

# Conscious Discipline®

**BUILDING RESILIENT CLASSROOMS**

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## Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

## An Introduction to Conscious Discipline

*“Be the change you want to see in the world.”  
— Mahatma Gandhi*

All teachers demonstrate a code of conduct and a value system through their daily interactions with others. Until we become conscious of these patterns of interaction, we will be ineffective in guiding the morality of the next generation. Most of us model respect when we are calm and life is going our way. But what happens when we are stressed and life becomes complicated? How do we behave when traffic is backed up, our children forget their permission slips, our spouse forgets to go to the bank, students are horsing around instead of listening and our school's test scores are falling instead of rising to meet legislative standards?

Each classroom and school is a culture. It is time to become conscious of the culture and the behavioral patterns that are aiding or impeding learning in our schools. We must stop pretending we can effectively teach children life skills through single-issue prescriptive curriculums like Character Education, Social Skills and Bully Prevention while simultaneously using stickers, shaming, coercion and loss of privileges in attempts to force compliance. To successfully teach a life skill, we must model and demonstrate it in daily life. A lesson on respectful behavior is pointless when we regularly demonstrate disrespect by raising our voices. A bully prevention program is rendered useless when our behavior punishes, excludes or shames the children who challenge us. It is time to shift from a “Do what we say, not what we do” style of discipline to “Be the change we want to see in the world.” Conscious Discipline empowers us with the mental shifts and practical skills to do just that, becoming instruments of positive transformation in our own lives and in the lives of children.

## A Hidden Epidemic

Stress and trauma have been called a hidden or invisible epidemic in the United States. The truth is they are neither hidden nor invisible! About 60 percent of adults report Adverse

Childhood Experiences (trauma) such as verbal, physical or sexual abuse, or family dysfunction like incarceration, mental illness or substance abuse (Gerwin, 2013). Research indicates that traumatic stress in childhood is the leading causes of morbidity, mortality and disability in the United States (Edwards, Shipman & Brown, 2005). In addition, nearly 25 percent of children in the United States lived in poverty in 2013; that's roughly 16.1 million kids. An additional 45 percent of children live in low income homes (Jiang, Ekono & Skinner, 2014).

Stress and trauma cross all ethnic and economic lines, with grave effects on health, learning, social-emotional development and brain development. Fortunately, research suggests that caregivers can ease the negative affects of stress on children (The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2010). Caregiving does not begin and end with parents; it must be built into the cultural structure of our communities and schools because it is essential to academic and social success. Children living with stress and trauma walk through our doors every day. We generally know them by their behavioral problems (the symptoms), with the stress and trauma underlying those behaviors as a side note on their rap sheets. We tend to treat their symptoms with rewards, punishments and removal instead of meeting their needs with a culture of inclusion, healing and connection that builds resiliency. Conscious Discipline is designed to teach effective social-emotional skills, and embed resiliency into the school culture as a way to counteract the stress and trauma that are so prevalent in our society.

I remember walking into a Conscious Discipline training saying, “Unconscious Discipline has been working just fine for me!” I was pretty resistant. I work with at-risk fifth and sixth grade children in our district-wide ACE program. The year before using Conscious Discipline I didn’t have one kid pass the state test. After beginning to implement Conscious Discipline, 19 of my 23 fifth graders passed the test. It made a huge difference, and I think a big part of it is that the program helped kids feel safe and connected enough to learn. For me, I realized that before Conscious Discipline I was teaching a class; now I teach individuals.

— Ted Miller, Keller Middle School, Pasadena Independent School District



A star in the margin indicates there are resources on your web portal that support the content you are reading. In this case, visit your web portal to watch video footage of Ted Miller and other educators discussing the transformational power of Conscious Discipline. Access your portal by visiting [ConsciousDiscipline.com/bookstudy](http://ConsciousDiscipline.com/bookstudy)

## Our Hierarchical Social Brain

If we look back in our cultural history, say around 5,000 years or so, we will see why our brains are wired to be social. Our brains evolved within a small, tight community of hunters/gatherers. Our environment was demanding, resources were scarce and we were relatively weak compared to our predators, hence the need to work cooperatively. Our survival depended on the interdependence within these groups. Consequently, our brains evolved into what neuroscientists consider a social brain. In this context, “survival of the fittest” doesn’t mean survival of the strongest and most forceful. It refers to those who can adapt most quickly to the demands of the moment in order to survive and thrive. Our social brain’s efforts to adapt rapidly enough to meet the rate of change in a modern world stresses us all.

The disparity between our social brain and modern western society creates enormous stressors. Leadership, corporations, factories, governments and schools are generally based on a hierarchical social structure steeped in competition, individual success and authority based on power over others. Computers and telecommunications have profoundly reinvented how we communicate and socialize. We have shifted from personal interactions to texts, tweets and status updates. It is not uncommon to see a crowd of young people clumped together, all texting someone elsewhere. Social media plays an important role in our complex social society, but it cannot replace the face-to-face socialization needed for optimal brain development.

All we have to do is watch the nightly news to see people who lack the resiliency required to cope with the mismatch of a social brain in a disconnected informational age. We need a new approach for successful education (Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005). Conscious Discipline fulfills this need by creating a community-based learning environment called the “School Family.” It asks school leadership to transform from an industrial, power-over, competitive, factory model of education to a relational-cultural leadership model with shared power, group cohesion, equality, trust and strong personal relationships in order to buffer our children from the side effects of a world full of information, stress and trauma, yet devoid of face-to-face community.

Our social brain is organized in a hierarchical manner consisting of higher and lower systems that act like two versions of ourselves. One version (the lower system) acts on impulse and seeks immediate gratification. The other version (the higher system) controls impulses and delays gratification in order to protect our long-term goals. Sometimes we are the person who wants to lose weight and sometimes we are the person who wants a cookie. The secret is being conscious of the best fit for the situation at hand. Conscious Discipline stems from this idea that conscious awareness empowers us to use our higher self-regulatory systems. Without awareness, the brain defaults to the unconscious, autopilot, knee-jerk reactions of the lower centers.

Our impulses, not our long-term goals, guide our choices when our minds are preoccupied. When we are not conscious of our actions, we can become reactive instead of proactive. We lose our ability to respond wisely to whatever curveball life throws. Someone brings out a tray of cookies and we habitually eat three. The stimulus (cookie) equals an automatic reaction (eat). Strengthening the pause between stimulus and reaction is at the core of Conscious Discipline. When we insert a pause, we free ourselves up to choose a wise response instead of a habitual reaction. We see the tray of cookies, pause to consciously consider whether eating the cookies aligns with our goals (values, beliefs, etc.) and whether the experience of eating the cookie is worth compromising those goals (values, beliefs, etc.), and then we consciously choose how to proceed.



Conscious Discipline encourages us to understand our hierarchical social brain in order to become consciously disciplined adults who can achieve long-term goals despite obstacles and distractions. We then teach this process to our children. It allows us all to be resilient, adaptable, respectful and responsible beings in a rapidly changing world. It empowers us to create our lives through choice. Some days we choose the cookies and some days we choose the veggie tray, but we always know we are the ones choosing.

## From Roles to Relationships

There have been many shifts in modern society, yet none so profound as the shift from roles to relationships. Building steam in the late 1950s, society began to enter bold new territory. Collectively, we decided that the roles of the past were too limiting and the inequality built into these roles was morally oppressive. The roles of husband and wife were explicitly defined. The role of the child (to be seen and not heard) and the role of the parent (boss) were clearly articulated. Relationships were governed by these prescribed roles. As long as everyone performed his or her ordained duties, all was well. Yet, we felt something was missing in the comfort and safety of these roles, especially for those relegated to subservient roles. The powerless rebelled.

Consciousness expanded in regard to women, minorities, people with disabilities and children as people boldly demanded more. We wanted relationships that included closeness based on equal worth instead of hierarchically-prescribed roles dictating the powerful and the powerless. When we cast off our prescribed roles, we placed ourselves on new ground. Sadly, we did not have the communication skills or social-emotional competence to build a solid foundation for these new relationships. Divorce rates skyrocketed to over 50 percent. Children grew demanding and parents felt at a loss for appropriate action.

We must replace the old roles of yesteryear with a strong new foundation of social-emotional skills. As we seek meaningful relationships, we must learn to interact in ways that promote mutual respect and responsive attunement. Conscious Discipline is a skill-based program to help educators resolve conflicts, enhance brain development by creating optimal learning environments, support self-regulation in ways that strengthen relationships instead of destroying them, and help children build respectful relationships with themselves, peers, parents and each other.

## Conscious Discipline as the Answer to the Hierarchical Social Brain and Changing Roles

Conscious Discipline solves the “Do as I say, not as I do” crisis that plagues communities, homes and schools. The Conscious Discipline model contrasts significantly with traditional approaches that are derived from the prescribed roles of yesteryear and fail to take our hierarchical social brain into account. Traditional classroom management systems are based on control. The teacher holds all the power and must control the students. Conscious Discipline is based on connection. It’s a cultural-relationship model that serves our brain’s innately social wiring and utilizes prosocial skills rather than prescribed roles. The power in the classroom is shared in the sense that all parties are responsible for their own behavior. This empowers the teacher as a self-disciplined adult who, in turn, teaches children how to become self-disciplined.

Teaching, of course, requires the adult to possess the skills he hopes to pass on to the children. One of my favorite bumper stickers says, “Can’t read? Write for help.” We would never expect an illiterate teacher to teach reading or a monolingual English-speaking teacher to teach Chinese. Yet, every day we ask teachers to model self-discipline, apply conflict resolution skills and work as a team with coworkers. We ask this even though most adults’ default is to implode or explode under stress. Our conflict resolution “skills” often lead us to divorce, and backstabbing and gossip are the workplace norm.



Many research studies have demonstrated that the most important in-school factor for learning is the quality of the teacher/student relationship. The quality of teaching begins in the hearts and minds of the teachers, yet most of us are not conscious of the dispositions and beliefs that drive our actions. We operate from a set of preprogrammed, unexamined beliefs and unconscious values handed down from generation to generation.

Much of what we believe about school comes from our experience as students. This is in part due to the mirror neurons in our brains. Scientists have recently been decoding how mirror neurons work. They've realized humans are wired to connect with and live vicariously through others' experiences in much stronger ways than we once thought. The brain doesn't differentiate much between watching someone do something and doing it yourself (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004), so the years we've already spent in classrooms are probably the strongest teacher training we've experienced.

Also due to the mirror neuron system, children will use the same skills they see parents and teachers apply. I was once with a bunch of first grade children on the playground. Marissa wanted a turn on the swing. She asked Emily for a turn and Emily said, "No, I am swinging until it is time to go in." Marissa quickly shifted to her next available skill and told Emily, "I am going to turn your card to red!" Card turning, writing names on the board and caution lights create a meaningless, competitive culture that fails to teach children how to take responsibility for their actions. We are going to model skills for our students; we might as well make them useful skills.

A dear friend once told me her lead teacher explained discipline like this: "It's important to make them cry. That means you have broken them. Don't be afraid to make an example out of one or two of them. It seems harsh, but you will thank me later." Imagine the discipline model this teacher grew up with and is passing down to the children in her care! We all possess a mental model of discipline; the question is if we're ready for an upgrade.

We have been put in the impossible situation of teaching students without possessing the necessary discipline skills to address today's complex emotional and social issues. In a culture where burnout, chronic stress and a degree of unpredictability is endemic, teachers must be resilient. We must learn to adapt well, respond wisely and recover quickly after stressful events. Conscious Discipline provides much-needed resiliency training by increasing emotional intelligence so we can develop a flexible, adaptive response to address problems constructively rather than avoiding them.

Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary self-regulation program that integrates social-emotional learning, school culture and discipline. It helps teachers and administrators build schools based on the internal resources of safety, connection and problem solving instead of external rewards and punishments. It is based on brain research that indicates our internal states dictate our behavior. Its goal is to provide systematic changes in schools by fostering the emotional intelligence of teachers first and children second. Simply put, as we become more emotionally intelligent, we are better equipped to create positive, healthy educational climates that help create and maintain optimal learning states. The three core components of Conscious Discipline are:



**Safety**, through self-regulation, enhances adults' and children's ability to recognize and manage physiological and emotional upset.





**Connection**, through creating a compassionate School Family culture, motivates adults' and children's willingness to engage in healthy relationships, help each other be successful and change perceptions about conflict.



**Problem-solving**, through changing our response to conflict and upgrading social-emotional skills, boosts adults' and children's ability to adapt to changing situations (resiliency).

With these components, everyday events and conflicts become opportunities to teach life skills. The social-emotional curriculum does not come from prescribed sequential lessons added to core standards; the curriculum emerges from daily challenges, acts of kindness, academic struggles, interpersonal conflicts, chronic rule breaking and celebrations. Our social-emotional curriculum shows up in a math lesson, in the cafeteria, on the bus or when a pet dies. Every person in the school becomes more resilient as he adapts rapidly to the needs of himself, others, circumstances and challenges in order to make wise personal choices.

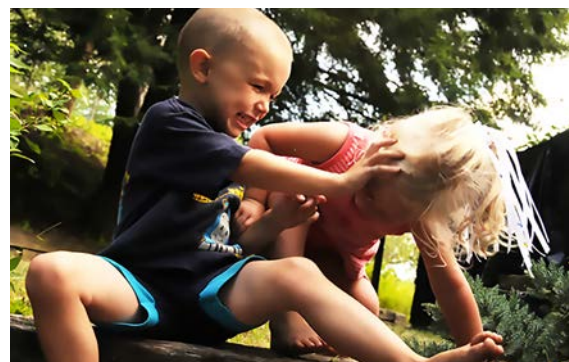
Seizing conflict as an opportunity to teach life skills is integral to Conscious Discipline. When a child misspells several words on a spelling test, this provides the feedback that more practice or additional spelling instruction is needed. We do not turn his card from green to yellow or deny him five minutes of recess; we teach. This is also how we must approach daily conflict. When a child acts in hurtful ways, this provides the feedback that more practice or additional social skill instruction is needed. Attempting to remove daily conflict through administering rewards or punishments removes the opportunity for teaching social skills lessons in context. It forces schools and teachers to add yet another prescriptive curriculum to an already full workload. On your portal, read about the researched limitations of prescriptive curriculums and how they do not achieve the outcomes we truly desire.



There are two parts to discipline, the health of the relationship and the skill set of those involved. We might think of it as country western two-step dance with slow-slow steps followed by quick-quick steps. The slow-slow part of discipline is building healthy relationships that promote the willingness to cooperate. The quick-quick is the skill set needed to respond wisely in moments of conflict. We've historically ignored the relationship part of the discipline dance, focusing instead on roles and rewards. Without healthy relationships, the willingness to change a behavior is severely impaired. Conscious Discipline helps educators with both the slow-slow and the quick-quick aspects of discipline, empowering our hierarchical social brain to become a goal-directed, self-regulated, conscious and disciplined learning advocate.



*Slow-slow relationship building*



*Quick-quick response to conflict*

# Teaching What We Value

Conscious Discipline leads teachers, providers, schools and programs through a transformational process that promotes permanent behavior change. The change is from an unconscious, traditional, compliance model of discipline to a conscious, relationship-based, community model.

## Traditional Discipline

The traditional model of discipline is founded on rules that are upheld through reward and punishment. The goal is to obtain obedience. Those who are compliant are rewarded. Those who aren't compliant are punished and removed if disobedience persists. Fear is the tool used to empower the system as teachers attempt to control children. This system is built on three major premises:

- 1. It is possible to control others through environmental manipulations.
- 2. Rules govern behavior.
- 3. Conflict is a disruption to the learning process.

This type of system also creates a classroom culture and climate that teaches the following values:

Belief	Value It Teaches
It is possible to make others change.	Failure to make others change equals failure on the teacher's part.
When others don't do what we want, we must try to coerce them.	The more insubordinate they are, the more external power/force is expected and justified.
When we succeed in making others behave, we demonstrate power and authority.	Power comes from overpowering people.
When we fail to make someone obey, it's his or her fault.	If others do not do things our way, they are bad, lazy and deserving of hardship.
If others would change (do as we say), we could be happy and peaceful.	We are justified in blaming others; they are responsible for our behavior.
Children must feel bad to learn how to behave better in the future.	Revenge is the answer to life's upsets.
Conflict is bad, disruptive and must be eliminated.	If you are good enough, you can shield yourself from conflict.
Fear is the best motivator for learning.	Fear is more powerful than love.

# Conscious Discipline

Conscious Discipline is built on three completely different premises:

1. Controlling and changing ourselves is possible and has a profound impact on others.
2. Connectedness governs behavior.
3. Conflict is an opportunity to teach.

Believing we must change ourselves first and model our expectations for others through self-regulation creates a classroom climate and culture that teaches the following values:



*Conscious Discipline links head and heart*

Belief	Value It Teaches
Changing ourselves is possible.	It is our choice whether or not to change.
We are in charge of ourselves.	We can become the person we want to be.
We are empowered by choosing to control ourselves instead of others.	Power comes from within.
When things don't go our way, we will seek solutions.	We are responsible for our feelings and actions. Our choices impact others.
We must teach children in order for them to learn to behave.	We teach others how to treat us. We cannot expect them to magically know how.
Conflict is an essential part of life.	Conflict and mistakes present us with the opportunity to learn a missing skill or let go of a limiting belief.
Love is the best motivator for learning and growth.	Love is more powerful than fear, cooperation is more effective than coercion and compassion is more powerful than competition.

Now let's look at both systems side by side.

	<b>Traditional Discipline Compliance Model</b>	<b>Conscious Discipline Community Model</b>
Motivation	Rewards and punishments	Connection and contribution
Goal	Obedience	Problem solvers
Foundation	Rules	Community
Power	External control	Internal self-regulation
Skills	Consequences	Seven Skills of Conscious Discipline
Philosophy	Rejection	Acceptance

Which model aligns the best with your own personal values? Which model aligns best with your school mission statement?

Conscious Discipline is based on a Brain State Model that empowers us to shift from educational systems grounded in controlling others to cultures of learning based on safety, connection and problem solving. Conscious Discipline is organized around the Seven Powers for Conscious Adults that help the adult to manage her internal state (safety), the creation of the School Family that utilizes connection to foster cooperation and optimal brain development (connection), and the Seven Skills of Discipline that empower the adult with strategies to teach children to self-regulate and problem solve (problem-solving).

1. **The Brain State Model** utilizes a neurodevelopmental model to help us focus our attention on internal states first and behavior second. By addressing the internal state that precedes the behavior, both adults and children learn to self-regulate and develop strong executive skills for problem solving and goal achievement.
2. **The Seven Powers for Conscious Adults** promote mindful, conscious adults who possess the ability to self-regulate. "Conscious" is a state of active, open attention in the present moment. Without conscious awareness, our ability to change old conditioned discipline practices to effective new practices is impaired. The ability to self-regulate and perceive conflict as a teaching opportunity provides the foundation for classroom safety.
3. **The School Family** provides an effective new metaphor for educational institutions. Historically, we have used the metaphor of a factory when creating our classrooms and schools. The goal of a factory is to create standardized products through a reward and punishment paradigm. Research and experience prove that we need a new metaphor if we wish to build an educational system that is successful and safe for all students. The School Family is built on a healthy family model with the goal of providing optimal development for all its members. The School Family builds connections that foster the following:

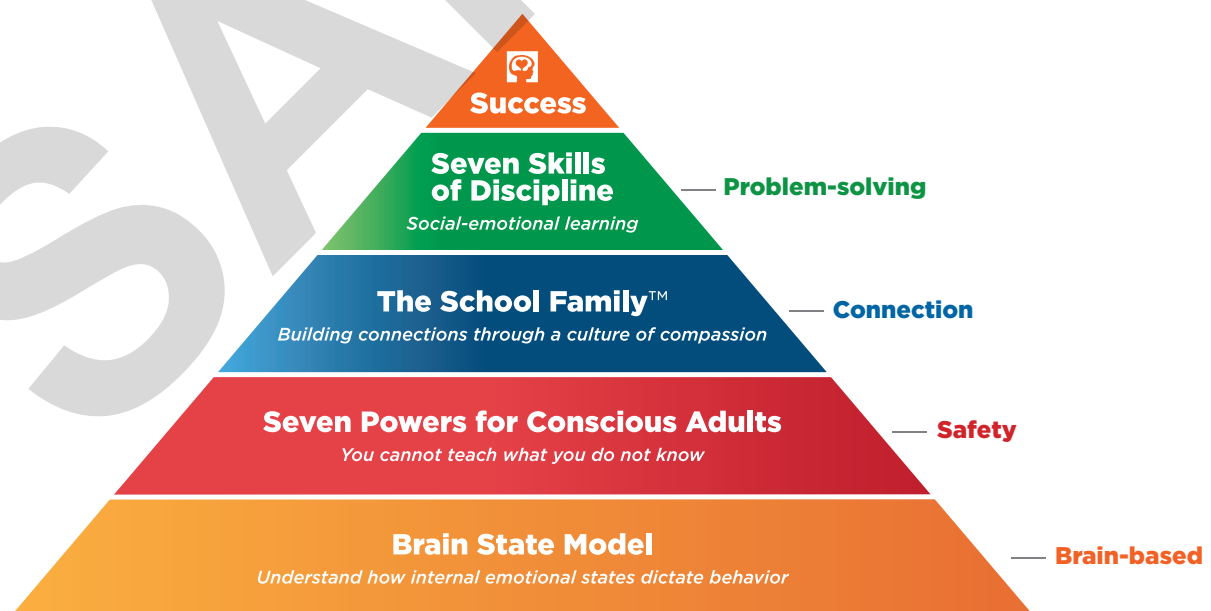
- Impulse control through co-regulation skills
- Cooperation and willingness to learn through a sense of belonging
- Executive skills through modeling, scaffolding and direct teaching

Teachers and students create a School Family through the use of routines, rituals, and classroom structures that provide the safety and connection needed for optimal development and learning.

4. **The Seven Skills of Discipline** provide the problem solving tools teachers need to transform everyday discipline issues into teaching moments. These moments are our opportunity to teach children the social-emotional and communication skills necessary to manage themselves, resolve conflict and develop pro-social behaviors. The seven skills are the foundation for a problem-solving classroom.



The image below represents the transformation change process of Conscious Discipline.

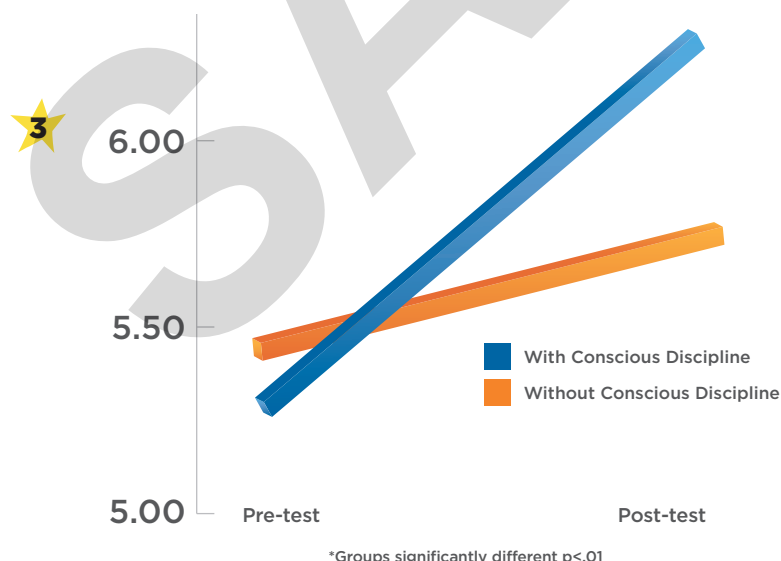


# Research on the Effectiveness of Conscious Discipline

I have spent my career synthesizing life experiences and research from multiple disciplines in order to make Conscious Discipline both effective and accessible. Multiple large-scale research projects have recently demonstrated what I know to be true about Conscious Discipline: Quite simply, it works. Research assessing the effectiveness of Conscious Discipline compared classrooms using and not using Conscious Discipline, showing that Conscious Discipline does the following:

- Improves the quality of student-teacher interactions
  - Improves the social and emotional behavior of students
  - Reduces aggression in classrooms
  - Increases student academic achievement
  - Increases student academic readiness
  - Decreases impulsivity and hyperactivity in difficult children
  - Improves the social and emotional behavior of teachers
  - Improves the organizational climate
  - Improves the classroom and school climate
  - Enhances parenting effectiveness
- (Barfield & Gaskill, 2005; Hoffman, Hutchinson & Reiss, 2005; Hoffman, Hutchinson & Reiss, 2009; and Rain, 2014)

Research shows that parents with children in schools implementing Conscious Discipline view the school climate positively, even when they do not feel safe where they live. Parents in schools not using Conscious Discipline did not report this response. This demonstrates the strength of school-wide Conscious Discipline implementation in creating a positive school climate (Rain, 2014).



## Impact on Child Social Skills Behavior (Teacher's Report)

Teachers who used Conscious Discipline reported better social skills behavior in their students, in comparison to teachers who did not use Conscious Discipline.

Review the full research results on your portal.



# Make the Most of This Book

We all have experienced discipline practices that left us belittled, shamed or rejected. We swore we would never repeat these practices on others, yet in moments of distress, that's exactly what we've done. This book is about transformation. It is a journey that, once embraced, will change how you live, how you parent and how you teach.

The first three chapters of this book lay a foundation for the transformation process you will undertake. The **Introduction** chapter you are reading now examines traditional beliefs about discipline and new information that points us toward a better way. The **Brain State Model** chapter explains the relationship between the brain and misbehavior, showing why shifting from reward and punishment to creating schools based on safety, connection and problem-solving is critical for academic success. The **School Family** chapter explains how school culture impedes or enhances optimal learning.

The remaining seven chapters are divided into three sections that each supports an overriding developmental need derived from the Conscious Discipline Brain State Model. These sections are **Safety**, **Connection** and **Problem-solving**.

Each chapter within these three sections focuses on one skill to discipline children, one power for conscious adults, current brain information and how to build your School Family. Next, we'll look at each component in greater depth.



## Introduction

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**Chapter 1:** Introduction

**Chapter 2:** Conscious Discipline Brain Model

**Chapter 3:** School Family



## Section 1 • Safety

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**Chapter 4:** Composure

**Chapter 5:** Assertiveness



## Section 2 • Connection

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**Chapter 6:** Encouragement

**Chapter 7:** Choices

**Chapter 8:** Empathy



## Section 3 • Problem Solving

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**Chapter 9:** Positive Intent

**Chapter 10:** Consequences



# Section 1: Safety Through Composure and Assertiveness

Section 1 of this book focuses us on creating safe classrooms and schools. Safety meets the developmental need of a survival state in the Conscious Discipline Brain State Model. It is the foundation upon which all else is built.

The acronym N.A.R.C.S. helps us remember the combined tools required for soothing survival state stress through safety. These tools are Noticing, Assertiveness, Routines, Composure and the language of Safety. These tools are explained in the Composure and Assertiveness chapters. We can provide children with the safety embedded in these lifelong skills or they may grow to find external methods of soothing like addiction, drugs and alcohol (thus the acronym N.A.R.C.S.).

Adults who can own and regulate their upset are at the core of a sense of safety. Out-of-control adults are always a threat to children. We can no longer blame children for making us angry. We can no longer ask children to develop self-control and respectful communication skills when we model a different set of skills during our upset moments. Safety requires us to regulate our inner states and take responsibility for our thoughts, feelings and actions. Safety is not about controlling the actions of others; it is about regulating ourselves effectively. The Skill of Composure and the Skill of Assertiveness help us create a felt sense of safety in the classroom by allowing us to stay calm enough to vigilantly focus on what we want children to do.

## Skill of Composure, Power of Perception

From the Power of Perception we are able to access and extend the Skill of Composure. This reminds us that we have a choice of how to see events. Seeing a child's behavior as a call for help or as a sign of disrespect will aid or derail our composure. When we choose a helpful perception, composure allows us to access the higher centers of our brain and respond with wisdom. It also teaches children that obnoxious, manipulative or aggressive behaviors have no power over us. It allows us to be calm enough to focus on what we truly value.

Conscious Discipline provides us with a wise path to follow so we can discipline ourselves well enough to meet our goals. When we find ourselves off course, it empowers us with the conscious awareness that we have lost our way. It then gives us the skills to refocus, get back on our path and achieve our desired goals.

## Skill of Assertiveness, Power of Attention

From the Power of Attention we are able to access, extend and utilize the Skill of Assertiveness. Assertiveness is the medium through which we teach respect; it is the skill that sets boundaries in a way that teaches others how we want to be treated. It is essential for limit setting, goal achievement and problem-solving. Assertiveness, the voice of no doubt, responds to the current moment with clarity, assuredness and a vigilant focus on what we want children to do. Focusing on what we want children to do wires the brain for success and sets us up to encourage children every step of the way.

One teacher who had an “aha” moment at a training looked at me and said, “You mean we must constantly think before we discipline a child? It’s a lot easier just to put their names on the board. I don’t know if I can be that conscious all day.” Imagine a teacher saying the same thing in regard to content areas: “You mean you want me to think while teaching reading and science?” Unconsciously moving clips, giving out points, flipping cards and removing recess need to evolve. It is time for us to become conscious in our discipline approaches.

## Section 2: Connection Through Encouragement, Choices and Empathy

Section 2 of the book is about connection and belonging. Connection directs the flow of information in the brain. Healthy connections promote problem-solving and thriving, while unhealthy connections promote defensive survival skills in efforts to feel safe. Humans are hardwired to be social. Our social brain develops through our relationships. Building human connections equals building neural connections. Connection meets the developmental need of an emotional state in the Conscious Discipline Brain State Model.

The acronym R.E.J.E.C.T. helps us remember the combined tools needed to meet the child’s need for belonging. These tools are Rituals, Encouragement, Jobs, Empathy, Choices and The School Family. Without a felt sense of connection, children often feel rejected; thus the acronym R.E.J.E.C.T.

In order to ensure optimal brain development, we must start creating compassionate classrooms where children begin caring about themselves and others on a deep level. The School Family is the ultimate representation of this compassion and commitment. The skills of Encouragement, Choices and Empathy help us build compassion and connection in our classrooms, fostering the willingness to focus on helping each other be successful. All the skills represented by R.E.J.E.C.T. are found in the chapters within Section 2.

### Skill of Encouragement, Power of Unity

Composure allows us to self-regulate enough to assertively focus on what we want. This vigilant focus gives us unlimited access to the Skill of Encouragement and Power of Unity. The Power of Unity calls on us to realize we are all in this together and allows us to access and extend authentic Encouragement to others. Knowing we are all energetically connected to one another allows us to offer encouragement and develop compassionate School Families. We know on a deep level that what we offer to others, we experience within ourselves. As we encourage children, we encourage ourselves. As we discourage children, we discourage ourselves. Discouragement has its roots in focusing on what we don’t want. As we attempt to manipulate children with bribes and threats, we manipulate ourselves. The Skill of Encouragement motivates children to bring the best of themselves to each moment.

## Skill of Choices, Power of Free Will

No matter how much we encourage others or ourselves, we still have the free will to accept or reject the guidance being offered. From the Power of Free Will we are able to understand and utilize the Skill of Choices. Life is a constant series of choices. No one is forcing us to go to work, making us act like raving lunatics or getting us to eat more vegetables; these are all choices. When we acknowledge that children are choosing to comply with us, we honor and encourage them to use their free will for the good of all. If we continue to look for ways to make them do homework or get them to finish their chores, manipulation replaces choices and our view of free will becomes distorted. The Skill of Choices helps children choose compliance and facilitates their ability to focus on the task at hand.

## Skill of Empathy, Power of Acceptance

When children reject our guidance and make poor choices, it is our job to offer empathy to help them accept personal responsibility for their choices. From the Power of Acceptance we can remove our bias of how life should be (our judgment of how others should think, feel and behave), accessing the Skill of Empathy. When we can relax into the current moment without the need to change it in any way, we can allow others to be themselves. We can see from their point of view, join with them in the moment and become a mirror for them to find clarity. This helps free them to change their perceptions, relinquish their judgments, process their feelings and take personal responsibility for their actions through reflection instead of blaming others. The Skill of Empathy helps children take personal responsibility for their choices by managing their emotions instead of acting them out.

# Section 3: Problem-Solving with Positive Intent and Consequences

Section 3 of the book provides the skills for problem-solving. In this section you will learn how to empower bullies and victims, utilize conflicts to teach life skills, and solve everyday problems with confidence. Problem-solving in a social setting meets the developmental need of an integrated executive state in the Conscious Discipline Brain State Model. The tools for this section provide a healthy space for us to be all we can be; thus the acronym S.P.A.C.E. These tools are Solutions, Positive intent, Academic integration, Consequences and Executive skills.

Problem-solving can only exist once we create a felt sense of safety and increase connection by building a compassionate School Family. Most of us are trying to use conflict resolution programs in school climates that actually impede problem solving, or we are asking children in survival and emotional states to resolve conflicts without access to the higher brain systems that are needed for success. Without self-control (safety) and willingness (connection), we become stuck in the problem (who did what to whom first, who is to blame, and what is unfair).

Children, as part of their developmental journey, will try as many ways as possible to get the world to go their way. The adult's job is to accept the moment as it is and respond wisely. If

an adult is still trying to make the world go his way, power struggles become the norm and problem solving the exception. Section 3 instills the mind set of letting the moment exist as it is, seeing the best in each situation and focusing on solutions instead of faultfinding. The Skill of Positive Intent and the Skill of Consequences will help us toward this goal.

## **Skill of Positive Intent, Power of Love**

From the Power of Love, we are asked to see the best in others by using the Skill of Positive Intent. Our perception of the intent behind other people's actions is completely made up. If one child pushes another child, we get to make up the aggressor's intent. Was the child's intent to be mean to others, to get the adult's attention or to access the marker the child is holding? We truly don't know. We do, however, have a choice of how we make it up. The Power of Love asks us to have the faith to make people's intent up positively. When we do this with children, we define their core as good and their behavior as needing correction. We keep our internal state calm, allowing us to access our own wisdom in the moment. If we make it up negatively, we send the message, "You are your actions and you are bad." Making up negative intent also throws us into the lower centers of our brain where we will react habitually. The Skill of Positive Intent allows us to consciously transform aggressive acts into life skills, derailing the development of bullies. Positive intent also facilitates composure, allowing us access to all the skills learned in previous chapters.

## **Skill of Consequences, Power of Intention**

Consequences is the last skill covered, not because it is the least important, but because we need the first six skills to use consequences effectively. With the Power of Intention, we can use self-awareness to help children take responsibility for their choices through the Skill of Consequences. Consequences are often distorted and confused with punishments. Consequences happen all the time. They are not something adults make up to deliver to children who have done wrong (punishments). Every choice has an inherent consequence bound to it. Often we are not conscious of these consequences or we hide from them through blame and rationalization. For consequences to be effective we must own our feelings (instead of blaming others), reflect on our choices and become conscious of their impact (instead of judging ourselves and others as bad).

Many guidance and discipline programs focus extensively on consequences. As teachers begin learning about Conscious Discipline, they ask, "Doesn't the child ever get consequences?" The answer is a resounding, "Yes." Conscious Discipline provides teachers with a class culture and seven skills that are essential for successful conflict resolution and effective consequences. Giving consequences to children who pronounce, "I don't care," is simply an exercise in discouragement for all involved. The Skill of Consequences allows us to help children learn from their mistakes instead of repeat them.

"The Conscious Discipline powers and skills that emerge from them became like an internal toolbox to guide me. As I use the powers and skills, they become who I am, not what I have learned. Life is a choice and it is up to us to decide what we want it to look like."

— Jenny Barkac, first grade teacher, Billings Public Schools, Montana

We have each approached difficult situations in brilliant and not so brilliant ways. The powers and skills of Conscious Discipline help us increase our brilliance through upgraded skills and the conscious awareness of knowing when our actions are hurtful instead of helpful. The “conscious” part of Conscious Discipline helps us become aware of ineffective choices and the “discipline” part provides us with the skills to be effective in living our highest values and achieving our desired goals. If we want children to learn from their mistakes and make different choices in the future, we must create internal and external conditions that support this goal. The chart below shows the synergy of the seven skills and how they can be used in any combination to address any life event.



Teachers who draw upon these powers and skills create classrooms that model our highest values and prosocial skills. This happens automatically. As teachers become conscious of their intentions, and change their perceptions and responses to classroom conflict, so will the children. Our classrooms become living, breathing units of healthy socialization. No separate artificial lessons are needed for character education, bully prevention or social skills. Conscious Discipline creates authentic change from the inside out.

Successful violence prevention, safe schools, character education and conflict resolution are not separate curriculums; they are a mindset. They require self-regulation and social-emotional competence. They rely on the ability to trust, establish relationships, set limits, offer and ask for help in socially appropriate ways, and solve everyday problems constructively. Ultimately, Conscious Discipline integrates all these factors into your existing academic curriculum. It's better than a BOGO because you get more than just two for one; you get it all!



# Pay It Forward

## Transformational Change

Conscious Discipline is transformational change, which is very different than traditional or transitional change. Traditional changes ask us to do Skill A better, faster and more effectively. Transitional change asks us to stop doing Skill A and learn Skill B. Transformational change asks us to change both our mindset and our skill set. For that to happen, we must be committed to the process, allow ourselves to make mistakes and take it slowly. It is a process that takes patience and forgiveness, but the payoff from that persistence is life changing and will impact generations to come.

This book encourages transformational change through immediate application in your life, classroom and school. Read Chapters 1-3 as you would any other book. Then, because it takes at least 21 days of consistent focus and practice to create or change a habit, you would read and implement only one skill chapter per month for Chapters 4-10. While this one chapter per month guideline is helpful, it is absolutely essential to progress at your own pace. (For example, you might progress steadily at one chapter per month for Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, and then spend three months fully implementing Chapter 8.) Be gentle with yourself. Reread sections that are meaningful. Reflect and implement the routines, rituals and classroom structures that support the skill and power in each chapter. Utilize the many free resources we provide online, including the book study portal. Reach out for support as needed.

Given the demanding nature of teachers', administrators' and providers' jobs, Conscious Discipline utilizes a "pay it forward" model to support transformational change. The goal is to focus on creating model classrooms with the most enthusiastic teachers who seek out a variety of training experiences and achieve full implementation in their classrooms. These teachers pay it forward by providing hands-on training for other willing teachers within the school. Once a school is implementing Conscious Discipline school-wide, the administration pays it forward by serving as a model site for other administrators and educators to learn from. Paying it forward in this manner ensures the utmost in flexibility, guarantees sustainable change, and provides ongoing motivation for personal and professional growth. One of the best ways to learn a skill is to teach it to others, and being of service provides a sense of satisfaction and self-worth that few endeavors can match. Watch a portal video of how a Pasadena, Texas school district is experiencing the many benefits of paying it forward with Conscious Discipline.



Though built on a pay it forward model of communal learning, Conscious Discipline is uniquely self-directed. You may proceed through the book alone, with a colleague, in teams or as an entire staff. If you choose to proceed alone, you will likely wish to seek assistance from your spouse, children, siblings or friends for some of the role-playing activities. They will enjoy being part of your life and your growth. Our many workshops, Loving Guidance Associates and Certified Instructors are also here to support you every step of the way.



Consider attending one of our workshops where you can deepen your learning with like-minded individuals who are also on this journey. Each year I lead the Conscious Discipline Summer Institute, a weeklong event designed to help you experience, integrate and internalize Conscious Discipline. I hope to meet you there one day.

— Dr. Becky Bailey


The following resources will help you as you proceed:

- Log into the interactive web portal to deepen your learning through additional information, activities and videos organized by chapter. A numbered star symbol in the text margin indicates that a supplemental item can be found on the portal. You can pause reading to interact with the portal when you see the star symbol or you can access the portal at the end of each chapter. The interactive portal is organized by chapter and by the number appearing inside each star symbol. It also contains a list of helpful resources for each chapter. Visit [ConsciousDiscipline.com/bookstudy](http://ConsciousDiscipline.com/bookstudy) from your computer, tablet or smart phone to access the portal.
- Utilize the many free tools available at [ConsciousDiscipline.com](http://ConsciousDiscipline.com). Be certain to browse Shubert's School, where you can click to watch more than 300 videos of Conscious Discipline implemented worldwide from infancy through high school.
- Join with others implementing Conscious Discipline on Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube and other social media. Post questions and share your successes while benefitting from the experiences of thousands of other Conscious Discipline users.
  - [Facebook.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://www.facebook.com/ConsciousDiscipline)
  - [Pinterest.com/ConsciousD](https://www.pinterest.com/ConsciousD)
  - [Twitter.com/ConsciousD](https://twitter.com/ConsciousD) or [@ConsciousD](https://twitter.com/ConsciousD)
  - [YouTube.com/user/LovingGuidance](https://www.youtube.com/user/LovingGuidance)
- Consider purchasing the *Conscious Discipline Online e-Course* for additional support, especially if you are doing a school-wide book study. The Online e-Course breathes life into each chapter of the Conscious Discipline book as Dr. Becky Bailey presents each power and skill in her engaging and unique style.
- Also consider purchasing the *Creating the School Family* book for a more in depth understanding of the routines, rituals and classroom structures discussed in this book.
- Seeking to track your progress? Conscious Discipline provides a standardized rubric for self-evaluation. You'll not only see dramatic changes in your classroom, you'll be able to personally measure your results with these rubrics.  
[ConsciousDiscipline.com/free-resources](http://ConsciousDiscipline.com/free-resources)
- Seeking specific guides for implementing Conscious Discipline in your particular job, with your particular age group? Conscious Discipline provides downloadable, age-specific implementation guides for parents, educators, administrators and mental health professionals.  
[ConsciousDiscipline.com/free-resources](http://ConsciousDiscipline.com/free-resources)



Shubert's School  
[ConsciousDiscipline.com/Shubert](http://ConsciousDiscipline.com/Shubert)





As you progress through this book, you will feel deep changes. These changes manifest in your life both inside and outside of school. It is a wonderful, empowering feeling, however, change does not come without some anxiety. Old skills will die off, sometimes kicking and screaming as new skills replace them. Breathe deeply and continue your journey. As you work on one skill, run the other facets of your class as you have in the past. Each month you'll make small but significant changes. By the end of the year, you'll be reflecting on how to better structure your classroom for the upcoming year. Apply Conscious Discipline again the next year and enjoy continued growth. Due to the nature of transformational change, Conscious Discipline takes about three years to feel natural and integrated. Be patient with yourself and enjoy the process. You cannot have an unhappy ending to a happy journey!

**Year One:** Year one is an “add on” year. Utilize whatever discipline approach you have always used, but add on the new skills, routines, rituals and structures you feel confident in using. Conscious Discipline replaces external behavior charts with internal skills. You cannot pull down the chart or let go of the red light system until you have upgraded your skills.

**Year Two:** Year two is a “let go” year. As you progress in your skill set, you will find that external control and tangible reinforcements are no longer necessary. One teacher carried a clipboard around to give children checks for misbehavior. The second year with Conscious Discipline, she asked her class what would be helpful to them, and they all asked her to put down the clipboard. She emailed me with excitement and said, “I have been clipboard-free for two weeks and it is wonderful!” In year two, let old methods die a natural death as you find they are no longer needed.

**Year Three:** Year three is one of integration. As you become more comfortable with the language of Conscious Discipline and the School Family routines, rituals and structures, you will be free to discover the many ways Conscious Discipline can integrate into your existing curriculum. In year three, your academic and social curriculum starts to become seamless.

## 1-2-3, Let's Do It!

Our planet, our country, our schools and our children need us to be the change we want to see in the world. Our greatest fear is not that we are unworthy; our greatest fear is that we are worthy and powerful beyond measure. It is time to set aside your fears and become the best “you” possible. To reach your destination, you mustn't obsess about the outcome. Instead, enjoy the process of personal growth. There's a fable that illustrates this point:

A young boy journeyed far from home to study with a sage. The boy asked, “How long will it take before I am as wise as you?” The sage answered, “Five years.” The boy said, “That's a long time. What if I work twice as hard?” The teacher responded, “Ten years.” “That's crazy,” shouted the boy, “What if I study all day and all night?” Calmly the sage replied, “Then it would take you fifteen years.” “I don't understand,” said the boy, “Every time I promise to work harder to reach my goal, you say it will take longer to achieve. Why?” “The answer is simple,” replied the sage, “With one eye fixed on the goal, you have only one eye left to guide you on your journey.”

Enjoy this journey and relax into the process of change. Be willing to let your old beliefs go and let new ideas enter. Do the exercises. Make commitments to yourself and keep them. Practice using the skills. You can do it!

I wish you well!  
— Dr. Becky Bailey