

Welcome to Session 7

The Skill of Choices and the Power of Free Will

SESSION OVERVIEW:

- Understand that power comes from choice, not force.
- Learn ways to help children build self-esteem by offering them two positive choices.
- Recognize the Power of Free Will and the fact that the only person we can make change is ourselves.
- Discover ways to help children reframe blame and take responsibility for their actions and choices.



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If you are in a group setting, choose a partner for Session 7:

Session 7: Pre-Learning Survey

Let's begin with a little survey to help you measure your perceptual shift as you learn helpful, new information.

1. Choices give children power when they might be feeling powerless.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2. It is possible to change the behavior of others.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3. From a state of powerlessness, we are prone to blame and attack.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. "You can finish your work or you can miss recess time" is a true choice.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5. The only person you can make change is yourself.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

In This Session, We Will Explore...

Skill of Choices: Building self-esteem and willpower

Power of Free Will: The only person you can make change is yourself

Adult Goal: To provide children with two positive choices in order to increase compliance, build self-esteem and increase willpower

Child Goal: To harness the power of choice

Combined Tools for Creating Connection

R = Rituals

E = Encouragement

J = Jobs

E = Empathy

C = Choices

T = The School Family

The Power of Free Will

The Skill of Choices comes from the Power of Free Will. Free Will reminds us that each of us is responsible for our own behavior. We cannot make children behave a certain way; however, when we honor children's free will, we are able to structure situations in ways that help them become more willing to cooperate.

We use our free will to make hundreds of choices every day. Each choice has a consequence. Think about these questions...

- What are some of the choices you made today?
- What were the consequences of those choices?
- Did you find yourself blaming others for choices that didn't turn out the way you'd hoped?

Choices build self-esteem and willpower. We have two fundamental choices:

- Accept what is and focus on solutions.
- Resist what is and focus on the problem.

1. We must shift from "How do I make the child..." to "_____."

2. The intent behind control is to _____ someone.

3. The intent behind structure is to _____ someone succeed.



Reflection:

Write a few thoughts about the following statement...

“It is my responsibility to make others change.” _____

Now write a few thoughts about this statement...

“It’s someone else’s responsibility to make me change.” _____

The Power of Free Will states that we are the only ones capable of and responsible for changing ourselves.

Did you ever believe it was your job was to make someone else happy? Describe _____

How did that work out? _____

It’s our job to make ourselves happy by self-regulating, managing our inner states and offering our happiness to others.

If you want to inspire others, first become the person you want them to be, and then inspire them through your example.

The Skill of Choices

True choices honor our free will. Determine if the following statements are evidence of manipulation or true choice:

4. “Line up now or you’ll go to the principal’s office.” manipulation true choice

5. “Do you want the red marker or the orange one?” manipulation true choice

6. “You can finish your homework or I can cancel your play date.” manipulation true choice

7. “You can stand with your hands by your sides or in your pockets.” manipulation true choice

Giving two positive choices provides structure so the child has some control within safe, acceptable limits.

8. When we feel like we’re making authentic choices, we get a hit of _____ .

True choice also helps organize the brain so we can access our higher centers and reach our goals.

9. _____ and _____ inhibit higher order brain function and forfeit the release of dopamine because the choices feel coerced and manipulative.

10. In spite of all that is positive about them, choices also have a downside.

The downside is known as _____ .

Avoid decision-making fatigue by doing the following:

- Offer limited, developmentally appropriate choices so choosing doesn't become overwhelming.
- Never offer a child choices that an adult should be making.
- Offer active calming, not choices, to help a child experiencing a Survival State.

11. Offer two positive choices to help a child experiencing an _____ State.

12. Conduct _____ throughout the day.

Two Positive Choices

The formula for two positive choices is...

“You may _____ or _____. Which is better for you?”

When we give two positive choices to children we...

- Provide structure and safety, help children access a problem-solving Executive State.
- Provide practice in decision-making.
- Build self-esteem as children learn to be cooperative and successful.

Choices give children power when they might otherwise feel powerless.

Offer a positive choice and a negative choice isn't true choice; it's manipulation.

Offer two positive choices requires us, as adults, to be okay with either choice we offer and have no emotional attachment to the outcome.

Parroting Technique

All behavior is a type of communication. If a child is unable to make a choice, he may be telling you he needs more time to organize himself, needs more information, or that there is an underlying stressor or relationship issue. Rushing the decision will not be helpful; in fact, it will only thwart his efforts to achieve the Executive State necessary to choose. Instead, actively calm and repeat the choices a couple of times. Maintain a supportive and positive tone that says, “You can do it!” Your composure is the key to the Parroting Technique's success.

When we feel powerless, we often blame and attack. If we want children to take responsibility for their actions, we must reframe the blame.



Reframe the blame for the examples below:

Child Statement	Adult Response
“Erica made me do it!”	13.
Child says, “No.”	14.
Child says, “Yes.”	15.

Complete the adult responses below.

Child: “Lexi made me do it!”

16. Adult: _____

Child: “No.”

17. Adult: _____

Child: “Lexi made me do it!”

18. Adult: _____

Child: “Yes.”

19. Adult: _____

Choices Summary

Authentic choices are empowering!

Give yourself more choices.

Change your “I should” to “I could.”

Change your “I have to” to “I’m going to.”

Remember to...

- Give two positive choices.
- Reframe the blame.
- Change “I should” to “I could.”

We must learn to run our lives by choice, not by coercion.

20. The structure for choices is _____.

21. You can only think of two positive choices when you are in an _____ State.

Structure: Picture Rule Cards

Picture Rule Cards structure choices for children in a way that is easy for the brain to encode.

Young children do not use inner speech to govern their behavior; they use mental pictures. We can guide their choices more effectively by displaying rules in picture form.

Picture Rule Cards provide visual images of two helpful choices and one unacceptable behavior. When children find themselves being hurtful, the first consequence is to guide them to the two helpful images and encourage them to make a helpful choice instead.

Home Picture Rules with Two Positive Choices



You may play by yourself.



You may play with a friend.



You may not hurt each other with words or actions.



You may clean up your materials by yourself.



You may clean up your materials with a friend.



You may not leave materials on the floor.

Classroom Picture Rules with Two Positive Choices



You may line up in your own space.



You may line up with your hands by your side.



You may not push and shove when you line up.



You may enjoy your lunch without talking.



You may talk quietly with your friends during lunch.



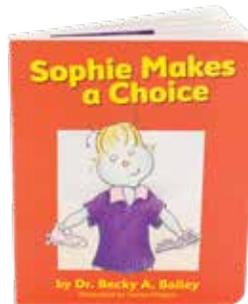
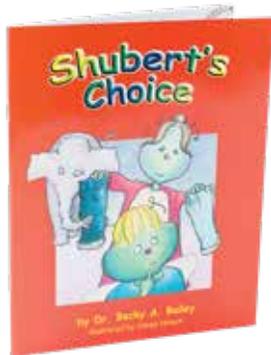
You may not talk loudly or yell while at lunch.



What we do to children, they will do to us.

Composure allows us to actively calm enough to access our wisest selves.

When children feel powerless, the Skill of Choices helps them regain their willpower by helping them focus their attention on what to do and breaking the task down into simpler parts.



I am willing

To take responsibility for my choices because I understand that when I choose to believe others are making me behave in certain ways, I give my power away, stress my body, and tend to blame or punish others.

SIGN: _____ DATE: _____

Focus Points for Parents

Reflect on the choices parents traditionally offer children.

Traditional Choices (intent to manipulate)	Positive Choices (intent to empower)
“You can pick up your toys or we can put them in the donation bag.”	“You can start with the blocks or the books. Which is better for you?”
“You can get dressed or I will dress you.”	“You can dress yourself or I can help you. Which is better for you?”
“You can hold my hand when we cross the parking lot or you can go right back home.”	“You can hold my right hand or my left hand. Which is better for you?”

Transform these common examples into two positive choices to increase cooperation, willpower and responsibility.

Traditional Choices	Positive Choices
“You can eat what I cooked or you can go to bed hungry.”	
“Sit still or we’re leaving.”	
Traditional choice I often offer _____	Two positive choices I could offer instead _____

Focus Points for Educators

Reflect on the choices educators traditionally offer students.	
Common Choices (intent to manipulate)	Positive Choices (intent to empower)
"You can line up properly or lose recess time."	"You can line up in your own space or you can line up straight against the wall. Which is better for you?"
"Stop clicking that fidget on the table leg or it's mine for the day."	"You can play with the fidget quietly in your lap or quietly on the table top. Which do you choose?"
"You can use the art materials properly or your project is over and you'll turn it in as it is!"	"You can color gently with the pastels or you can switch to colored pencils. What sounds better to you?"

Now, transform these common situations into two positive choices to increase cooperation, willpower and responsibility.	
A student is rocking his chair back on two legs	
Students are making a game out of changing seats in the reading corner instead of reading.	
Traditional choice I often offer _____	Two positive choices I could offer instead _____

Review: Skill of Choices

Power:	Free Will: The only person you can make change is yourself.
Becoming Brain Smart:	Choices motivate from within, improve goal-achievement and facilitate self-regulation.
Skill:	Two positive choices, reframing blame, Parroting technique, Who is the boss of you?
School Family:	Visual Rules



Reflection: Power of Free Will

Many of us have spent a large portion of our lives seeking to change others. The Power of Free Will states, “The only person you can make change is yourself.” We can continue attempting to make others act a certain way or we can claim our Power of Free Will by accepting that change can only happen within us. This month vigilantly embrace free will with these steps:

- Become conscious of how often we attempt to control others and how often we think others are making us do things.**
- Convert “make me” language into the language of choice.** Instead of saying, “Don’t make me stop this car,” say, “I am going to stop the car until you have your seat belt on and everyone is safe.”
- Catch ourselves thinking, “How can I make the child ____?” or “How can I get the child to ____?”** Change the question to, “How can I help the child successfully ____?”
- Change “should” to “could,” and then make a choice.** When we begin to think, “I should run to the dry cleaner,” own the choice and say, “I could run to the dry cleaner,” instead. Then decide whether to do it or not. There is no should or ought to, only choices. Start choosing!
- Practice allowing others to have their own thoughts and feelings.** Resist the urge to try to make others happy.
- For one day, give up the attitude, “I don’t know and I don’t care.”** This attitude allows us to give up our power by avoiding choices. We must act as if we do know and do care. If a friend asks where to go for lunch, state your preferences clearly. “I’d like Chinese food.”
- Watch the Power of Free Will video** on the portal to deepen your reflection.

Review: Brain Smart Teaching Moments

Assertive commands are essential for children operating from the survival state. Two positive choices provide a way for us to be assertive while empowering children. They are best utilized with those who are in the emotional state. A child in an executive state does best with open-ended questions like, “What would help you get started?” Use the lists below as a guide:

These children experiencing a survival state often benefit from assertive commands:

- Children who chronically change their minds
- Children who are overly stressed
- Children who are easily overwhelmed

These children experiencing an emotional state often benefit from two positive choices:

- Children who do not follow the directions the first time
- Children who have difficulty focusing and staying on task
- Children who are somewhat defiant and like to boss others around
- Children who have trouble making choices
- Children who seem to feel powerless
- Children who appear stressed from life experiences

Children operating from an integrated, executive state often benefit from open-ended questions.

Reflection: Traditional Discipline and Conscious Discipline

If possible, partner up with someone and say the following two statements out loud. See if you can feel the difference. After each statement share, “The difference between Traditional Discipline and Conscious Discipline for me was...”

Traditional Discipline	Conscious Discipline
Look how you made her feel.	See her face? Her face is saying, “I don’t like it when you push me. Please walk around me.”
You can finish your math or miss recess!	You have a choice. You can finish problem four first or problem five. Which is better for you?
Don’t make me have to walk back and separate you two from talking.	I’m going to separate you two so each of you can focus better on your work. You will have time to visit at recess.
How can I get my children to listen during large group time?	How can I help my School Family listen successfully during large group time?
I have to stop after work to pick up some things at the grocery store.	I could stop after work and pick up some things at the grocery store.
Kenisha are you making good choices?	Kenisha, take a deep breath and look at the other children. What would be a wise choice for being successful as part of our School Family?

3-2-1 Reflections

3 Things you learned...

2 Ways that you were personally impacted...



1 Question you still have...

Implementation Plan: Make a Commitment

Commitment for Educators

What are you willing to begin implementing right away? Pick one commitment from below or fill in your own. Take out your **Reminder Mini-Poster** for this session and write your commitment in the space provided. If you are in a group setting, verbalize this plan to your Commitment Buddy.

- Post picture visual rules as needed and where needed**, using the formula of two positive choices and one “no” choice.
- Verbally offer two positive choices to children** when they are in an emotional state to facilitate compliance.
- Use the Parroting technique** for oppositional children.
- Reframe blame** by saying, “So ____ is the boss of you! What could you do that was helpful if you were the boss of you?”
- Create individualized plans** for children who have trouble making choices.
- Use the website**, including Shubert’s School and the portal, with a focus on Picture Rule Cards/Visual Rules.
- Other** _____

Commitment for Parents

What are you willing to begin implementing right away? Pick one commitment from below or fill in your own. Take out your **Reminder Mini-Poster** for this session and write your commitment in the space provided. If you are in a group setting, verbalize this plan to your Commitment Buddy.

- Post and review picture rules as needed and where needed**, using the formula of two positive choices and one “no” choice.
- Verbally offer two positive choices to children** when they are in an Emotional State to facilitate compliance.
- Use the Parroting technique** for oppositional children.
- Reframe blame** by saying, “So ___ is the boss of you? What could you do that was helpful if you were the boss of you?”
- Use the website**, including Shubert’s Home and the portal, with a focus on Picture Rule Cards.
- Other** _____



Chapter 7: Post-Learning Survey

Let's revisit our little survey. Answer the questions below. Then take a moment to re-read your Pre-Learning Survey from the beginning of the session and reflect on the transformational changes you've already internalized.

1. Choices give children power when they might be feeling powerless.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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2. It is possible to change the behavior of others.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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3. From a state of powerlessness, we are prone to blame and attack.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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4. "You can finish your work or you can miss recess time" is a true choice.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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5. The only person you can make change is yourself.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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(odd numbered items with a "1" and even numbered items with "5" show the highest level of understanding)

Reflect

Extend Your Learning

Brain Breaks

- “Encouraging Words” from *Kindness Counts*
- “My School Family” from *It Starts in the Heart*
- “Goodbye Rituals” from *Songs for I Love You Rituals, Vol. 2*

Essential Reading

- *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms*, Chapter 7, Choices (Pages 194-217)
- *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline*, Chapter 5, Choices: Building Self-Esteem and Willpower (Pages 97-119)
- *Creating the School Family*, Chapter 6, Visual Rules and Routines (Pages 99-127)

Rubrics

- Skill of Choices 4.0
- Picture Rule Cards 4.1

Products to Support the Skill of Choices

- *Shubert’s Choice*
- *Sophie Makes a Choice*
- *Shubert Puppet*
- *Sophie Puppet*
- *Picture Rule Cards*
- *Seven Skills Poster Set*, Choices poster

Additional Resources

- *Daily Routine cards*
- *Brain Smart Choice cubes*
- *Bailey Bear*
- *Songs for I Love You Rituals, Vol. 1 and 2 music CDs*
- *I Love You Rituals book*
- *I Choose Self-Regulation board*
- *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms book*
- *Creating the School Family book*
- *Kindness Counts music CD*



- *It Starts in the Heart* music CD
- *Brain Boogie Boosters* music CD
- *Conscious Discipline Premium Digital Toolkit*, including:
 - Make-N-Takes
 - CD Games
 - We Care Cards
 - Audio Series
 - Elevate SEL Video Sessions

Online Resources

Log in to your e-Learning Portal at [ConsciousDiscipline.com](https://www.consciousdiscipline.com) to access additional resources and video FAQs for Session 7.

- [ConsciousDiscipline.com](https://www.consciousdiscipline.com)
- [Facebook.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://www.facebook.com/ConsciousDiscipline)
- [Pinterest.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://www.pinterest.com/ConsciousDiscipline)
- [Twitter.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://twitter.com/ConsciousDiscipline) or [@ConsciousDiscipline](https://twitter.com/ConsciousDiscipline)
- [Instagram.com/ConsciousDiscipline/](https://www.instagram.com/ConsciousDiscipline/)
- [Youtube.com/c/ConsciousDisciplineVideos](https://www.youtube.com/c/ConsciousDisciplineVideos)

ANSWER KEY: SESSION 7

1. "How do I help the child to successfully...?"
2. Coerce
3. Help
4. Manipulation
5. True choice
6. Manipulation
7. True Choice
8. Dopamine – yahoo!
9. Reward / punishment
10. Decision-making fatigue
11. Emotional
12. Brain breaks
13. "So Erica is the boss of you?"
14. "What could you do right now if you were the boss of you?"
15. "That must be hard to have someone else bossing you around all day."
16. "So Lexi is the boss of you?"
17. "What could you do differently if you were your own boss?"
18. "So Lexi is the boss of you?"
19. "How sad! That must be hard for you with Lexi bossing you around all the time."
20. Visual Rules
21. Executive

