we respond in a manner that doesn't reflect ... I don't remember how Joyce put it, but it's not the quality teachings practices that we would hope we would always use.

Now we want to talk about those occasions. The things that might influence that are implicit bias, vulnerable decision points, which include your decision state – and we'll talk about that in a minute – or the situational factors. And then deficit thinking versus strengths-based thinking. We can talk about each one of those. Let's start with implicit bias. You know that, first of all, we all have biases, and when we talk about implicit bias, we're talking about biases that are unconscious. They're kind of wired into us because of our history, our experiences, things we've been exposed to.

Our goal, of course, is to be aware of them, to keep them in check, to work on them. But when we're in difficult situations, these unconscious biases could influence our responses to children. What we want to do is be in a place where we know what our biases are, that we're aware of when they surface. We'll get to the strategy part in being able to cope with them when we're encountering children's problem behavior. It's more likely that these things happen when we're kind of stressed.

That's when they can really surface. If we're stressed, we're tired, we're hungry, we're out of sorts, then it may be more likely that those biases are evident, or it could be about the particular situation. When people put in a chat like if those things happen and teachers' buttons or coachees' buttons are pushed, they might feel really stressed or really overwhelmed. That may be the time that those things are surfacing that for the coachee or for the educator.

Sarah: I think that as a coachee can feel really uncomfortable to approach situations where we think that we've observed a coachee's implicit bias showing. Based on their response to the challenging behavior or even sometimes the perceived challenging behavior. I'm just curious and would love to hear how others in this webinar have approached that in their role as a coach. In the chat, if you wouldn't mind, just share out some strategies that you've used to approach implicit bias with a coachee.

And maybe if you're like, "I haven't done that yet because it feels scary." That's OK. You can tell us that, as well, but what's a strategy you've used to – I don't want to say call out – but approach implicit bias and draw a coachee's attention to that. As we're waiting for the chats to come in, Lise or Joyce, have you – do you have any ideas for how those conversations can be approached for ...?

Lise: I think it's really important to do what you just said is kind of surface the reflection. I think that is where we want to be, and I'll ... We have a colleague that we all know, and I think she may have been on webinars with you all, Rosemarie Allen. She's like if you're aware, you're halfway there.

But getting to a place where you've become aware of them, and that can happen in that if you have a good, safe, and trustful relationship with your coachee. Then you may be able to guide the reflection to begin to surface some of those things by saying things like, "I noticed that ..." and opening the conversation. Or "When Isabelle did this, maybe a challenging behavior, you responded like this. Can you tell me more about how you were feeling in the moment?" That could be a way to begin to get it on the table so that you can have that conversation.

Sarah: The people in the webinar are putting in responses in the chat. Jesse says, "I put myself in their shoes, give the benefit of the doubt, and I don't get personal – don't take it personally, maybe." Ebony says, "Sometimes I simply ask the intent. 'Tell me a little bit about why you did that?'"

And making it a safe place. "Being transparent about the time that I may have reflected on my own biases," is something Gwen said. Josephine acknowledges that it's hard. It really is. It can feel uncomfortable to approach these, but you guys have some great ideas about how to approach these. Oh, last one because I just love this word. Come in with curiosity. How do you think that went?

How do you feel your responses to the children were received? Getting curious and asking those questions. All right, thanks for your responses. We talked a little bit about some of those strategies, but I want to hear from you, Lise. Can you share some strategies that coaches might try using with coachees that maybe might feel a little different than what we just heard?

Lise: Well, we have such great ones in the chat, so I'll be reflecting many of those. I can tell we have a really skilled coaching audience with us here today. I think it's really important that we stay in the reflective place and help because that's the only way actually you can ultimately tackle implicit biases is to be able to be continuously reflective. We model that as coaches as we support our coachees. Keep in mind doing that.

When we ask a question like, "I saw you did that. And when Isabelle had her meltdown, I saw you responded like this. Tell me a little more about the situation." If then your coachee says, "Oh, it was so hard. She had me so rattled. I'm – I just I know I was short with her but ..." and actually offer something like that, the first thing you ought to do is just mirror back about the emotion, so they're heard and validated because you don't want to compromise.

You don't want to jump right into, "Well, we've been talking a lot about using this practice and this is what you ought to do," because, I mean, with that, you're going to completely shut it down. That's one thing I would say about staying in that space where we keep people talking. A lot of the strategy that popped about videoing. If you have observed and you think it's an ongoing issue with a coachee, I really think video is the nice way of having ... Again, it's helping in their reflection because you can be outside yourself and look at it together.

We talked about it in the context of problem behavior, but I think there are also other things we ought to be thinking about around that could begin to surface bias. You might say ... Let's say it's around a child with a disability in the classroom, and you notice that the educators in

that classroom are really good at bridging all children's interactions with each other but not so often with this child with autism spectrum disorder.

You might say, "I've noticed you all are really great at doing ..." If you're in the South, you'd say y'all. "Y'all are really great at bridging these interactions between kids, but I noticed that Emily, who's the child with autism spectrum disorder, said that often she's not the one that we're bridging into things." That could surface that. That could be, "Yeah, I know. We don't know what to do with her. She doesn't want to socially interact. I guess we just forget about doing that." Then it could begin to surface some of those that you could begin to talk about it.

Sarah: I love that because it really is a conversation. If you come at it with, "I've got all the answers, and remember, we talked about this," that won't go over so well. I think that sometimes when we think about how to do this in a coaching meeting, I know that I'm curious, what are some ideas that you might suggest that a coach do to gather information about a coachee's implicit bias? Like when would this happen? How would you notice a coachee's implicit bias? Would that be during the observation? What does that look like?

Lise: I think it's most likely in the observation. You can do things like start keeping a tally of the use of practices equitably across children. You can start to notice who has the stronger relationships in looking at teacher-child relationships or adult-child relationships. Simple things like who received positive descriptive feedback and who is it in the classroom. That is one way you might begin to kind of begin to gather some information that would inform your coaching conversations. And then I think being ready to pivot on the debrief when you're having that reflective conversation. If people begin to experience things that let you know that they're struggling, being at the ready to follow up on that I think is really important.

Sarah: Another thing that I think is a tool that when utilized effectively or like as intended would be like the coaching agreement is a helpful tool. Because you could approach that in the beginning like we might have some uncomfortable conversations and just getting that out in front of them so that there's not any surprises. Because I would imagine that if they're like, "Well, we're talking about turns in a conversation and now she's talking to me about equity and bias." And that might feel surprising. One thing that I've done in the past is to include it like this might be something we touch on and it brings about [inaudible].

Lise: That's a great idea. We have a sample coaching agreement on challengingbehavior.org that includes that – that we're going to hold each other accountable to that. I think that's really important and good. And maybe also within your program, there's program-level discussions about being committed to doing this work and you can reference those.

Sarah: You mentioned vulnerable decision points earlier. Can you describe what those are?

Lise: Sure. That was my number two of what could affect you in responding a way to behavior that isn't how, if you are the coachee or the educator, isn't the way we hope we would. There's this concept of a vulnerable decision point, and the person who's vulnerable is you, the person

who is responding to a child in distress or a child whose behavior is challenging you in a way that when you respond, you're responding in a way that you're like, "I wish I hadn't done that."

I think all of us have those examples in our adult lives. Have you ever used the expression, "I really lost it when ...?" That's a vulnerable decision point. And those are usually ... Those are influences. Those occasions happen often when we're stressed out, or people have said, "Oh, I was really hangry and then I did X." You're hungry; you're super-tired. "I was up all night. I don't have the bandwidth to do this."

I mean, we talk about this as adults about our responses to adults, but this happens in our responses to children, as well. A vulnerable decision point is when the conditions, either your state, your decision state is compromised, or the conditions like the situation. Let's say you're on the playground, and the child who runs away is at the gate and scaling the gate. You might be really freaked out, and that might be a time where you react in a way strongly, maybe shouting even, because you're frightened.

That's the situation is influencing it. These vulnerable decision points are like the time of day, the location, all of those variables that affect the way we respond. In this conversation about children's behavior, it's important to know when those happen, and we'll talk through a strategy of what you can do when those occur.

Sarah: Because just like implicit bias, I think being aware of "Hey, did you notice like every day at this time, this happens?" I found that out about myself when I was realizing at the end of the day during bath time for my kids, I was not as calm. I was more stressed, so good reminders. You also mentioned deficit thinking versus strengths-based thinking and how that impacts how we respond to those challenging behaviors. Can you tell us a little bit more about that and help us unpack that?

Lise: Sure. I mean, I think what we want to do in our support of children is always be – and families – always be in a strengths-based place. We always need to be focused that every child and every family has strengths, and abilities, and assets, that we value. And that when children are in distress or children have behaviors that we find challenging, that becomes something we've got to attend to, but that doesn't make that child a problem. That's staying in that strengths-based space.

It's not that you should always be Pollyanna. It's like, "Oh, it's all fine. It's all great." There's hard stuff to teaching, to supporting children's development and promoting their development that we all struggle with. But it's not that we're not going to acknowledge some of those things, but we don't want to shift. It's become ... You can feel the tug of it sometimes. You can get ... You can bottom out in thinking it's all bad – or "There's so many challenges here I can't do anything about it" or "That family has so much going on. I don't even know where to begin."

And losing sight of "That family has a lot going on, and I can be of support in this manner." We want to just stay. I like this slide because you have the strengths on one side and the deficit on the other, and we want to stay in that strengths-based place. But when we're confronted with

really significant, challenging behavior, it can whip us right into a deficit thinking. When you are working with your coachees, you, too, want to guide them to stay in the strength space.

You want to help them if they begin to talk about that, really get mired in starting to note the problem, starting to talk about deficits. You want to bring them back to the strength space, based thinking because that's when we can really think through how best to support a child, which is what we want to do when we're seeing behaviors that challenge us. Because really that's a child in distress, and we need to think about how do we support them in a way that's instructive and promotes their development.

Sarah: I know that we're talking about this in the – with children and with families. I think also, too, as the coach, it's important to remember to see the strengths-based – do the strengths-based thinking with your coachees, as well. Because, I mean, I think about when you have a really challenging moment with a coachee or if you come back and it's like, "They're not working on their action plan." We can go quickly to that deficit thinking. I think all around, this is just a good concept to think about that reframing and focusing on the strengths.

We've talked about some things that can impact the way we respond to behavior. Could you walk us through a little bit of an example? People might be familiar with this kind of format here.

Lise: We talk about this format as the ABC's – or What are the triggers? What happened before? What did somebody do? – the behavior and what happens after. Well, we're going to apply that idea to actually the teacher. What happened before to trigger that teacher? What did they do? And then what happened after? Let's look at the example. Get us the before.

Little Delilah has interrupted the story at the rug four times today, and this is the second week in the row where she's done this. And the teacher's getting ... Someone had put in the chat teachers might respond by getting annoyed. She's losing her patience. She feels really annoyed. She feels so annoyed that she asked Delilah to sit at the table in the back and stop calling out. She actually kind of excused her, unfortunately, from the activity.

You can imagine what could happen next. Delilah gets even more upset. She begins crying for a prolonged period of time, and the longer she sits, the louder the crying. Now all of rug time and story has been disrupted, and Delilah's become really escalated. Because the teacher was triggered, we have all this other stuff that happened, which we wish hadn't happened.

Sarah: Now we can think about this, as we mentioned this, we're focusing on the teacher here. What strategies, if we want to think about some of those factors first, factors before strategies, that might be impacting how this teacher is responding to Delilah. Use your chat. If we look here what happened before, what do we think might be impacting how this teacher is responding to Delilah in the moment? What are some of those elements of the situation here? Joyce, Lise? What are some things that stand out to you?

Lise: I think one thing that stands out to me is the teacher is so driven about she wants to tell the story. That she is being impatient about [Inaudible].

Sarah: Emily noticed that, too, or someone said, Erin said, "It feels like she has to get the story in." Like, "I've got to get it all in." And as a teacher, you can feel like that. There's so many things to do. And it's been happening over an extended period of time so the teacher's bandwidth for this type of behavior is probably wearing over time. The teacher seems annoyed.

Maybe the teacher, let's see, it's disrupting class, so maybe the teacher's feeling like now the – all the other children aren't getting this storytime, as well. Another one said that it's a buildup of different things. It sounds like it's compounding, it's happening over weeks, and that it's multiple things taking place here.

Joyce: Sarah?

Sarah: Yes.

Joyce: I want to just pop in real quick. Anna says, "What kind of interruptions?" And this goes back to the beginning when we were setting the stage for our conversation and talking about those hot buttons that ... What kind of interruptions? Because what can seem to be interrupting for me may not even phase you, Sarah, so I think that's something else interesting to think about, as well.

Sarah: I'm so glad that you pointed that out because interruptions for this teacher might be very different. Let's now pivot and think about ... Remember, we're talking about the teacher here. What's something that the teacher could do for themselves in this moment before they respond? What's something that the teacher could do to help prevent this situation from escalating – do for themselves? If you want to use the chat to put in a response. Joyce, do you have any ideas? What do you think this teacher might do while we're waiting? Oh, I'm seeing them come in now.

Lise: They're there.

Joyce: Well, one thing I was just thinking about was because she said, Delilah has interrupt ... This is the second week. And thinking from last week to this week, what planning has been done by the teacher to say, "OK, if this happens, am I prepared for it, again, for this week."

Sarah: That's great. We've got a lot of people saying take a deep breath. Take a deep breath. Regulation. Breathing and a pause. Count in your head. Those are all what we're talking about here. Things that the teacher can do in that moment to kind of pause them before they react or respond in a way that's not quite as intentional. You guys are right on target, and we'll move on. Now I'm going to have Lise walk us through how we might walk through this a little differently.

Lise: OK, so we have the situation. That's a given, so let's ... There's an animation, I think. The first one says what the teacher did was something she learned let's say from her coach. She

checked herself. She counted to three, and she's like, "OK, I'm tired. I'm irritable. How do I want to respond to Delilah?" This is how she responded. She reminded Delilah to raise her hand and wait to hear her name before offering her answer. She showed her the visual prompt associated with the rule and then let's see how that affects Delilah's behavior.

Delilah still is like, "I want to share." But this time, she starts to yell. She sees the visual. She raises her hand. The teacher gives her positive descriptive feedback for doing that and reminded her to wait for her name the next time. Now we might all have issues with all of this. It might not be the way we would like to see storytime happen. But what we see here by the teacher taking a moment and responding in a way that was calm and instructive, what we avoid is escalating Delilah.

And that's where we want to get is how can we help teachers have a strategy so that in the moment they can take a little bit of a step back and interrupt that chain so that we're not triggering more problems – more behavior that they find challenging or escalating the behavior that we see.

Sarah: I think as a coach, you might find yourself supporting a coachee to think about their response. This example is doing a great job of showing how that adult awareness of how they're feeling has a big impact on how they respond to Delilah. I know that this example was a classroom focus, but you definitely could support ... A coach could support a home visitor to use these practices with families, as well.

I think that the trickiest part about adult response is to know what to do instead. It's like, OK, I know what I shouldn't do but what should we do instead? What do you recommend a coach do to support a coachee to respond differently?

Lise: What I want to share with you is this concept of a neutralizing routine. I'm super-excited about being able to use this and support teachers and educators in this way, and family members in this way. Neutralizing routines ... We're going to use vulnerable decision points. When these kinds of situations that we just looked at happened with Delilah, that teachers have a go-to.

It's the idea that it's a planned go-to so that they can respond in a way that's instructive and not reactive. A neutralizing routine is a plan the teacher has – and we'll talk about what the features of it should be – that we have in our mind to use before it happens so it becomes our routine. And we call it neutralizing because what we're doing is just calming the situation, taking the heat out of the hot situation so that we can respond with our high-quality practices in a way that really promotes child learning.

Here's the components of what you need in the routine, and I'll show two routines in a minute so this will all pull together for you. It should be an if-then statement. If-then would be "If I'm really stressed, then I will ..." "If I'm feeling panicky, then I will ..." "If the child pushes my buttons, then I will ..." It's about if it's a heightened emotional moment, then ... And then whatever it is you're going to do has to be really brief because you don't have a lot of seconds

here, especially if the behavior's intense. And clear steps of what you will do. When these are created, they really have to be very doable.

But the most important part is that we're interrupting that chain. When we looked at the first example of what happened with Delilah, and she got escalated, we needed to interrupt between the trigger for the teacher and what that teacher was responding. We want to interrupt that chain so we don't get the power struggle. That's our goal. Let's look at what a neutralizing routine could be. Here's one. The next one's my favorite, but here's one that people have developed and used, and it's called PAR. If a child really pushes my buttons, I can PAR. I can pause and reflect.

I'm going to take a deep breath. I'll think about what happened. I'm thinking in my mind what's this behavior telling me. Again, behavior has meaning, so that piece, that's my ask, and then R. When I respond, I'm going to do it in a way that keeps – makes sure the child's validated, listened to, understood, and safe, and I can guide the child. These are things like, OK, I'm going to pause, reflect, ask what's the behavior about. Remember to validate, calm, make sure that child's safe, redirect. I'm taking a little break, thinking on PARing and hopefully responding in a way that's instructive and supportive to the child. Let's show my favorite one.

I like this because it's shorter, and you can tell by my gray hair, I'm old and it's hard to remember things. Oh, I like this one a lot. I'm going to TRY even though people point out to me the Y is about – the sentence doesn't start with a Y – but it's about TRY. I'm going to "take a deep breath, reflect on my emotions, and I'll say, 'You've got this. You can be calm to support this child to be calm.'" So that I'm remembering, I might take a little poster to put in my classroom. I might put it on front of my planner when I start my day to think about it. I might put it in the center where sometimes these challenging behaviors come up more often than not.

Sarah: Stick it on your book. If you're Delilah's teacher, put it on the book.

Lise: Something like that.

Sarah: Awesome. Thank you so much, Lise, for walking us through that strategy. Now we're going to go through a quick example. We're going to give you a scenario and walk through how to remember to be calm in the moment. Let's walk through this case example and then I'm going to have Lise and Joyce share out some of these points of the situation and think about developing this neutralizing routine. We've got Sonya. Sonya teaches in a 4-year-old classroom, and she has a large group, and it is a challenge.

The children are still learning the rules and the routines, and the transition from lunch to naptime feels really chaotic. Sonya doesn't eat until everyone goes down for nap, so she's probably feeling hangry. During this week, every day at nap, Eve begins to cry and says, "I don't want to nap." Sonya's tired, and hungry, and doesn't have the energy to remind Eve of the naptime rules. Sonya ignores the crying for a while and then after she got the children situated, but this only resulted in Eve escalating and crying even louder.

Sonya then becomes really upset and asks the assistant teacher just to take Eve out of the room. Let's help Coach Yejin walk through developing a neutralizing routine for Sonya. While we're walking through this, feel free to pop in your thoughts in the chat. First, what are some of the elements of this situation? What stands out to you guys about Sonya and her struggle with Eve?

Joyce: Sonya's just tired.

Sarah: It says she's tired, and she's hungry. It feels chaotic already, so this transition is stressful, it sounds like. Next, what do you ... What thoughts do you have about ... What do you think these elements of the situation might cause Sonya to feel? Let's walk through developing a neutralizing routine. Lise, talk us through if you were Sonya's coach, Yejin, what would you do first?

Lise: Well, it happened so it's done, and perhaps I'm learning about it because I was there and observing. If I was observing, we could talk about that when Eve started to cry, You ... So I noticed that when Eve started to cry, that she was asked to leave the room so that she wouldn't ... And I'm going to infer probably as a coach my own ... So she wouldn't disrupt other children. It gives the teacher ... It's kind of a little softer, like, I did it benevolently. Is that [Inaudible]?

Versus ... And say, "Tell me more about that." I'm hoping then Sonya would then say, "I got ... I'm just so frustrated. She does this all the time." And then I might reflect back. I said, "And I noticed that you just really, unlike most days, you seem a little more tired, and it seemed like a harder time for managing Eve than what I've noticed before." I might just start the conversation, again, gently, validating but hopefully beginning to guide.

And then it's like, "When things are hard like that," so then we come to neutralizing routine. "When things are hard like that, it can be really challenging to stay in the space where you're thinking about how do I best support the child" and introduce the concept of a neutralizing routine. That might be the way that we tackled it. If Sonya's sharing it with me later, which often our coachees do. This has happened in the classroom.

Then again, I think then the door's open. If she shares it with you, the door's open. First to guide the reflection that, "Yes, and I was really hangry, and I was really tired, and here's what I did, and I don't really feel very good about it, but I didn't know what to do." First validate and then you can move into, "Well, here's an idea." I think the whole idea of a neutralizing routine is it's an alliance with your coachee. It's an acknowledgement that we're all humans, and we all get in that place, and even though we all want to be super-educators or family members and never break, we all have those little chinks. I think it's really important that as we talk about that, we do it in that manner that ... But you all have good ideas. I'm sure, Sarah, you have ideas, and Joyce.

Sarah: Well, I love that.

Joyce: Things are coming in the chat, as well.

Sarah: I really love that you talk about – you remind us going back to one of the most important things about coaching, and it's that reflection. We're reflecting with the coachee. I loved how you said that, if she shares this is happening all the time, and it's really stressful, OK, let's work together to figure this out. What can you do?

One thing that it was a ground rule we made for a group, a coaching group that I ran. It was like focus on what you can control, and it makes me think of that. I can only control myself. I can't control the other things that are happening. That makes me think of that. Thank you.

Joyce: Hey, Sarah, so I'm also noticing there's a lot in the chat about what are the strategies around Eve? I think all of you coaches who are really smart and on it about the kinds of quality practices we want to see happen have ideas about Eve. But this is an opportunity, too, so I want this to be one of your takeaways is an opportunity also to give Sonya a new skill that she can use with the neutralizing routine.

We can jump in and come up with all our great ideas about how to manage Eve but what happens when Sonya is hungry, tired, and her buttons are pushed the next time. You could give her a generalizable skill, a generalizable practice of how to cope when things get really stressful, and one thing we know about early education is those moments are going to happen.

Sarah: Yes. I love that you said that. I didn't notice, but I'm seeing now lots of strategies. That's what we do really well as coaches. We know how to work with the children really well. But giving the teacher, Sonya, something to do instead ... That they can use in a variety of situations. They can use it at home with their children. Thanks for pointing that out. Well, as we wrap up today, I just wanted to do a little bit of a pulse check and see if ... I went ahead and I'm going to start it.

And I want you to give me a thumbs up or a thumbs down if this feels like a strategy that you could use with your coachees. Or if you have – if you think back to that hot button, those coachees with hot buttons, and would one of those coachees be a good fit for developing a neutralizing routine. You can give us a thumbs up, thumbs down. I see right now, we've got people saying thumbs up, for sure. Because we can know all the strategies for the children, but if we're not changing how we're responding, then it's not going to matter.

We really have to respond with intention to these behaviors. We've got a resounding number of thumbs up, so I'm going to close the pulse chat. I mean, we're up to 230 people saying yes, this is a good strategy. They think they could use it. All right. Well, I'm going to turn it over to Joyce, and she's going to wrap it up today. But before we do that, I just want to say thank you so, so very much, Lise, for walking us through this strategy and giving us another tool for our toolbox. Thanks for joining us today.

Lise: Thanks for having me. I enjoyed it.

Joyce: Yes, thank you. And I will say, Lise, you're getting some love for the TRY strategy, as well. Someone said they like the TRY sign, as well.

Lise: Oh, that's great.

Joyce: And thank you, thank you for sharing your ideas and just from your experience with us today. And with that being said, we want to definitely keep the conversation going on MyPeers, and you'll see a link that will pop up for you. Feel free to join us on MyPeers in the practice-based coaching community to keep the conversation going. If you have follow-up questions or other ideas you want to share, please like let's just keep it going over on MyPeers.

Thank you, thank you for joining us today. We will see you again in October. Again, this is our last webinar for this season. It's been a great season together and we look forward to great things next year. We'll see you in October of 2024.