



# Composure: Being the person you want children to become

## Materials

- Reminder slip
- Safekeeper Box and figures
- Greeting visuals (apron, poster, etc.)
- Parent Night Visual Routine
- "It's Brain Smart Time" from *Kindness Counts* music CD
- "Twinkle, Twinkle" I Love You Ritual
- Wish Well Ritual and props
- "Button Pushing - Conscious Discipline Skills" video with Dr. Becky Bailey found at <http://consciousdisciplinevideos.com> (Length 5:22)
- Shubert is a S.T.A.R.* book
- Sophie is a S.T.A.R.* book (optional)
- Make-n-Take: S.T.A.R. Folder: directions and templates (Reproducibles page 152), two manila file folders per family, staplers, scissors, markers
- Make-n-Take: Safe Place Calming Book: Copies of calming strategies (Reproducibles page 163), scissors, glue, construction paper and staplers
- Parent handout (Reproducibles page 120)
- Student videos to support teaching the Safe Place and deep breathing (optional).
- "I Love You Rituals - Your Guide For Meaningful Connections" video (optional) found at <http://consciousdisciplinevideos.com>

## Routine

Welcome

Brain Smart® Start

Power: Power of Perception

Skill: Skill of Composure

Structure: Safe Place

Shubert or Sophie book

Make-n-Take: S.T.A.R. Folder and Safe Place Calming Book

Closing Ritual and Goodbye

## Prepare

- Send home the reminder slip one week in advance of the parent night.
- Prepare the materials listed above.
- Set up a Safekeeper Box at the sign up table. Provide enough figurines for every caregiver expected to attend. Write the session's commitment on a dry erase board or cardstock near the Safekeeper Box. Caregivers will commit by choosing a figurine and placing it in the Safekeeper Box. (For the rest of the night, I'm going to take three deep S.T.A.R. breaths when life doesn't go my way.)
- Make samples of both make-n-takes (S.T.A.R. Folder and Safe Place Calming Book).
- Record student videos to support teaching the Safe Place and deep breathing (optional).

Parent Night Visual Routine Composure	
	Welcome
	Brain Smart Start
	Power: Power of Perception Skill: Skill of Composure
	Structure: Safe Place
	Shubert or Sophie Book
	Make-n-Take
	Closing Ritual and Goodbye

## School Welcome

Greet each caregiver the moment he or she enters the building. Offer three greeting choices (see Beginning Preparations in the Introduction). **Welcome to our School Family. How would you like to be greeted?** Direct parents to the proper meeting point (classroom, meeting area, etc.).

## Classroom Welcome

The teachers will greet caregivers at the classroom or meeting space door. Use the same greeting style and choices you use with the children each day.



### Infant/Toddler

Greet both the parent and the child. **Hi, Michael! You brought your precious little Sammy, and Sammy brought her precious little nose!**

Direct parents to sign in, and explain the Safekeeper Box and commitment process. **Over there at sign-in** (point), **you'll see a Safekeeper Box, a commitment statement and some figurines. The Safekeeper Box represents my commitment to keep the classroom safe and your commitment to help keep it safe. Read this session's commitment on the sign-in table. If you are willing to make that commitment, choose a figurine and put it in the Safekeeper Box.**

### Brain Smart Start

Explain that you conduct the Brain Smart Start each morning to help children be in an optimal learning state. **Children can only learn when they feel physically and emotionally safe. This ideal state for learning is called an "Executive State." We are always teaching strategies to help children achieve an Executive State so they can learn. We'll talk more about that in a little while.**



### Infant/Toddler

**Infants and toddlers must feel our calm in order to calm themselves. The adult's inner state co-regulates the little one's. In order for our babies to calm themselves, we must breathe deeply so we can be calm, too!**

**Unite and Disengage Stress:** "It's Brain Smart Time" from *Kindness Counts*, followed by three deep breaths.

**Connect:** Review the "Twinkle, Twinkle" I Love you Ritual learned at the open house. Invite them to conduct it with a partner.

- ♪ **Twinkle, twinkle little star,** – Touch each other's fingers, wiggling them.
- ♪ **What a wonderful child you are.** – Bring arms to gently rest on each other's shoulders.
- ♪ **With bright eyes and nice round cheeks,** – Touch each other's eyebrows and cheeks.
- ♪ **A talented person from head to feet.** – Gently touch each other's head and feet.
- ♪ **Twinkle, twinkle little star,** – Touch each other's fingers, wiggling them.
- ♪ **What a wonderful child you are.** – Hug.

Show the "I Love You Rituals - Your Guide For Meaningful Connections" video (optional) found at <http://consciousdisciplinevideos.com>

**Commit:** I think you all saw our a Safekeeper Box at sign in. The Safekeeper Box represents my commitment to keep the classroom safe and your commitment to help keep it safe.

This session's commitment is "For the rest of the night, I'm going to take three deep S.T.A.R. breaths when life doesn't go my way." Hopefully those of you who chose to make that commitment placed a figurine in the Safekeeper Box. Just in case someone forgot, let's recommit together by clapping three times as I say, "Three S.T.A.R. breaths." Ready? Chant slowly and clap as you say, **Three S.T.A.R. breaths. You did it! You made a commitment!**

In our classroom, we would do our Absent Child Ritual next. We start by identifying any children who are absent, putting their pictures in our Wish Well Circle and then wishing them well. Demonstrate. Sing your wish well song or other wish well ritual.



### Extra Credit

If needed, provide a quick review for those who did not attend the open house.

**S.T.A.R. is a breathing technique used in Conscious Discipline. S.T.A.R. stands for Smile, Take a deep breath And Relax.**

I can see by looking around that some of our families did not make it tonight. Let's take a moment to wish them well. We're going to breathe deeply and open our hearts. Sometimes it helps to close our eyes and picture something really precious, something like the way it feels when a tiny infant holds your finger tight. Now take that warm, loving energy and wish well to those who are absent and anyone you know who may be struggling a bit right now.



## Introduce the Power of Perception

**The Power of Perception:** No one can make you angry without your permission. How many times have you caught yourself saying something like, "Look what you made me do!" "You are driving me nuts!" or "Don't make me pull this car over!" Statements like these say that someone else is in charge of us. The Power of Perception puts us in charge of ourselves. It allows us to model the behaviors we want to see, and to be the person we want children to become.



### Extra Credit

When we say, "Look how you made her feel," we imply one child is in charge of the other child's feelings.

"Inner state" is the phrase we use to describe what's going on inside us. Sometimes our inner state feels calm and composed. Sometimes it feels whiny, angry or overwhelmed. In Conscious Discipline, we use a brain state model to help simplify and understand the complex workings of our brain. We break it all down into three basic mind/body states: Survival State, Emotional State and Executive State.



### Safekeeper

Know your caregivers. Some groups are ready to learn about the brain states discussed next. Some groups will find the information overwhelming. When we feel overwhelmed, we operate from the lower centers of the brain and are unable to learn. Safety and connection – not additional information – will be helpful to caregiver groups that seem stressed or easily overwhelmed. Know your group and be its Safekeeper! If you suspect at least half of the caregivers would feel overwhelmed by the brain information, replace it with this simplified “Safekeeper” paragraph, conduct an I Love You Ritual as a brain break and go straight to “Introduce the Skill of Composure.”

**It’s helpful to know about these brain states because the brain can only access a limited set of skills from each state. When we feel unsafe or upset, our skill set is very limited and not very helpful. Our brains simply cannot think clearly enough to learn or solve problems! In order to learn or solve a problem, adults and children must be in a calm Executive State. In this classroom, we do a lot of work with the Power of Perception and the Skill of Composure because we know that the single most important skill we can teach children is the ability to calm themselves during times of upset. This skill is essential to self-regulation and opens the door to a learning, problem-solving Executive State. Self-regulation in children is the #1 predictor of life success, and it starts with a calm, composed adult.**

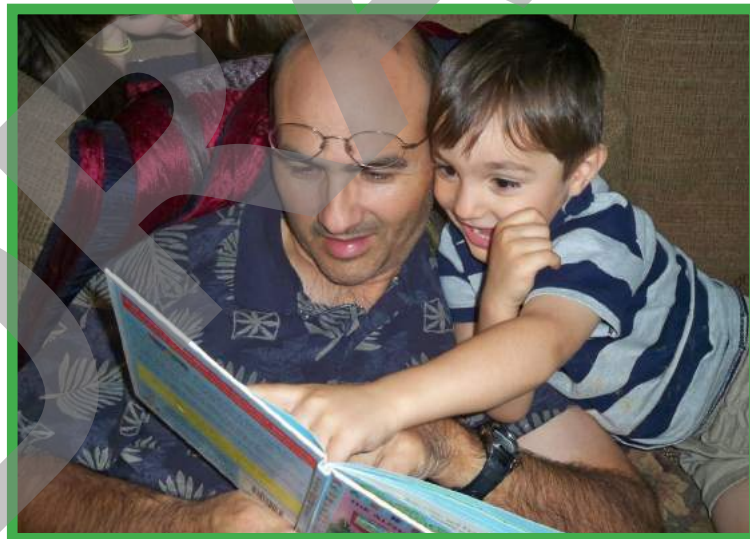
**It’s helpful to learn about these states because our brains can only access a limited set of skills from each of them. A Survival State is triggered when we feel threatened. It doesn’t matter if the threat is physical or social, real or imagined; it only matters that we feel unsafe. The Survival State skills are physical reactions like fight, flight or surrender. When we feel unsafe, we have a really limited skill set.**



The Emotional State is triggered when life doesn't go our way. These skills are more verbal like whining, name-calling, blaming, judging, backtalk, tattling and sass. When we're in an Emotional State, we can really only express ourselves in these mouthy, not-so-helpful ways.



The Executive State is a calm, alert and composed state. It is the only internal state from which we can learn and problem-solve. This is the integrated brain/body state where we say the right thing at the right time and life goes smoothly.



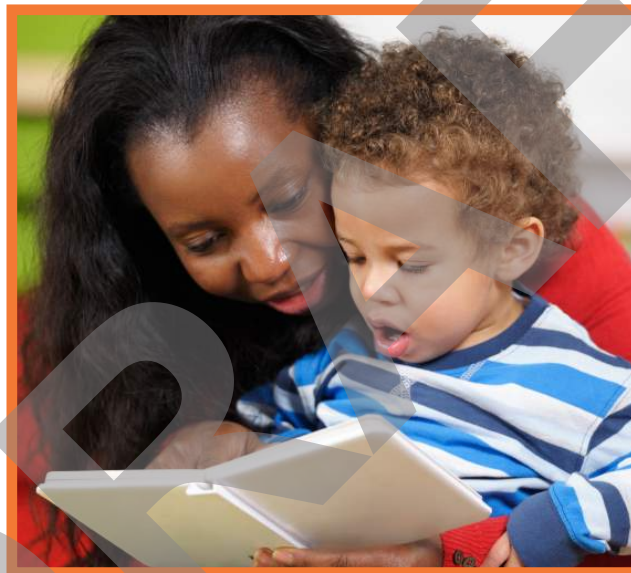
**That's a lot of information. So, let's bring it down to a real level: What inner state are you experiencing right now?** If no one speaks up, share your own internal state. Maybe you are experiencing an Executive State now, but earlier you were in an Emotional State because your comfort zone is with kids and you felt nervous about being up in front of adults. Share how you were grumpy with coworkers and saying all sorts of scary things in your head while you were in an Emotional State, and how you are consciously choosing to breathe deeply to keep yourself calm now. After you share, encourage participants to try reflecting on their internal states again by asking for a raise of hands for each state or breaking into small groups for discussion.

**Now, here's another question: Who is responsible for the state you are in?** Pause for a bit for reflection. **Is it your boss? Your spouse? Your kids? A traffic delay? A pile of dirty laundry? The balance in the bank account?** If you used the earlier example of being nervous in front of adults, be sure to add “a room full of adults” to the list.

**If you believe your laundry is responsible for your inner state, then you have just put your laundry in charge of you. The Power of Perception says, “Heck no! I am in charge of me!”**

**Our laundry may trigger upset within us, but each of us is responsible for our inner state. The Power of Perception is the key to owning our inner states and choosing to change them from upset to calm. Or not! We can always choose to be a hot mess, too!**

**We do a lot of work with the Power of Perception and the Skill of Composure in this classroom because we know that the single most important skill we can teach children is the ability to calm themselves during times of upset. Self-regulation is the #1 predictor of life success, and this is where it starts!**



## Introduce the Skill of Composure

The Skill of Composure helps us reclaim our power by learning to actively calm ourselves in times of distress. When children's behavior triggers a feeling within us, composure creates a pause that allows us to choose to behave in ways that are helpful and model the behaviors we hope children will use. As caregivers, your internal state helps to regulate your children's states. Your child cannot be in a higher state than you. If you want your child to be able to learn and problem solve, then you both must be operating from a calm, Executive State. Coach yourself first, so you can then coach your children.

Active calming is a three-step process:

- 1. Take three deep breaths.** In Conscious Discipline, this deep breathing is often referred to as S.T.A.R. breathing. **S**mile, **T**ake a deep breath **A**nd **R**elax.
- 2. Affirm to yourself,** “I am safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this.”
- 3. Wish well** by opening your heart and seeing the preciousness of the person with whom you are interacting.

**This is what active calming looks like.** Demonstrate. Be sure to emphasize your belly going out on the inhale and in on the exhale. Show how the exhale should be twice as long as the inhale by counting 1–2–3–4 as you inhale and 1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8 as you exhale.

**Now, let's practice together. Check in with your body as you breathe. When you breathe in, your belly should go out. When you breathe out, your belly should go in. A lot of us have gotten in the habit of breathing shallow because we're stressed. If your belly isn't moving, then you aren't breathing deeply. Make sure you pull a big, full breath deep down into your lungs.** Demonstrate. 1–2–3–4. **And then let all that air out of your mouth slowly.** Demonstrate. 1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8. **Now, tell yourself, "I am safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this," and wish well.**

Show the "Button Pushing - Conscious Discipline Skills" video with Dr. Becky Bailey found at <http://consciousdisciplinevideos.com>



### Safekeeper

Preview the video before the parent night to assess whether the content will be helpful rather than overwhelming to your group. Remember, too much information can trigger us to downshift to the lower centers of the brain, using our resources to scan for safety rather than learning. Be a Safekeeper for your group. You may need to limit the viewing by starting at the 1:30 mark and ending at the 4:30 mark, or eliminate showing the video altogether.

## Structure: The Safe Place

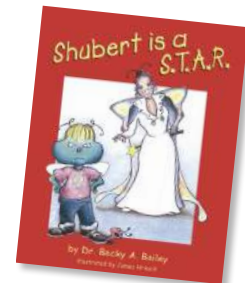
Read *Shubert is a S.T.A.R.*, pausing at the following scenes to briefly describe Shubert's brain state and/or Mrs. Bookbinder's skills.

**Page 5: Shubert's body is showing us that he is experiencing a Survival State. He feels threatened or unsafe. His brain can't think or learn properly right now. He doesn't know what to do.**

**Pages 6-7: Mrs. Bookbinder notices Shubert's state. Noticing is when we describe a child's actions in a non-judgmental way in order to achieve eye contact and bring his awareness to his actions.**

**Pages 12-13: Mrs. Bookbinder invites Shubert to help teach calming strategies.**

**Page 16: We can see here that Shubert is visibly more calm and willing to be helpful. He is experiencing an Executive State where he can learn new skills and solve problems.**



Share highlights from Mrs. Bookbinder's Bits of Wisdom on the last page.



### Infant/Toddler

Infant/toddler teachers will choose whether to use a Shubert or Sophie book for each parent night. The Shubert books provide more depth and opportunities for teaching, but the subject matter in the Sophie books may be more relatable to infant/toddler caregivers. There is no right or wrong answer, and you may wish to use Sophie for some parent nights and Shubert for others. In this parent night, the Shubert book teaches four active calming techniques while Sophie only teaches one, so you will want to do additional teaching on your own if you choose to use the Sophie book.

If you read *Sophie is a S.T.A.R.* instead of *Shubert is a S.T.A.R.*, pause at the following scenes for discussion.

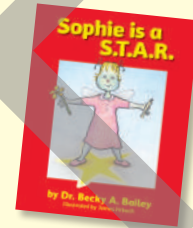
**Page 1: Sophie feels sad. She is experiencing an Emotional State.**

**Page 2: Dad notices Sophie's big feelings and stays in an Executive, thinking brain state so he can help her.**

**Page 3: Dad says, "I will keep you safe." Safety and connection are essential to calming upset. Adults often say "You're fine," or, "It's okay," but if children are upset, it doesn't feel okay to them! Replace your "fines" and "okays" with "I'll keep you safe."**

**Page 4-7: Dad encourages Sophie to S.T.A.R. breathe. They take three deep breaths together.**

**Page 8: Because Dad noticed Sophie's upset and helped her feel safe and connected, Sophie is now experiencing a calm Executive State and has returned to playing blocks.**



Show the caregivers your classroom's Safe Place and discuss how it is used. **The Safe Place is a research-backed learning center from Conscious Discipline. The Safe Place is a tool for learning, not a Time Out. Time Outs are used as punishment, and are ineffective in creating permanent behavior change. The Safe Place is where children learn and practice the skill of self-regulation. The ability to self-regulate is the #1 predictor of lifelong success.**

**The Safe Place changes with age. The Safe Place starts in the womb, then moves to the caregiver's chest, then the lap, then an external Safe Place like in our classroom, and ultimately children will carry their Safe Place within themselves as inner peace. This is our classroom's Safe Place.**

Show your Safe Place and the active calming techniques children use there. At minimum, you will demonstrate S.T.A.R., Drain, Balloon and Pretzel.



### Infant/Toddler

**The infant/toddler Safe Place is in the adult's arms. This is true at home and in our classroom. To be a Safe Place for a young child, hold the upset child to your chest and breathe deeply. Your calm, deep breathing helps you to stay calm and helps the child to calm down, too. Sometimes you might repeat, "You are safe. Breathe with me."**



Everyone pick a favorite active calming technique and do it now...1...2...3...

Share a teachable moment about using the Safe Place as your emotional regulation center.



### Extra Credit

If technology and time permit, show prerecorded video clips of students answering the question “How do we use our Safe Place?” and demonstrating S.T.A.R., Drain, Balloon and Pretzel.

Distribute the handout. **If you look on your handout, you will see the steps to active calming there. Are there any questions about that or anything else I’ve talked about so far tonight?**

## Make-n-Take: Composure at Home

Now we’re going to make some take-home items to help you practice composure as a family and set up a Safe Place at home. Remember, the Safe Place is a place to practice active calming and self-regulation, not a punishment. Also remember that you are a portable Safe Place for your child.



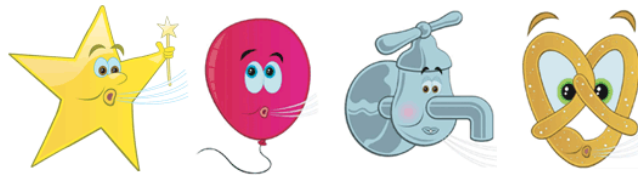
### Breathe With Me Folder

Distribute the materials, directions and templates for the Breathe With Me Folder. Demonstrate how to make and use the folder. Provide time and supplies for each family to make a folder to take home.



## Safe Place Calming Book

Distribute photocopies and materials for the Safe Place Calming Books. Provide time for caregivers to make books to take home for their Safe Places.



## Closing Ritual

Review your commitment (being a S.T.A.R.). Ask caregivers to reflect on whether they took three deep breaths when feeling stressed, upset, nervous, anxious, angry, sad, etc. Offer ample encouragement. **You did it!** or **Oops, try again!**

Thank caregivers for taking the time to join your School Family in learning about their children's classroom. Encourage them to return for the next parent night: Shubert's Big Voice, The Skill of Assertiveness. Provide reminder notes with date, time and topic. Conduct the same closing ritual you use with the children each day. End with your School Family song/chant.

## Goodbye

Just as staff welcomed caregivers as they arrived, now staff will say goodbye and thank you as caregivers leave the building. **We look forward to seeing you for our next parent night!**



### Extension Activities

Show *Conscious Discipline Live! DVD*, disk 1, workshop 2, "Composure."

Show the *Power of Perception Webinar* found at <http://consciousdisciplinevideos.com>

