



# Conscious Discipline®

## SUCCESS STORIES: SAVING BRAINS GRENADA

### Community-based Conscious Discipline program reduces corporal punishment, improves cognition in the Caribbean

#### CHALLENGE

In Grenada, a Caribbean island nation of 110,000 people, corporal punishment is widespread. Harsh child-rearing and excessive corporal punishment hinder the development of executive functions such as attention, impulse control and prioritizing.

#### SOLUTION

A team including neuropsychologist Dr. Barbara Landon presented Conscious Discipline as a positive alternative to physical punishment. They developed a community-based program focused on parent education, teaching Conscious Discipline through home visits and a mobile resource unit called the Saving Brains Bus.

#### MILESTONES

**66**

Conscious Discipline Paraprofessionals (CDPP) made over 2,000 home visits

**50**

communities received 12 visits each from the Saving Brains Bus

**750**

families from across Grenada served

**843**

infants and toddlers served in 60 communities

**340**

children and caregivers assessed

#### SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES

- **Less Corporal Punishment** - Parents who received Conscious Discipline intervention had less supportive attitudes toward corporal punishment.
- **Cognitive Improvement** - Children of parents who received Conscious Discipline intervention demonstrated statistically significant higher function on cognition assessments than children of parents who did not receive the intervention.
- **High Referral Rates** - 100 percent of families who visited the Brain Bus said they benefited from the lessons and would recommend the program to others.
- **Program Growth** - 12 schools will implement Conscious Discipline in 2019, with 12 more schools implementing the following school year. Additional funding will allow for more coaching and assessment of the program.

#### KEY PLAYERS



**Dr. Becky Bailey,**  
Author, Educator, Child-Development Expert and Founder of Conscious Discipline.



**Dr. Barbara Landon,**  
Neuropsychologist, professor of bioethics & Conscious Discipline Certified Instructor



**Stephanie Holmes,**  
Saving Brains Grenada project manager & Conscious Discipline Certified Instructor



**Dr. Randall Waechter,**  
Neuroscientist, professor of bioethics & Research Grants Coordinator at the Windward Islands Research and Education Foundation (WINDREF)



Each month, the Saving Brains Bus parked at a community gathering place, put up a tent, and placed a parachute on the ground for children and parents. Every bus visit had a theme, with lessons focusing on parenting skills and positive attachment.

*“Conscious Discipline is a foundation and template for teaching parents solid skills and improving child outcomes in Grenada.”*

**-DR. RANDALL WAECHTER**



# Conscious Discipline®



*Conscious Discipline is a trauma-informed, brain-based self-regulation program combining discipline, social-emotional learning and school climate into one integrated process. It helps adults create an environment of safety and connectedness that fosters learning and problem-solving. Adults and children learn to manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviors, empowering them to reach their goals.*

In May 2015, a group of parents and their toddlers gathered around a brightly colored red, green and gold bus designed to match the Grenadian flag. The Conscious Discipline S.T.A.R breathing icon and a reading father and son duo adorned the bus's side.



Jayden

Project manager Stephanie Holmes welcomed the families to the Saving Brains Bus. She encouraged parents to pose with their children, snapping photos for a Friends and Family Board. When it was two-year-old Jayden's turn to pose with his mother, Carvita, his mother refused. Jayden took his picture alone.

"They were both unhappy and seemed very disconnected from one another," observed Holmes.

## Saving Brains Grenada Is Born

It was with the goal of strengthening parent-child connections in Grenada that the Saving Brains project was formed. Dr. Barbara Landon, a neuropsychologist and professor of bioethics at St. George's University School of Medicine, became interested in presenting Conscious Discipline as a positive alternative to physical punishment in Grenada.

Landon discussed the idea with Dr. Randall Waechter, a St. George's colleague and neuroscientist who shares her interest in executive functions. They agreed that harsh child-rearing and excessive corporal punishment hinder the development of vital executive functions. However, physical punishment was the only way that most parents in Grenada knew to discipline children. With Conscious Discipline, Landon and Waechter hoped to introduce a better way and help build a society of resilient problem-solvers.

Along with their Conscious Discipline Action Team (CDAT), the colleagues applied for and received a Saving Brains grant from Grand Challenges Canada. Saving Brains is a program that supports innovative ideas to improve early brain and child development globally.

The Saving Brains Grenada program focuses on parent education, teaching Conscious Discipline skills through both home visits and a mobile resource unit called the Saving Brains Bus.



Barbara Landon



Dr. Randall Waechter

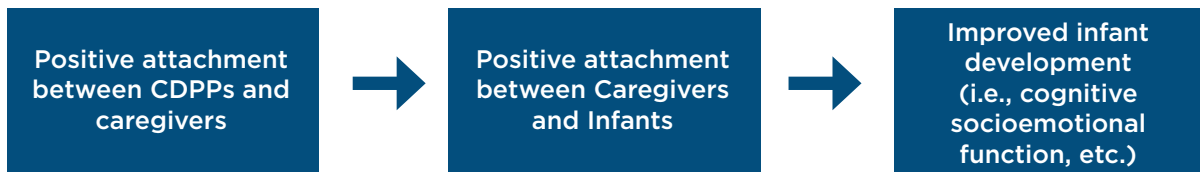
## Home Visits

Just after Landon and Waechter learned of the Saving Brains grant, they were introduced to Dawn Cyrus, then the director of the Roving Caregivers Project. The Roving Caregivers, a home-based program providing early learning and socialization, are active on several Caribbean islands.

At the time, Grenada's Roving Caregivers were visiting homes once a week to work with children ages 0-3. Most of the 66 Roving Caregivers had some degree of Conscious Discipline training, and Cyrus was enthusiastic about the Saving Brains project. Dr. Landon and her team decided to enlist the help of the Roving Caregivers by utilizing a train-the-trainers model.



Mindy Becker



With assistance from Conscious Discipline Certified Instructor Mindy Becker, the Rovers were taught what safety, connection and self-regulation look and feel like. In turn, they were able to connect with and model for parents, allowing parents to connect with and model for their children. Through a Conscious Discipline-based curriculum, parents learned to provide children with safety, predictability and attachment, the building blocks for healthy neurodevelopment.

The Roving Caregivers, now also called Conscious Discipline Paraprofessionals (CDPP), continued visiting homes weekly, shifting their focus from working directly with infants to teaching Conscious Discipline to parents of children under the age of two. This intervention was delivered over an 18-month period.

## Saving Brains Bus

Another member of Dr. Landon's team, Sue Brathwaite, had the idea for the Saving Brains Bus. To complement visits from the Roving Caregivers, Dr. Landon and her team purchased a mobile resource unit that traveled the island teaching Conscious Discipline.

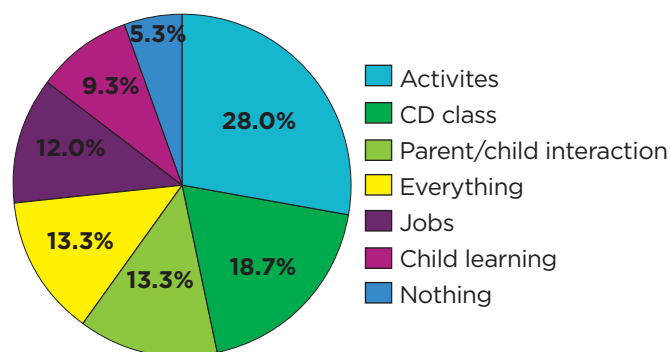
Once a month, the Roving Caregivers brought the families they served through home visits to the Saving Brains Bus. The bus parked at a local playing field or other community gathering place, and the Saving Brains team put up a tent and spread a colorful parachute on the ground for children and their parents. Other community members were welcome as well, and additional participants and spectators often gathered.

Every bus visit had a theme, and each participant received a job, like in the Conscious Discipline School Family.<sup>1</sup> Lessons focused on fostering positive attachment and building new parenting skills. Stephanie Holmes and the Roving Caregivers gave away books and resources provided by the nonprofit organization Conscious Discipline Cares.

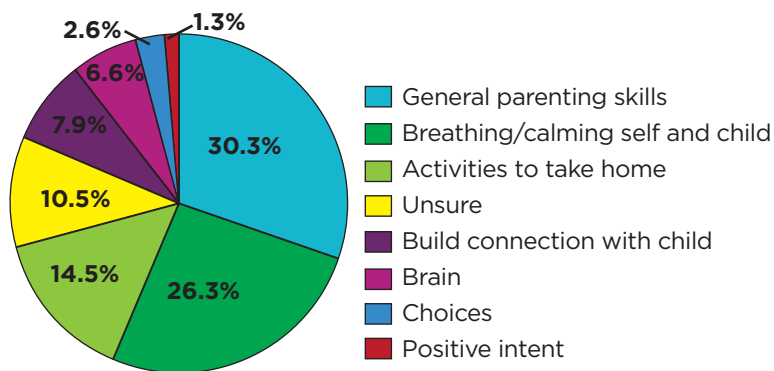


<sup>1</sup>Every child in a Conscious Discipline classroom has a job. These jobs provide children an opportunity to build self-worth and responsibility by contributing to the School Family and being of service to others.

**What was your favorite thing about visiting the bus?**



**What was the main thing you learned from your bus visits?**



## An Unexpected Use of Conscious Discipline Emerges

While implementing the Saving Brains project, Landon and a team from The Windward Islands Research and Education Foundation (WINDREF) also worked with pediatric virologist Desiree LeBaud from Stanford University to examine the epidemiological effects of the mosquito-borne virus Chikungunya.

During this study, Grenada experienced a Zika outbreak. Landon and her team wanted to use a Conscious Discipline-based curriculum to rescue neurodevelopment in babies infected with the Zika virus. After a lengthy process, the National Institute of Health (NIH) agreed to fund the Zika intervention project.

The team is currently conducting epidemiological studies and the Conscious Discipline Zika intervention project in tandem. The epidemiology involves head/body measurement, neurodevelopment (vision, hearing, language, cognition, motor, social-emotional), blood draws and EEGs.

The intervention is a combination of de-stigmatization around disabilities and a Conscious Discipline curriculum: specifically working on attachment, attunement, joint attention, language development and motor skills.

Research is still in progress, but Dr. Karen Blackmon, a neuropsychologist and epileptologist helping to implement the Zika program, says the effect of Conscious Discipline is apparent: “Some colleagues thought it would be impossible for me to get awake 2-year-olds to be calm and still for 20-30 minutes while EEG recording is taking place. In 50 percent of the cases so far, children have felt calm and secure enough to fall asleep with the EEG still recording, which is ideal from a data collection standpoint. I attribute the success of these data collection procedures to a staff that is trained in Conscious Discipline.”

## Results

Initial results of the Saving Brains Grenada program demonstrated changed attitudes in parents and caregivers, improved cognition in children, and a high degree of acceptance within the community for the program.

Data indicated that parents who learned Conscious Discipline from the Roving Caregivers and the Brain Bus had less supportive attitudes toward corporal punishment than parents not enrolled in the intervention. Several parents reported using new strategies more and corporal punishment less.

Children were assessed via the INTER-NDA.<sup>2</sup> In comparison to wait list controls, the children who received the Conscious Discipline intervention demonstrated statistically significant improvements in cognition. Results also showed a dose effect: The greater the child’s exposure to Conscious Discipline, the greater the child’s improvement in cognition.

<sup>2</sup> The INTER-NDA is an international assessment of child development at two years.

100 percent of families who visited the Brain Bus said that they benefitted from the lessons and would recommend the program to others.



### What's Next?

After the Saving Brains project demonstrated success, Landon and her team received additional funding to continue expanding their efforts.

Grand Challenges Canada, the organization that funded the original Saving Brains pilot, awarded \$468,057 Canadian dollars for a Transition to Scale grant. This amount had to be matched. It was matched by UNICEF to fund assessment and the NIH to fund the Zika project.

Landon and her team plan to provide intense training for four coaches and 37 Roving Caregivers, implement ongoing assessment of children in the program, and work with key groups from neighboring island nations to replicate the Saving Brains program.



Jayden and Carvita

In 2019, the team will implement Conscious Discipline in 12 schools in Grenada. 12 additional schools will begin implementing Conscious Discipline the following school year. At least one school will eventually serve as a demonstration center for neighboring island nations and for other schools in Grenada. The funding from UNICEF will be used to assess three, four, and five-year-olds at 12 intervention schools and 12 waitlist schools to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention program.

As for Jayden and Carvita, the pair now has no shortage of photos to choose from. Holmes said, "The change in their relationship was very noticeable and heartwarming. Carvita said she learned to have fun and play with her children more."