

The Incredible 5 Point Scale

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www.5pointscale.com

What's this about?

- Developed by **special Ed Teachers with 20 years of experience.**
- **For some students it's easier to speak in numbers than with socially and emotionally based words.** Especially those on the autism scales. Scales are visual and abstract ideas are reduced to numbers.
- Research indicates that **scales are useful in teaching children with Autism Spectrum Disorders** (Attwood, Baron-Cohen, Minshew)
- The 5 point scale is a Cognitive-Behavioural approach. **How we act, react and interact with others depends on how we perceive the situation and how quickly we can assess what is going on.**

Why should we use this?

- Creates a common language between school and home
- Teaches self-regulation – When does the student need a break? What do they need to do to regulate themselves (e.g. calm down)?
- All kids can benefit from the use of the 5-point scale. Can be used classroom-wide or individualized.
- Reduces power struggles

How do we do it?

Step 1 - Student has a behaviour difficulty or misinterprets a social situation. Define the specific behavior or emotion (e.g. losing control, or voice volume).

Step 2 - Write a story for the student about the exhibited behavior. Share it with the student in a 1-on-1 situation. Write it at the student's level of understanding. You may use pictures and words. The student may assist in using the story.

- If the student finds social stories to be “babyish” write them an email, memo, etc. (See example below). Within the note to the student, invite them to help fill out the 5 point index with you.

Step 3 - Discuss what the behavior/emotion looks like with the student. Using the student's words, break behavior or emotion into 5 parts.

Step 4 - Define each of the 5 parts of the scale from the student's perspective (what does a 1 feel/look like, etc.?)

Step 5 - Discuss with the student when is it appropriate to be at each place on the scale.

- How do we know when we are at a 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5?
- What might make us be at a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5?
- When is it okay and not okay to be at a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5?
- What positive alternatives are there for the student to get to a lower number?

Step 6 - Initially, the student can monitor their behaviors/emotions by rating themselves throughout the day at scheduled times (e.g. beginning of class). If needed an adult can prompt the student and show them where they are on the scale. Then slide their finger down the scale to show them where they need to be.

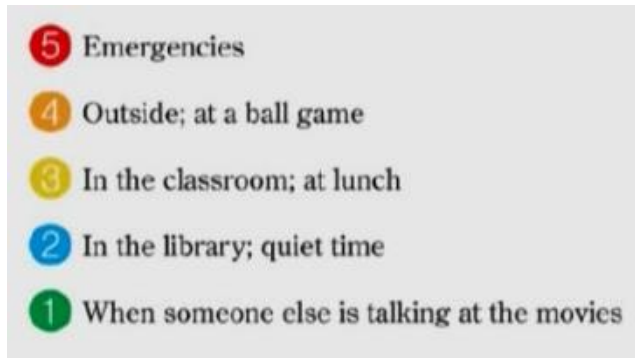
Step 7 - After the student learns about it and understands implicitly what a 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 means
- *then* take the visual scale with you and simply point to the number they are at - -
- *then* move your finger to the number you would like him to be.

This is much less confrontational and you are less likely to get into a power struggle.

Positives are important!! Point out when the student is using the system well.

Example:

Voice Volume – Middle years



Voice Scale – Kindergarten



Example of a memo

M E M O

To: Kevin

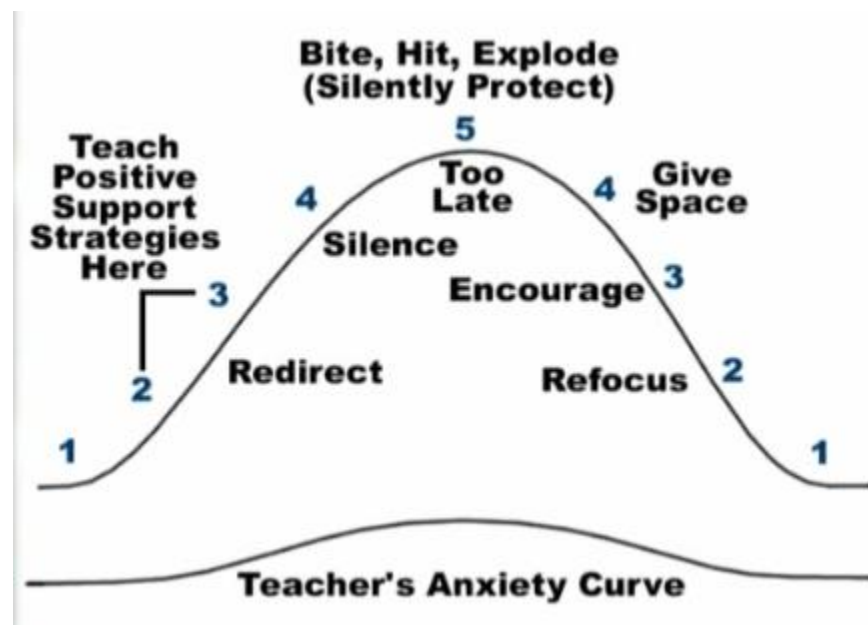
Re: When Your Obsessions Get Too Big

Sometimes having obsessions can be a positive thing, because it means that your brain is capable of latching on to an idea and not letting go. This can be beneficial for great explorers, inventors and writers. BUT sometimes having obsessions can be very upsetting and frustrating.

This memo is to inform you that I understand that sometimes your obsessions get so big that you are not able to control them because of the severe level of anxiety they cause. It would be highly beneficial for you to learn to tell the difference between when your obsessions are too big to handle and when they are feeling more like positive obsessions. One way to do this is to do a “check-in” three times a day when you consider your obsessional index. The first step is to help me fill out the following chart by rating your obsessional index on a 1-5 rating scale. Thank you for your cooperation.

Kari Dunn Buron

Managing Anxiety & Behaviour



Draw a curve (see example above). Write redirection strategies at the bottom (drink water, take deep breaths, change seat, adapt assignment, etc.). Curve helps illustrate *what* to think about when things go wrong.

1 = no problems

2 = Behavior begins to emerge (e.g. getting nervous, starting to pace) but student still has enough control to handle input.

- Redirect student to a new activity (drink water, take deep breaths, change seat, adapt assignment, etc.)

3 = Behavior is starting to increase (e.g. talking too loud) but student still has enough control to handle input.

- Redirect student to a new activity.

4 = Student is almost impossible to calm down (e.g. swearing, throwing things, disrupting classroom) - this can easily escalate into a 5.

- Teachers often try to intervene at this stage, but the student is not open to suggestions at this point.

- At a 4, all you can really do is stop talking. When you're talking, you are really increasing their stress rather than decreasing it. Offer silence and support.

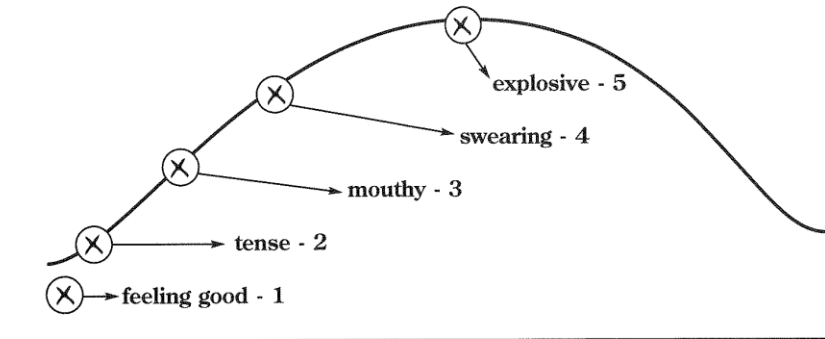
5 = Student is out of control. All you can do is protect the environment, protect other students, and protect the student at hand. Be quiet and remain calm.

- When the situation calms itself, and crisis is over, then you are a 4, still not ready for redirection. Silence and support is at a 4. Once you are at a 3 or 2, you can redirect the student to a new activity.

If you continue getting to 5's then you have not defined 2 and 3 effectively. Redefine and determine new redirection strategies for these levels.

You may want to sit down with the student and map out both the teachers'/EAs' and students' perspective of what behavior looks like at each step along the curve. This will help to build relationships and better control the behavioural outbursts. Example:

Emily's Anxiety Curve



	Emily thinks		Mrs. Olson thinks
5	hitting		hitting
4	running out of the room		swearing
3	swearing		mouthy
2	mad/tense		challenging
1	ok		working

Emily goes to the stop-and-think room when Mrs. Olson *thinks* she is close to an explosion.