



The Conflict Cycle model (Figure 1) asserts that students with EBD tend to come to the school environment with irrational beliefs—beliefs that are grounded in their personal experiences and poor self-concept (Long & Morse, 1996). These beliefs persist, causing the stress to affect their thoughts and feelings. Their irrational thoughts foster their feelings, yet the teacher tends to enter their world only when the child’s thoughts and feelings enfold into an exhibited behavior. Students with EBD are characterized by internalizing (e.g., anxiety, fear, depression, social withdrawal) and externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression, overactivity, noncompliance, and delinquency; Coleman & Webber, 2002). During the child’s time of crisis, teachers have the ability to feed into the student’s irrational beliefs (e.g., ALL teachers are against me) or choose to manage their behaviors and proceed in a different direction. With the goal of maintaining a positive learning environment, a teacher can alter her response to a student with EBD and choose to not perpetuate the cycle of irrational beliefs of the child. Depending on the individual situation, such responses may include providing clear choices for the child, planned ignoring, providing the child with a direction and then moving away, and/or reminding the child of his goals. Our responses are most effective when there is an established relationship with a child and when we free ourselves from our own ego. Looking beyond the child’s veil of surface behaviors, we may proceed with an empathic way of thinking.