The Incredible 5 Point Scale

What is the Incredible 5 Point Scale?
The Incredible 5 Point Scale is a visual method for helping individuals understand levels or intensity on any construct. It can be used to teach volume, emotions, pain, or nearly any information that can vary in degree or amount. The Incredible 5 Point Scale can be used to have individual’s rate their current level of a specified construct. It can also be used to help learners modulate their behavior.

How do I create a 5 Point Scale?
1. First select a construct for the rating scale. As long as the construct has various degrees or levels, it is appropriate for the scale.
2. Assign values for each number. Define what each level of the concept looks/sounds like.
3. Create a visual support. Using the learner’s area of interest, create a story that explains how to use the scale.
4. Teach the scale. Build in time to teach the learner how to use the scale and how to identify each level.
5. Extend its use. Have the learner practice the scale and ensure to teach generalization of the scale so it can be used it across settings and people.

Sample 5 Point Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Visual Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Screaming Emergency</td>
<td>![Screaming Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Outside Voice</td>
<td>![Outside Voice Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Classroom Voice</td>
<td>![Classroom Voice Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Whisper Voice</td>
<td>![Whisper Voice Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No talking Listen only</td>
<td>![No Talking Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>![Angry Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Overwhelmed</td>
<td>![Overwhelmed Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>![Frustrated Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>![Anxious Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>![Happy Image]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Anxiety Curve

The anxiety curve model (Buron and Curtis) is one use of a 5 point scale. It illustrates anxiety and its relation to the learner’s behavior. “1” is the trigger. “2” is early visual cues that anxiety is growing and simple strategies. “3” and “4” focus on caregiver strategies to help diffuse the anxiety. By “4” the individual is no longer having a teachable moment, and is not able to make rational choices. “5” is the peak of anxiety.

This is the foundation of the plan, where positive relationships are built and functional skills are taught (e.g., 5 point scale, social stories, social skills).

Inappropriate behaviors and aggression may occur

Model calming strategies, don’t offer choices

Time to leave the stressor

Early stress signs may be identified; refocus away from stressor

4

3

4

3

2

2

This is peak anxiety. Don’t try to talk or problem solve

Encourage relaxation not decisions/actions

Be encouraging and supportive; don’t discuss the stressor

Can begin calmly redirecting at this point

The caregiver curve. It is important to stay calm to diffuse their anxiety

How Can I Learn More?

Articles and Books


Adapted from fact sheets originally published by Illinois Autism Training and Technical Assistance and Illinois State University.