Fostering Self-Regulation Skills in all Children, even the Most Defiant and Aggressive
Help children help each other in the classroom

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Conscious Discipline®

Conscious Discipline is an emotional intelligence program consisting of Brain Smart® strategies for responding rather than reacting to life events. Through responding, conflict moments are transformed into cooperative learning opportunities.

Conscious Discipline is a research-based program proven to:
• Increase academic achievement
• Decrease problem behaviors
• Improve the quality of relationships: student to student, teacher to student, parent to child, teacher to parent, and coworker to coworker

For most of us, upset is scary.
So what causes upset? The world does not go our way. All conflict starts with upset. We spend enormous energy avoiding conflict. To avoid conflict, we must avoid upset.
To avoid upset, we have tried to:
• Happy up the child through permissiveness.
• Bribe the child through rewards.
• Punish the child who displays upset.

Responsibility is the ability to respond to a situation. We have confused responsibility with admitting guilt. Responsibility is not fault-finding but solution-seeking. Responsibility requires access to the higher centers of the brain (prefrontal lobes).

The key to managing upset is consciously knowing what you are feeling when you are feeling it. This is the cornerstone of emotional intelligence.

Conscious Discipline Brain State Model

Prefrontal Lobes
I don't like it when you __________. What can I learn from this?

Limbic System
Name calling/mouthing off
Am I loved?

Brain Stem
Pushing, hitting, withdrawing
Am I safe?

Conscious Discipline Brain State Model

Integrated State
Ability to respond

Thinking State
Tendency to complain about what’s wrong

Emotional State
Tendency to verbally lash out and blame others for inner upset

Survival State
Tendency to physically act out feelings

Wiring the brain for personal responsibility

Research overwhelmingly says.... Attunement with children (others) creates the most stable, most flexible, most adaptive state possible. It creates the highest neural integration we can measure.
-Daniel Siegel, 2007

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State-Changing Skills

1. Upload and download calm: S.T.A.R., Smile, Take a deep breath, And Relax.
When two eyes meet, a wireless connection is created between the orbital frontal areas of the pre-frontal lobes. From this connection we literally download inner states into one another. The eyes contain nerve projections that lead directly to the key brain structures for empathy and matching emotions.

Mirror neurons ensure that the moment someone sees an emotion on your face, they will at once sense that same feeling within themselves. - Daniel Stern, 2003

2. Emotions are energy in motion. They begin unconsciously as vibrations in the body. Notice the body.

“Your face is going like this. You arms are going like this.”
Demonstrate the child’s actions to make contact and raise awareness.

“You seem ______.” Label the emotion. As emotions move up into awareness they can be named and ultimately tamed or managed.

“You wanted or you were hoping __________.” Once conscious, then consciously help the child shift from what they don’t want to what they do want to begin the problem solving process. In this final shift the brain becomes an integrated unit with one goal.

3. Solve the problem.

Safe Place
The Safe Place provides an opportunity for children to remove themselves from the group in order to become calm, regain composure and maintain control when upset, angry or frustrated. Children come to the Safe Place in order to be helpful and not hurtful to themselves and others. It is the keystone to your anger management curriculum.

Safe Place set up:
Space: A corner or other area in the classroom or home that is away from distractions (or portable Safe Place mat). 
Visuals: Label the center and have pictorial reminders of relaxation techniques. (Go to www.ConsciousDiscipline.com and look under “Resources” to download the breathing icons.) 
Materials: Add calming items that are age appropriate and child specific. 
• Tape recorder with recording of
parent saying “You’re safe. Keep breathing. You can handle this. I love you.”
- Blanket or beach towel
- Wave bottle
- Hard plastic toys
- Squeeze balls
- Stuffed animals
- Note pad and pencil

Routines
M.A.P. - Model it, Add visuals and Practice your routines.
Make books for your classrooms family. Lend your prefrontal lobes.

How to:
S.T.A.R. - Smile, Take a deep breath And Relax.
Encourage belly breathing where the tummy goes out when the air goes in, and in when the air goes out. Also help children learn to exhale slower than they inhale.

Balloon - Place your hands on top of your head and interlace your fingers. Breathe in through your nose as you raise your arms, inflating an imaginary balloon. Release the air in the balloon by pursing your lips, exhaling slowly, lowering your arms and making a “pbpbpbpbpb” sound.

Pretzel - Standing up, cross your ankles. Now cross your right wrist over left, turn your hands so your thumbs are facing the floor, put palms together and interlace fingers. Bend your elbows out and gently turn your hands down and toward your body until they rest on the center of your chest. Put your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Relax and breathe. For young children you can modify the pose and help them be successful by singing the following song to tune of “I’m a little teapot.” “I can be a pretzel. Arms and legs out.” (Sit on floor, extend arms & legs) “Cross them over and watch me pout.” (Cross arms & cross legs) “When I feel all angry, a pretzel I’ll be.” (Breathe) “Squeeze together 123.” (Pull crossed arms & legs up tightly to the body)

Drain - Extend arms out, pretending your arms are faucets. Tighten arm, shoulder, and face muscles. Exhale slowly making a “sssshhh” sound and release all your muscles, draining out the stress.

Suggested I Love You Rituals

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
What a wonderful child you are!
With bright eyes and nice round cheeks,
Talented person from head to feet.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
What a wonderful child you are!

Round and Round the Garden
Round and round the garden
Goes the teddy bear.
One step, two step
Tickle under there.

The Story Hand
Tell the child, “It’s story time.” Take his/her hand. Start with the pinky finger, giving it a deep massage and saying, “This little finger went to school today.” Go to the next finger and continue the same process of offering a deep finger massage and telling a story of the child’s day. “This little finger played with her friend, Emily.” Continue with story using highlights from the child’s day for each finger until you get to his thumb. The thumb represents something that might be creating anxiety. For example, “I wonder who will keep me safe when Mom and Dad go to work?” Tuck the thumb into the palm of the child’s hand and cover that concern with the child’s other fingers. Then wrap your hands securely around the child’s. With a firm touch and a reassuring voice say, “Ms. Kelly in the yellow room will keep you safe until your Mom comes back.” Substitute other reassuring words as necessary, depending on the child’s anxieties and situation.
5 Steps to Self-Regulation

Step 1:
I Am
Child is triggered into a state of upset. Emotions biochemically overtake us and we become them. “I am angry.”

Step 2:
I Calm
Children need assistance in turning off the stress response in their body and calming down their physiology. Begin to move from “I am angry” to “I feel angry.”

Step 3:
I Feel
Children need assistance in naming and taming the feelings that have overwhelmed them. Once you can name a feeling and become conscious of it, you are automatically better able to manage it.

Step 4:
I Choose
Children need assistance in choosing strategies that will help them move from the lower centers of their brain to the higher centers of their brain in order to get back to classroom activities/work.

Step 5:
I Solve
Something triggered the child into a state of upset before entering the Safe Place. Whatever happened needs some type of solution.
What Gets in Our Way: Unhealthy Styles

Adults’ reactions to our upset early in life left us with two self-defeating beliefs:
1. We believe we cannot tolerate the uncomfortable sensations generated by different emotions.
2. We believe that the sensations will not pass and may last forever.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style of Upbringing</th>
<th>Sad</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Scared</th>
<th>Happy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dismissing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixing/Saving</td>
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Primary and Secondary Systems: Finding Our Emotional Guidance System

**Primary Emotions:** Serve a survival function, Angry, Sad, Scared, Happy

**Secondary Emotions:** Have no healthy function. They cover up the primary emotions, making it impossible for our primary emotions to send us their messages or organize us for emotional wellbeing.
Step 1:

**I AM**

I AM Angry vs I Feel Angry

- When an event triggers us, we experience a flood of physiological changes.
- We become the emotion, feeling completely out-of-control and powerless against it.
- We interpret life in a way that supports our perception and ignore all other information.
- We evaluate what is happening in a way that justifies and maintains our emotional state.

Self-regulation is the cornerstone skill for all development. It refers to both the conscious and unconscious processes that allow us to regulate our thoughts, feelings and actions in order to achieve a goal.

Without the ability to self-regulate, our emotions become out of control, our thoughts become unyielding and our behaviors sabotage life goals as we become hurtful to others and ourselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unconscious</th>
<th>Conscious</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I Blame</strong></td>
<td><strong>I Am Triggered</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look what you made me do</td>
<td>I am angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I Demand/act out</strong></td>
<td><strong>I Calm</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I demand the world go my way, Name calling, etc</td>
<td>Breathing and noticing nonverbal cues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I Medicate</strong></td>
<td><strong>I Feel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I medicate the distressing sensations through addiction, comfort food, etc</td>
<td>Identify and name the feeling, shifting from “I am angry” to I feel angry.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I Bury</strong></td>
<td><strong>I Choose</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I bury my feelings in a life story or life script, painting myself or others as villains or victim and separating from others</td>
<td>I relax, change my state and reframe the problem. I can see the situation differently by using positive intent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I Am Stuck</strong></td>
<td><strong>I Solve</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am stuck in the problem, story or life script</td>
<td>Win-Win solutions are abundant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feelings Are Good Guys, Not Bad Guys

Feelings are the bridge between problems and solutions. All conflict starts with upset. If you cannot manage the upset, solutions are not possible.

- Feelings integrate the body and readies it for action
- Feelings provide signals to others—communication system
- Feeling give us messages so we can return to a higher state of adaptability.

Feelings are the bridge between problems and solutions

Model Safe Place

I Calm Poster Provides children with visual icons of the four basic calming strategies.

My Five Steps Chart Provides visuals for teachers and children to conduct the five steps to self-regulation.

Safe Place Case A container to hold all the items listed on the I Choose to Think poster, plus other items to help children organize and calm.

Brain Smart Choices for Connection and Calming Provide an additional 20 connecting activities and 15 calming activities for your Safe Place. The Choice Cubes are optional.
Step 2: ★ CALM

Children need assistance in turning off the stress response in their body and calming down their physiology. I Calm interventions include the following:

1. The I Calm: Safe Place Mat
2. Four visual icons for STAR, Drain, Balloon, and Pretzel (download these from [www.consciousdiscipline.com](http://www.consciousdiscipline.com))
3. Including the following activities during other times in the day:
   - Stress reducers during the Brain Smart Start
   - Reading *Shubert is a STAR* many times, sending it home for parents, or keeping it in the Safe Place
   - Singing “The STAR Song” on *It Starts in the Heart* by Jack Hartman and Dr. Becky Bailey and “Calm Your Brain” on the Brain Boogie Boosters CD by The Learning Station and Dr. Becky Bailey
   - Writing a class made book of when and how to do the four stress reducers

Check yourself:

✓ Have I visually posted the icons in the Safe Place?
✓ Have I read and placed *Shubert is a STAR* in the Safe Place?
Step 3: **I FEEL**

The children will need assistance in naming and taming the feeling that has overwhelmed them. Once you can name a feeling and become conscious of it, you are automatically better able to manage it. I Feel interventions include the following:

1. I Feel: Feeling Buddies Kit
2. Mood Cube
4. Provide a safe mirror

Check yourself and make a plan:

- ✔ Have I provided visual facial images of different feelings?
- ✔ Have I provided a safe mirror for the children?

Step 4: **I Choose**

The children will need assistance in choosing strategies that will help them move from the lower centers of their brain to the higher centers of their brain in order to get back to classroom activities and work. I Choose interventions include the following:

1. I Choose Board
2. Choices displayed through visuals
3. What would help me feel better in my body (download prototype from www.ConsciousDiscipline.com)

Several of the choices require materials to be completed. These materials would be contained in the Safe Place Case. The Safe Place Case is a container that holds the pencil, paper, a squeeze ball, and other items that help children self-calm. All children are different and your Safe Place Case will reflect this. Some children will need very individualized choices, and may require their own Safe Place Case.
Step 5: **Solve**

This is the final step in the process, and the children will still need your assistance to be successful. Something triggered them into a state of upset before entering the Safe Place. Whatever happened needs some type of solution.

- If a child was upset about cleaning up, then it would be time to return and clean up the mess when he or she leaves the Safe Place.
- If a child was missing his family, then the solution might be drawing a picture for his family, looking at the Friends and Family Board, or making a card.
- If the child was frustrated with a math problem, a mentor might be needed when he or she returns to the project.
- If the child had a conflict with a friend, the Conflict Resolution Time Machine would be used.

Notes

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