

The Three Stages of the Rage Cycle

Rumbling, Rage, and Recovery

Rumbling

What are these cues?

There may be an increase in stereotypical behavior and stemming, for example, fidgeting, hand flapping, rocking, grimacing, excessive chewing, tapping and other repetitive behaviors.

There may be an increase in verbal behaviors such as strange vocalizations or nonsense noises, changes in volume of vocalizations (mumbling, speaking under the breath or to themselves), swearing, making threats.

An increase in movement, such as walking in circles (circuits), pacing, or leaving the room/house to get away.

Rage

When the volcano erupts there is little that can be done to reduce the fallout. The child or adult has lost control, emotionally and physically.

The noise and destruction may include screaming, explosive impulsiveness, biting, hitting, kicking, destruction of property, and self-injury (e.g., head banging).

Recovery

The eruption may be followed by crying, sleeping, denial of rage, withdrawal into fantasy, and apologizing. Remember that it is very easy for a child to go back into rage at this point due to their fragile state.

What can be done to avoid the Rage?

The key point to the Rage Cycle is to intervene during the Rumbling stage. It is too late during the Rage stage (and during that stage you need to focus on safety – of everyone involved). These are some of the things you can do to prevent the Rage stage:

WALK, DON'T TALK!

Children with ASD (especially when stressed or getting angry) have difficulty with listening and processing words – LESS TALKING PLEASE! Let them walk to calm down. Make sure someone is accompanying them. Let them talk all they want to
Chill out zone

It is a good idea to have a space or room with low sensory stimulation where school children with ASD can take their work, when they need to calm down, cool down or chill-out.

Non-judgmental removal

Remove the child from the situation (in a positive manner) by involving them in a task such as delivering a note to a teacher in another classroom. They will feel important and the Rage Cycle is being interrupted or short circuited, as their attention is diverted to something more enjoyable.

Divert attention

Schedules and routine

Never underestimate the importance of schedules and routines for the child with ASD. The use of such things as visual schedules, diaries, calendars, lists and charts in their daily life provides certainty, predictability and a sense of security that goes a long way to reducing the anxiety that can feed into the Rage Cycle. Give plenty of warning to the child of any changes to the routine.

What else!

These are just some ideas on how to interrupt the Rage Cycle. As the child gets older it is important that they learn to monitor their own level of anger and have their own strategies available to manage this anger.

A simple technique is to have a visual 10-point scale of anger (where 10 is the angriest) which the child can use to identify their level of anger. This is accompanied by a list of effective anger-reducing strategies that the child has identified.

When the child identifies that their anger is climbing up the scale (say 6 to 7) they look at their list and pick an activity to reduce the anger. The list can be kept on a small card in their pocket or school bag or wallet for ease of access. This sounds simplistic, but that is the key – when a person is angry they stop thinking clearly and need simple, visual cues to assist them in managing their feelings.

Brenda Smith Miles & Jack Southwick (1999)

Asperger Syndrome and Difficult Moments: Practical Solutions for Tantrums, Rage, and Meltdowns.

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QUICK REFERENCE LIST

From:

Myles, B.S. & Southwick, J. (2005). *Asperger syndrome and difficult moments: Practical solutions for tantrums, rage, and meltdowns*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

RUMBLING STAGE

Typical Rumbling Stage Behaviors by Student

- Fidgeting
- Swearing
- Making Noises
- Ripping Paper
- Grimacing
- Refusing to cooperate
- Rapid movements
- Tears
- Tensing muscles
- Name calling
- Increasing/decreasing voice volume
- Verbal threats
- Tapping foot

Rumbling Stage Interventions

- Antiseptic bouncing – non-punitive removal from environment by running errands
- Proximity control
- Signal interference
- Touch control
- Defusing tension through humor
- Support from routine
- Interest boosting
- Redirecting
- Cool zone
- Acknowledging student difficulties
- Just walk and don't talk

Effective Adult Behaviors during the Rumbling Stage

1. Remain calm
2. Use a quiet voice
3. Take deep breaths
4. Prevent power struggle
5. Re-evaluate student goals
6. Be flexible—the student is not able to be flexible at this time

RAGE STAGE

Typical Rage Stage Behaviors by Student

- Disinhibited
- Acting impulsively
- Emotional
- Explosive
- Destroying property
- Self-injurious
- Screaming
- Biting
- Hitting
- Kicking
- Internalizing behavior

Rage Stage Interventions

- Protect the student
- Protect the environment
- Protect others
- Don't discipline
- Remove the audience
- Be non-confrontational
- Plan a "graceful" exit strategy
- Follow a plan
- Obtain assistance
- Prompt to a cool zone, as appropriate
- Use few words
- Prevent a power struggle
- Re-evaluate the student's goals
- Be flexible—the child cannot
- Set a timer

Effective Adult Behaviors during the Rage Stage

1. Control "flight or fight" tendency
2. Remember that less is more
3. Remain calm and quiet
4. Do not take behaviors personally
5. Disengage emotionally
6. Be conscious of your nonverbal cues
7. Take deep breaths

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RECOVERY STAGE

Typical Recovery Behaviors of Student

- Sleeping
- Denial of rage behaviors
- Withdrawal into fantasy
- Apologizing

Note: Consider the student to be fragile. Student can re-enter the cycle easily at this stage.

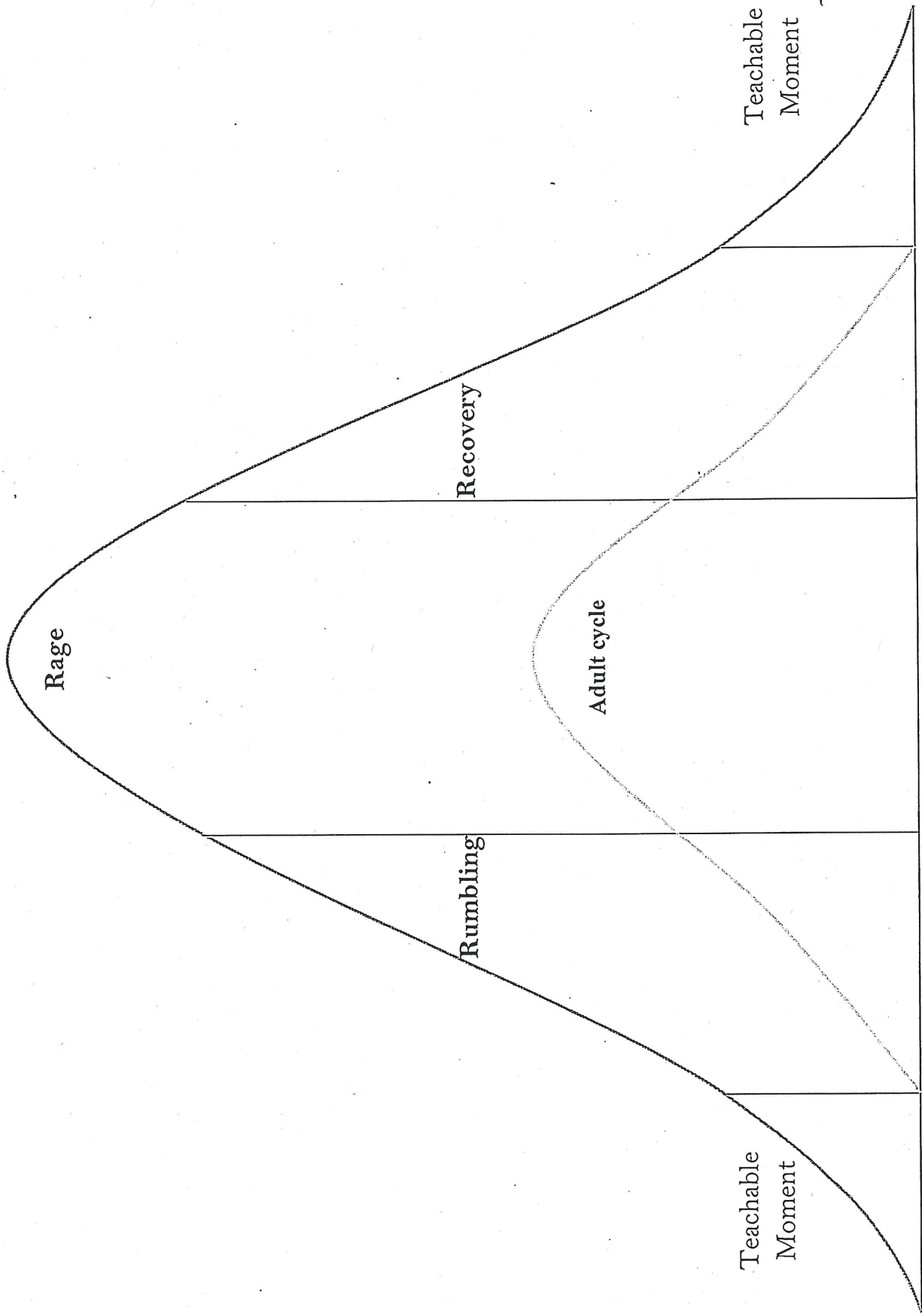
Recovery Stage Interventions

- Allow student to sleep, if necessary
- Support use of relaxation techniques
- Do not refer to the rage behavior
- Support with structure
- Consider the child “fragile”
- Plan instructional interventions to provide alternatives to tantrums, rage, meltdowns, and shut-downs
- Determine appropriate option for child:
 1. Redirect to successful activity or special interest
 2. Provide space
 3. Ensure that interventions are presented at or below the child’s functioning level
- Check to see if student is ready to learn
- Do not make excessive demands

Effective Adult Behaviors during the Recovery Stage

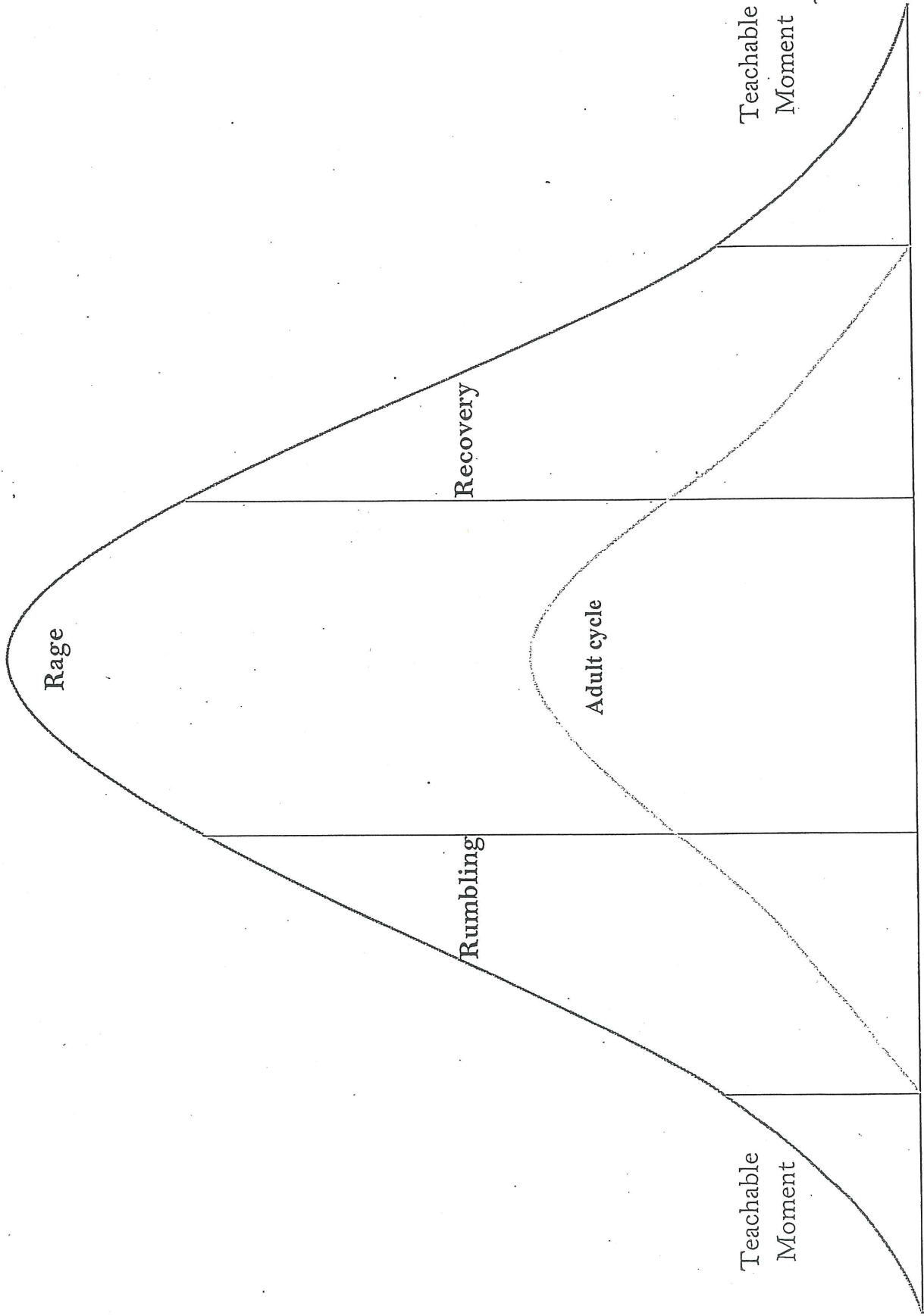
1. Remain calm and quiet
2. Take time for yourself to regroup

The Cycle of Rage:



Adapted from Myles & Southwick

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