

Behavioral Interventions and Strategies Series: *How Big is the Problem? How Big is My Reaction?*

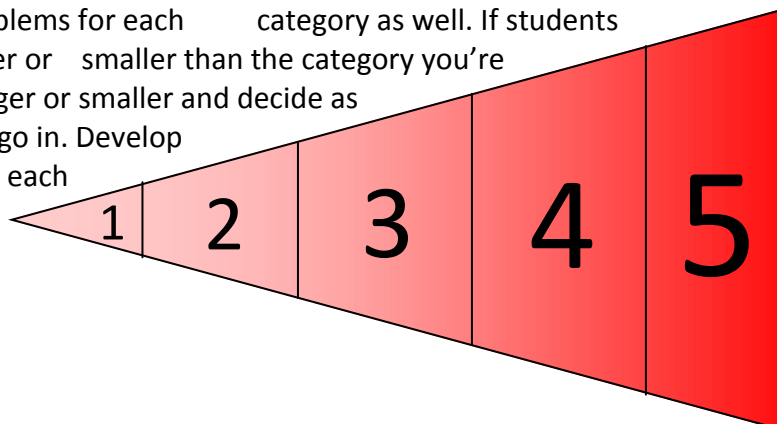
When to use: To reduce the amount of disruptive reactions to problems encountered in the school setting.

Why Use: This strategy teaches students to evaluate the problem and the appropriateness of their reaction. Often, students display big reactions to small problems and those big reactions result in disruptions to instruction and daily routines. For example, a student may react to a peer accidentally bumping into them by hitting the peer. The reaction is far bigger than the problem—they don't match. By teaching and prompting students to compare the size of the problem to the size of a reaction, students learn to engage in appropriate responses for problems.

Materials: Problem chart poster displayed in classroom, list of various problems in the classroom and appropriate/inappropriate reactions to problems

Introduction & Training

- Display problem chart in a clearly visible spot in the classroom
- At the beginning of the year (preferably during the first few days), set aside a block of time to discuss common problems in the classroom and how students should react to each problem. Using the problem chart can also begin after experiencing significant problems with inappropriate reactions in the classroom. Spend around 20 minutes discussing different types of problems that can happen at school and why it is important to react appropriately to them. Below is a script you can use to teach your students about the size of common problems and how we should react to them.
 - “Today we are going to talk about everyday problems we sometimes have at school. We are going to use this chart to help us decide how big each problem really is and how we should react to each problem.”
 - “Some problems are really **small** (*Point to the 1 on the chart*), some problems are really **BIG** (*Point to the 5 on the chart*), and some problems are in the middle (*Point to the sections for 2, 3, and 4*). How we react (or what we do) when we have a small problem should be different than how we react when we have a big problem. Small problems need small reactions; with big problems it's ok to have a bigger reaction.”
 - “Let's talk about what kinds of problems are the smallest (*Point to 1*) and work our way up to what kinds of problems are biggest (*Point to 5*).” Use your prepared list of problems associated with each number on the chart to talk about what problems fall into each category. The attached list can help you begin to generate your own list of problems for each category based on the most common problems in the classroom. Have students come up with problems for each category as well. If students choose a problem that you believe is bigger or smaller than the category you're working on, discuss why you think it is bigger or smaller and decide as a group which category the problem should go in. Develop a classroom list of example problems for each category that can be displayed with the Problem Chart.



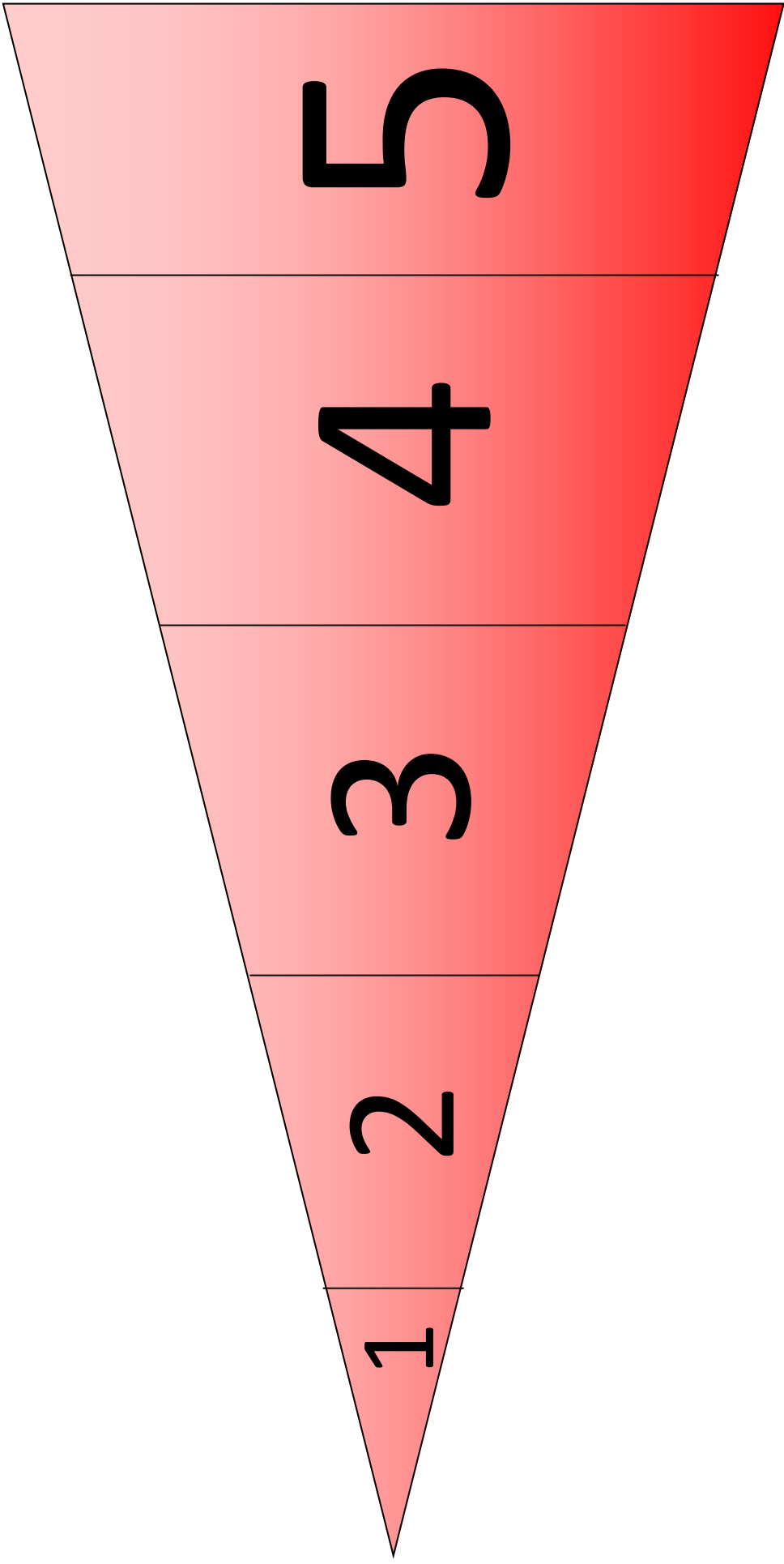


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- Continue the lesson by talking about reactions to the problems. “When we have problems, we usually react a certain way. What we do, or how we react, after a problem happens should be the same size as the problem. A **small** problem should have a **small** reaction. When there is a **BIG** problem, it’s usually ok to have a **bigger** reaction.” Use your list of acceptable reactions for each category to talk about appropriate reactions for each problem size and specific problems you and your students came up with. Have students generate appropriate reactions for each problem. Include the reactions with your list of problems to be displayed with the Problem Chart.
- It’s helpful to include inappropriate reactions in your discussion and talk with students about why bigger reactions are not appropriate for small problems (e.g., throwing a book when a student gets a low grade) and why smaller reactions are not appropriate for bigger problems (e.g., ignoring when another student hurts you instead of telling the teacher).
- After you have generated your class list of problems and appropriate reactions and student-generated examples of appropriate and inappropriate reactions, you and your students can model problem and reaction scenarios. Provide feedback to students about the appropriateness of their behavior and ask students to provide feedback to their peers.
- Inform students you will be observing them during the day to see if they are using their problem identification and reaction skills
- Review each day by spending a few minutes re-teaching 1 or 2 problem and reaction categories at the beginning of each class period/day.
- When you see students reacting inappropriately gently remind the student to think about how big the problem really is and what the appropriate reaction should be, either individually or as a small group or whole class.
“Marcus, how big of a problem is having your clip moved from green to yellow? It’s a size **2** kind of problem on our chart, isn’t it? How do we act for size **2** problems?”
- Continue providing immediate praise to students or groups engaging in appropriate reactions consistent with the size of the problem.
“The Green table just did a great job of reacting to an argument over who gets to use the scissors by deciding to share and letting Jenny go first.”
- Monitor reactions and problems to determine which categories need to be reviewed and/or which students are violating appropriate reaction guidelines.



How BIG is the Problem, Really?



How BIG is the Problem, Really?

How Big is the Problem?	Examples of Problems	Appropriate Reactions
1	Someone accidentally bumps you or is staring at you	Ignore it Accept their apology
2	Your teacher tells you, “No” or asks you to do something	Accept your teacher’s response—use kind words and a soft voice Continue your work
3	Another student is trying to talk to you when you should be quiet or working	Ignore them and continue your work Quietly and kindly ask them to leave you alone
4	You forgot your homework and you know there is a consequence	Admit you forgot it Write down your homework so you don't forget next time
5	Someone hurts you or threatens to hurt you	Walk away Tell your teacher or an adult