

Welcome to Session 8

# The Skill of Empathy and the Power of Acceptance

## SESSION OVERVIEW:

- Explore how managing our inner states is a prerequisite to resolving conflicts.
- Determine how to shift from negating our feelings to accepting and managing them in the moment.
- Discover ways to help children take ownership of their feelings as we guide them through emotional regulation.
- Examine how to handle fits, tantrums and emotional upset in a way that wires the brain for self-control.



ConsciousDiscipline®



**If you are in a group setting, choose a partner for Session 8:**

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## Session 8: Pre-Learning Survey

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

### 1. We must manage our emotional upset before we can resolve our conflicts.

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

### 2. Inappropriate behavior does not deserve empathy.

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

### 3. The moment is as it is.

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

### 4. Empathy will happy up children so they can move on to solving their problems.

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

### 5. All conflict starts with upset.

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

## In This Session, We Will Explore...

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**Skill of Empathy:** Teaching children to manage their emotions

**Power of Acceptance:** This moment is as it is

**Adult Goal:** To accept the moment as it is in order to respond to upset with empathy and build personal responsibility within children

**Child Goal:** Create a positive self-image. Celebrate accomplishments and learn how to offer empathy to self and others

### Combined Tools for Creating Connection

**R** = Rituals

**E** = Encouragement

**J** = Jobs

**E** = Empathy

**C** = Choices

**T** = The School Family

## Introduction

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Empathy teaches emotional regulation, integrating the brain so children can take responsibility for their actions.

Understanding our feelings is like having our own personal GPS. We might call it our EGS – Emotional Guidance System. Emotions signal us to make a change.

Empathy is the key that helps us and children unlock the powerful messages our emotions are sending so we can make helpful changes to our behaviors and perceptions. It helps children handle their frustrations and disappointment.

Parenting children in a way that fosters healthy growth of their Emotional Guidance System requires us to be willing to put our children in touch with their feelings, rather than distracting them away from them. When we teach children to handle their emotions in a healthy way, they are less likely to grow into adults who have unhealthy relationships and addictions.



## The Power of Acceptance

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All conflict starts with upset. Many of us try to resolve conflicts without first managing the emotional upset. Until we learn to accept and manage our emotional upsets, we will never be able to truly resolve conflicts.

When we negate or deny something, we are saying the moment isn't good enough. What are your thoughts about this?

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Acceptance is the non-judgmental awareness of "what is." It is mindfulness in action. Empathy requires adults to accept children's thoughts and feelings without the need to change them.

## The Skill of Empathy

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Without understanding, regulating and integrating our feelings, we cannot make wise decisions. Feelings are our internal guidance system. They let us know when we're off in the weeds so we can get back on our path.

It is essential to know what we are feeling when we are feeling it. We cannot regulate our emotional states unless we are conscious of having them. Describe a time that this was true for you.

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We generally respond to children's emotional upset in one of the following ways...

- Ignoring the child's feelings
- Letting the child cope alone
- Punishing
- Offering empathy

Being empathetic with children requires us to tune into our own inner world. We must be aware of our feelings, feel those feelings and offer ourselves compassion. The next time you enter a conflict, pause to notice the feelings that bubble up, maybe, "I feel frustrated, I'm tired and I just want your cooperation." Then, practice active calming until you are composed enough to provide the empathy children need.

### **Remember the three steps for active calming...**

- Breathe deeply (S.T.A.R.)
- Affirm to yourself, "I'm safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this."
- Wish well

Do you feel removed from, out of touch with, overwhelmed by or intimidated by your emotional guidance system?  
 Why do you think that is?

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The way we view our emotional system as adults is determined by the way important attachment figures responded to our feelings during our childhood. What are your thoughts about this?

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As a child, how did the well-intentioned adults in your world respond when you shared your feelings with them?

Mark one:  Saved     Dismissed     Punished     Ignored     Coached

After watching the adult-child role play video, what empathy style resonated with you? \_\_\_\_\_

Did your parents/caregivers have two different styles and what were they? \_\_\_\_\_

Unconscious, Unregulated Life	Conscious, Regulated Life
I blame	I am
I demand / act out	I calm
I medicate	I feel
I bury / ignore	I choose

**Feelings are the bridge between problems and solutions.**



Emotions carry powerful information. They are our inner guidance system, our emotional GPS and our life's compass.

## The D.N.A. Process

The D.N.A. process helps us to guide children through a healthy emotional regulation path.



1. What does D.N.A. stand for?

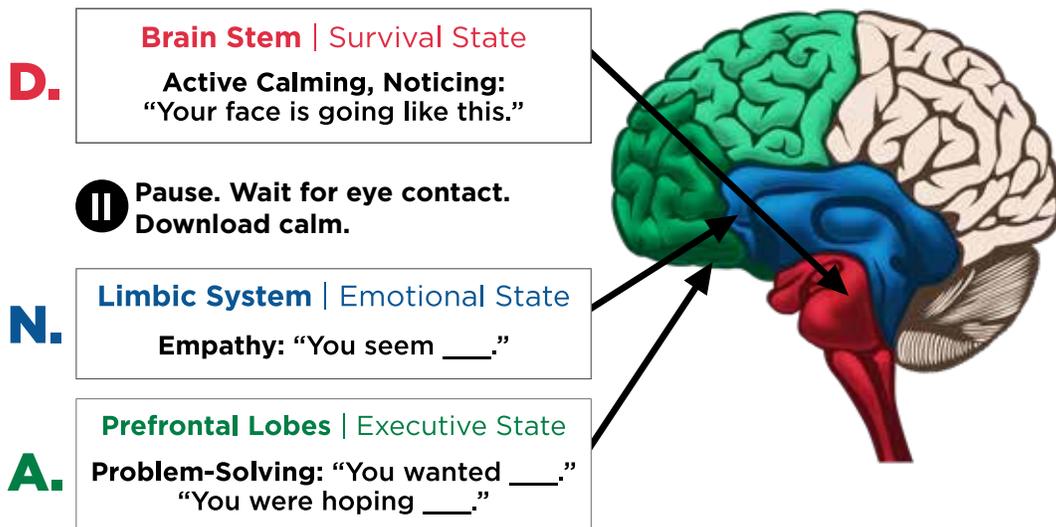
**D.** \_\_\_\_\_ “Your face is going like this (demonstrate).”

**N.** \_\_\_\_\_ “You seem (fill in a feeling word) .”

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_ “You wanted (fill in the want) “ or  
“You were hoping (fill in their hope).”

2. True empathy comes from a \_\_\_\_\_ heart.

Teach children how to handle strong emotions, not negate them.



**Try the D.N.A. Process:**

3. A child has his head down on the table.

**D.** \_\_\_\_\_

**N.** \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_

4. A child pushes you away with her hands.

**D.** \_\_\_\_\_

**N.** \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_

Using noticing language with children who are experiencing a Survival State helps them identify their face and body signals.

The feeling – not the story – is real. It is necessary to pull the feeling out of the story to help manage the moment.

5. We must \_\_\_\_\_ the feeling in order to solve the problem.

The D.N.A. process helps children...

- Become conscious of the facial and body cues that indicate a feeling state.
- Become conscious of the name of the feeling.
- Become conscious of their long-term goals.

Empathizing does not change the limits on behavior; it helps children become better able to accept those limits.



**CLASSROOM EDITION:**  
Feeling Buddies Self-Regulation Toolkit



**HOME EDITION:**  
Feeling Buddies Self-Regulation Toolkit

### The Feeling Buddies

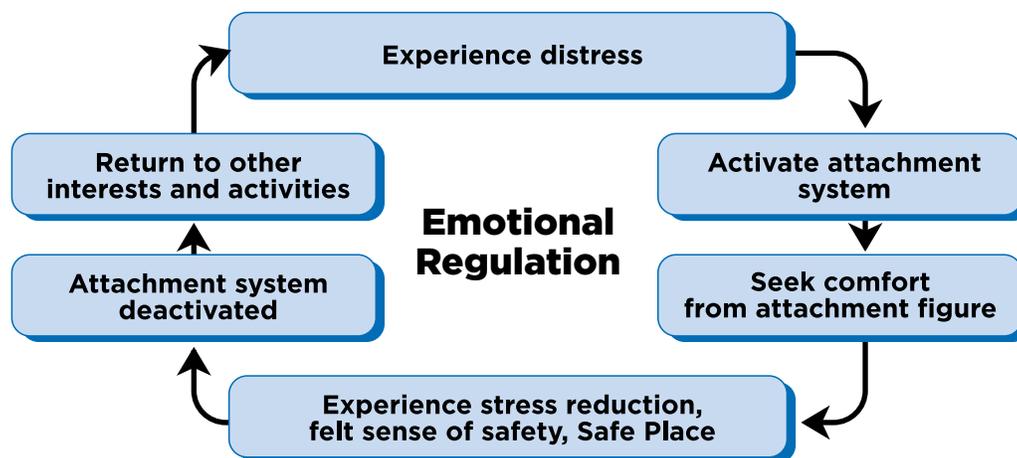
The *Feeling Buddies Self-Regulation Toolkits* are comprehensive and innovative tools for teaching self-regulation. The Feeling Buddies are based on a unique strategy in which the adult teaches the child to self-regulate and the child teaches the Buddy to self-regulate, learning the five-step process. Together, the Feeling Buddies, Safe Place and daily life maximize learning and give the new skill set permanence.

6. What does empathy do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Whoever you believe to be in charge of your feelings \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





8. Discouraged children are \_\_\_\_\_ .

9. Disconnected children are \_\_\_\_\_ .

10. When the attachment system is on, the exploration system is \_\_\_\_\_ .

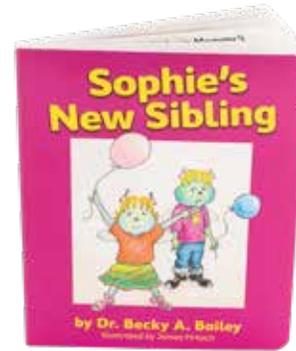
11. When the attachment system is off, the exploration system is \_\_\_\_\_ .

12. The structure for the Skill of Empathy is the \_\_\_\_\_ .

Children's upset gives us the opportunity to...

- Help them become conscious of their emotions so they know what they are feeling when they are feeling it
- Stimulate the development of the prefrontal lobes
- Develop impulse control and emotional regulation

The children who are upset the most are the ones who need empathy and emotional regulation the most.



**I am willing**

To feel my feelings instead of punish, dismiss or distract from them. I will slow down, name the feeling and breathe into it, saying, "I am safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this."

SIGN: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

# Focus Points for Parents

Imagine you've had a long, difficult Monday. How would you typically respond to the following...

You tell your child that it's bedtime. She screams, "You're so mean! I hate you!" \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Unless we consciously choose to change, we typically respond to children's emotional upset in one of the following ways:

- **Ignoring the child's feelings.** "Just go to bed."
- **Letting the child cope alone.** "Go to your room."
- **Punishing.** "You're grounded!"
- **Empathy sounds like this:** "You seem angry. You wanted to keep playing the game."

The D.N.A. process requires us to actively calm ourselves so we remain in a relaxed, alert Executive State. It then empowers us to respond to children's upset in a conscious, empathetic way so children can take responsibility for their actions and manage their upset.

What are three common situations in your family that would benefit from applying the D.N.A. process?

1. Situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**D.** \_\_\_\_\_

**N.** \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_

2. Situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**D.** \_\_\_\_\_

**N.** \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_

3. Situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**D.** \_\_\_\_\_

**N.** \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_



If you are in a group setting, role-play one of the scenarios you identified. First, role-play with your partner using the traditional strategies you might have employed before this session. Discuss how it felt to be the child and the adult using the traditional model. Then, use the D.N.A. process. Discuss how it felt to be the child and the adult using the D.N.A. process.

## Focus Points for Educators

Imagine you've had a chaotic, exhausting week and it's only Wednesday! How would you typically respond if you instruct Jackson to turn in his paper because the quiz is over, and he crosses his arms, saying, "I don't have to and there's nothing you can do about it!"

Unless we consciously choose to change, we typically respond to children's emotional upset in one of the following ways:

- **Ignoring the child's feelings.** "Here. I'll take that paper."
- **Letting the child cope alone.** "Remove yourself to the empty seat in the back of the classroom."
- **Punishing.** "Adjust that attitude or you'll go to the principal's office!" (i.e., Oh yeah? Just watch me make you comply!)
- **Empathy sounds like this.** "You seem frustrated. You were hoping for more time to finish the quiz."

The D.N.A. process requires us to actively calm ourselves so we remain in a relaxed, alert Executive State. It then empowers us to respond to children's upset in a conscious, empathetic way so children can take responsibility for their actions and manage their upset.

What are three common situations in your classroom that would benefit from applying the D.N.A. process?

1. Situation: \_\_\_\_\_

D. \_\_\_\_\_

N. \_\_\_\_\_

A. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Situation: \_\_\_\_\_

D. \_\_\_\_\_

N. \_\_\_\_\_

A. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Situation:

D. \_\_\_\_\_  
N. \_\_\_\_\_  
A. \_\_\_\_\_

If you are in a group setting, role-play one of the scenarios you identified. First, role-play with your partner using the traditional strategies you might have employed before this session. Discuss how it felt to be the child and the adult using the traditional model. Then, use the D.N.A. process. Discuss how it felt to be the child and the adult using the D.N.A. process.

## Review: Skill of Empathy

**Power:**                      **Acceptance:** The moment is as it is.

**Becoming  
Brain Smart:**              Empathy integrates the brain for personal responsibility  
and self-control.

**Skill:**                         D.N.A. process for emotional regulation, rage book and program

**School Family:**         We Care Center



## Reflection: Power of Acceptance

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Focus on letting it be and being conscious of all the “shoulds” we place on ourselves and others. We must accept thoughts, feelings, actions, others, ourselves and situations as they are in order to make the wisest possible choice in the moment. Negating the moment negates everyone in it. Start implementing the Power of Acceptance with the following steps:

- Notice how often we want things to be different** by paying attention to thoughts like, “They/I should \_\_\_\_\_,” “They/I need to \_\_\_\_\_,” “Why don’t they/I \_\_\_\_\_,” “We don’t \_\_\_\_\_ in our classroom.”
- Practice linking our frustrations in life with a lack of acceptance** in that moment; upset stems from resistance.
- Notice if we are confusing thoughts with feelings.** Practice saying, “I feel \_\_\_\_\_,” followed by a feeling word (disappointed, angry, happy, etc.).
- Practice being present** and listening to upset colleagues, significant others and friends. Resist the tendency to judge anyone as a victim.
- Become conscious of empathy styles** and how we distract ourselves from our feelings (shopping, cleaning, drinking, working, eating, etc.).
- Watch the Power of Acceptance video** on the portal to deepen your reflection.

# Review: Brain Smart Teaching Moments

Watch how children express feelings and offer empathy. Watch for verbal, nonverbal (facial expressions, body language) and physical (actions such as crossing arms, hitting, stomping feet) expressions of sadness, disappointment, anger, frustration, happiness, joy, anxiety and fear. The following list helps us focus on the emotional aspects of the classroom:

## Disappointment and Sadness

Verbal Expressions:	Nonverbal Expressions:	Physical Expressions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It’s not fair.”</li> <li>• “I wish we could ___.”</li> <li>• “This sucks.”</li> <li>• “Bummer.”</li> <li>• “I don’t care.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downcast eyes</li> <li>• Steamed shrimp posture</li> <li>• Droopy eyes and face</li> <li>• Slow movements</li> <li>• Shuffling feet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawing</li> <li>• Reluctance to engage</li> <li>• Crying</li> <li>• Pouting</li> <li>• Whining</li> <li>• Complaining</li> </ul>

## Frustration and Anger

Verbal Expressions:	Nonverbal Expressions:	Physical Expressions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “This is stupid.”</li> <li>• “I hate you.”</li> <li>• “I hate ___.”</li> <li>• Cursing</li> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• “You can’t make me.”</li> <li>• “You said we could ___.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Furrowing eyebrows</li> <li>• Tight face</li> <li>• Folding arms</li> <li>• Tense muscles</li> <li>• Clenching fists</li> <li>• Reddening face</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screaming and shouting</li> <li>• Throwing items</li> <li>• Stomping</li> <li>• Physically attacking (hitting, kicking, biting, etc.)</li> </ul>

## Anxiety and Fear

Verbal Expressions:	Nonverbal Expressions:	Physical Expressions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Do we have to?”</li> <li>• Excuses and blame</li> <li>• “I don’t know.”</li> <li>• “I don’t want to.”</li> <li>• “I can’t.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide eyes</li> <li>• Shallow breathing</li> <li>• Darting eyes</li> <li>• Lack of eye contact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fidgeting and hyperactivity</li> <li>• Busy hands, sitting on hands</li> <li>• Nail biting</li> <li>• Rubbing arms, legs, etc.</li> <li>• Withdrawal and hiding</li> <li>• Non-conversational language (“Fine.” “Okay.”)</li> <li>• Physical complaints (headache, stomachache)</li> </ul>



# Reflection: Traditional Discipline and Conscious Discipline

If possible, partner up to say the 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
Why are you feeling that way?	You seem disappointed. You were hoping to go out to dinner.
There is no need to act like that.	You seem anxious. You wanted more time before the test.
It is not that big of a deal, let it go.	You seem frustrated. It’s hard when others ignore your advice.

## 3-2-1 Reflections

**3** Things you learned...

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**2** Ways that you were personally impacted...

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**1** Question you still have...

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# 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.

- Feel your feelings instead of judging them**, talking about them or distracting from them.
- Acknowledge your feelings** using the following inner speech: “I seem \_\_\_\_\_. I wanted \_\_\_\_\_.” (Or “I was hoping \_\_\_\_\_.”)
- Think, “The moment is as it is, relax (breathe) and solve the problem,”** when the world is not going as we’d like.
- Offer empathy to upset children using the D.N.A. process daily.** “Your eyes are going like this. Your mouth is going like this. (pause and download with eye contact) You seem \_\_\_\_\_. You wanted \_\_\_\_\_. Or You were hoping \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Differentiate a distress tantrum from a frustration fit** and handle each accordingly.
- Start a rage program**, if needed.
- Continue noticing what brain state a child is operating from** (survival, emotional, executive) in order to start the interaction with the most effective skill.
- Create a We Care Center** in the classroom and/or school.
- Review additional helpful web resources**, including Shubert’s School and the web portal.
- 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.

- Feel your feelings instead of judging them**, talking about them or distracting yourself from them.
- Acknowledge your feelings** using the following inner speech: “I seem \_\_\_\_\_.  
I wanted \_\_\_\_\_.” Or “I was hoping \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Think**, “The moment is as it is. Breathe and solve the problem,” when the world is not going as you would like.
- Offer empathy to an upset child using the D.N.A. process daily.** “Your eyes are going like this (demonstrate). Your mouth is going like this (pause and download). You seem \_\_\_\_\_  
(feeling word) \_\_\_\_\_. You wanted \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Differentiate a distress tantrum from a frustration fit** and handle each accordingly.
- Create a rage program**, if needed. In the home, this may include a homemade rage book to show the procedure, a space for physical activity and ample practice during times of calm.
- Continue noticing what brain state a child is operating from** (survival, emotional, executive) in order to start the interaction with the most effective skill.
- Create a We Care Center** in your home.
- Review additional helpful web resources**, including Shubert’s Home and the web portal.
- Other** \_\_\_\_\_

# Session 8: 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. We must manage our emotional upset before we can resolve our conflicts

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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## 2. Inappropriate behavior does not deserve empathy.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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## 3. The moment is as it is.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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## 4. Empathy will happy up children so they can move on to solving their problems.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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## 5. All conflict starts with upset.

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

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# Extend Your Learning

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## Brain Breaks

- “It’s Brain Smart Time” from *Kindness Counts*
- “It Starts in the Heart” from *It Starts in the Heart*
- “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” from *Songs for I Love You Rituals Vol. 1*

## Essential Reading

- *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms*, Chapter 8, Empathy (Pages 218-251)
- *Creating the School Family*, Chapter 14, We Care Center (Pages 301-319)
- *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline*, Chapter 8, Empathy: Handling the Fussing and the Fits (Pages 165-186)

## Rubrics

- Skill of Empathy 5.0
- We Care Center 5.1

## Products to Support the Skill of Empathy

- *Shubert’s New Friend*
- *Sophie’s New Sibling*
- *Shubert Puppet*
- *Sophie Puppet*
- *Seven Skills Poster Set*, Empathy Poster

## Additional Resources

- *Songs for I Love You Rituals*, Vol. 1 and 2 music CD
- *I Love You Rituals* book
- *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms*
- *Creating the School Family*
- *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://ConsciousDiscipline.com) to access additional resources and video FAQs for Session 8.

- [Facebook.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://Facebook.com/ConsciousDiscipline)
- [Pinterest.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://Pinterest.com/ConsciousDiscipline)
- [Twitter.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://Twitter.com/ConsciousDiscipline) or [@ConsciousDiscipline](https://Twitter.com/@ConsciousDiscipline)
- [Instagram.com/ConsciousDiscipline/](https://Instagram.com/ConsciousDiscipline/)
- [Youtube.com/c/ConsciousDisciplineVideos](https://Youtube.com/c/ConsciousDisciplineVideos)

## ANSWER KEY: SESSION 8

1. D = **D**escribe the body's signals.  
N = **N**ame the feeling.  
A = **A**cknowledge the desire or intent.
2. Compassionate
3. D = **D**escribe: Your head is going like this (demonstrate).  
N = **N**ame: You seem disappointed.  
A = **A**cknowledge: You wanted to go outside.
4. D = **D**escribe: Your arms went like this (demonstrate).  
N = **N**ame: You seem frustrated.  
A = **A**cknowledge: You wanted me to move.
5. Manage
6. Empathy integrates the brain so children can take personal responsibility for their thoughts, feelings and emotions.
7. You have placed in charge of you
8. Disruptive
9. Dangerous
10. Off
11. On
12. We Care Center

