

**3 Phrases  
You Can Use to  
De-escalate a  
Student**

**by Roshanda Glenn**



### 3 Phrases You Can Use to De-escalate a Student

© 2025 by Roshanda Glenn

All rights reserved.

This publication, including all text, illustrations, graphics, logos, design elements, and proprietary teaching frameworks contained within, is the intellectual property of Roshanda Glenn and The Behavior Studio™.

No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations used for purposes of review or professional reference.

Unauthorized use, duplication, adaptation, or distribution of any portion of this material - including the Crisis Response Protocol Framework, Behavior Studio™ terminology, and any associated instructional models - is strictly prohibited and may result in civil or criminal penalties.

For permissions, licensing inquiries, or training requests, please contact The Behavior Studio™ at [info@thebehaviorstudio.com](mailto:info@thebehaviorstudio.com).

The strategies in this checklist are general suggestions based on classroom crisis response best practices. I am not certified to provide definitive or legally binding guidance, and this resource is not legal, clinical, or medical advice.

Always follow your district and site policies, state laws, required trainings, and administrative directives. Safety is the highest priority, and no strategy listed here should ever be interpreted as encouragement to put yourself, a student, or anyone else in harm's way.

Laws and policies related to crisis response, restraint, and seclusion vary by state and district, so always defer to your administration and trained crisis response personnel.

Use your professional judgment, seek support whenever needed, and apply these strategies only in ways that comply with your school's established procedures.



In every classroom, emotions can run high. Even the best of us will have moments where we're not sure what to say next. If you've ever faced an angry or defiant student and felt your heart race and your mind go blank, you're not alone. The good news is that de-escalation doesn't begin with control, it begins with connection.

When a student is escalated, especially a student with a history of severe behavior, attempts to control them are often met with psychological reactance, which can unintentionally make the situation worse. When students feel threatened or powerless, their behavior often escalates instead of improves. The three phrases in this guide will help you calm emotions, rebuild safety, and restore trust, one conversation at a time.

## Phrase #1 - Name the Emotion & Offer Support

When students feel truly seen and supported, their nervous systems begin to settle. Your calm presence communicates, "You're safe with me."

By showing that strong emotions don't push you away, you model emotional stability and trustworthiness - two things many students with behavioral challenges rarely experience from adults.

This simple moment of empathy tells them you care more about connection than control. Over time, that consistency strengthens your relationship and opens students up to your influence. What begins as a small act of understanding can transform the entire classroom climate into one of calm, safety, and belonging.

### Phrase #1 - Example

**"I can see you're upset. I am here to help. What do you need?"**

## Phrase #2 - Express Intent to Understand & Invite Sharing

This phrase reminds students that their voices, experiences, and perspectives matter. It shows them that you're not just there to correct their behavior, you're there to understand it.

When students sense genuine curiosity instead of judgment, defensiveness fades and trust begins to grow. What might have turned into a power struggle becomes a moment of connection and partnership.

Over time, students who feel heard are more willing to accept redirection, reflect on their choices, and try again. Listening doesn't remove accountability - it creates the safety students need to learn from mistakes and build better habits.

### Phrase #2 - Example

**“I really want to understand what’s going on. Can you tell me?”**

## Phrase #3 - Use Collaborative Language that Invites Problem Solving

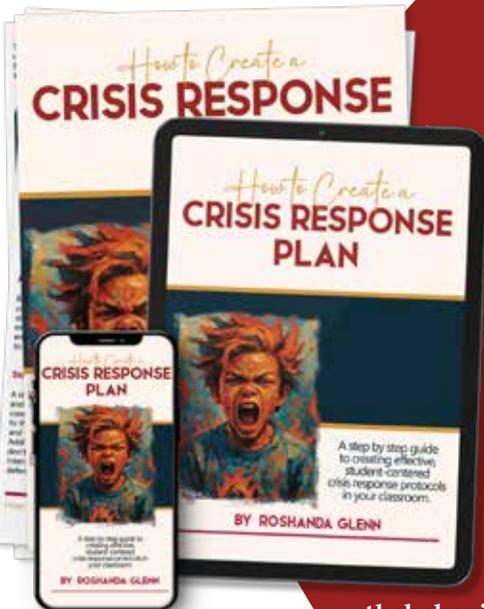
This phrase shifts the tone from me versus you to us versus the problem. It communicates that you see the student as capable, valuable, and worth collaborating with. Students feel like our teammates rather than just the targets of our disapproval. As a result, their resistance will begin to soften, and solutions will become possible. It also sends a powerful message: “I respect you enough to work through this issue together.” That sense of shared ownership transforms conflict into connection and growth.

As students experience your steady belief in them, they begin to rise to the positive vision you hold. Partnership builds accountability - and that's where real behavioral change begins.

### Phrase #3 - Example

**“I can see you’re upset. I am here to help. What do you need?”**

## How to Create a CRISIS RESPONSE



# JOIN MY MAILING LIST

Subscribe today and this FREE 10-Page guide - "How to Create a Crisis Response Plan" - will land in your inbox instantly.

You'll also get weekly insights, practical behavior tools, and ongoing support to help you build a calmer, safer crisis response system

Join & Download

[thebehaviorstudio.com/newsletter-sign-up](https://thebehaviorstudio.com/newsletter-sign-up)



## Leading with Empathy

Empathy is the strongest de-escalation tool we have because it helps us truly understand our students and the emotions driving their behavior. When we take the time to see beneath the surface, we discover what they need most - safety, belonging, and connection.

That understanding allows us to design supports and interventions that meet students where they are and guide them toward growth. Each moment of calm connection models the emotional regulation we hope to teach.

When we choose connection over correction and clarity over control, we create classrooms where trust replaces fear and behavioral transformation begins. And perhaps most importantly, we remind students that they are worthy of patience, dignity, and belief, even in their hardest moments. That message stays with them long after the crisis has passed.



## Roshanda Glenn

Founder & President, The Behavior Studio

Roshanda is an experienced educator of 29 years who specializes in teaching students diagnosed with Emotional Disturbance. Beyond the classroom, she passionately trains other teachers in effectively managing and transforming extreme behaviors in students.



@thebehaviorstudio