

## CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE: THE SKILL OF COMPOSURE

Composure is the willingness to change our internal state from upset to calm. Composure is self-control in action. It is a prerequisite skill adults need before disciplining children. It requires us to be the person that we want others to become.

Composure comes from the power of perception which states: “No one can make me angry without my permission.” Whomever or whatever we put in charge of our feelings, we have placed in charge of ourselves.

### Composure strategies

1. This is your job description: “My job is to keep you safe. Your job is to help keep it that way (safe).”
2. Take back your power: Change “Don’t make me \_\_\_\_\_” language to “I’m going to \_\_\_\_\_” language.
3. Use calming techniques:

**Be a S.T.A.R.** (Stop, Take a Breath, And Relax)

**Say to yourself:** “I’m safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this.”

**Say to your child:** “You’re safe. Breathe with me. You can handle this.”

4. Create a safe place. This is a place for the child to go if he/she is feeling upset, angry, frustrated, sad, etc. It can be a large pillow or bean bag chair. Teach children calming strategies.

### Brain Smart Principles

1. The best exercise for the brain is exercise.
2. The brain is pattern-seeking and survival-oriented.
3. Connections on the outside, with other people, build connections on the inside.
  - o That kind of connection is key to all change. These connections are made with eye contact, touch, and presence (the mind is where the body is).
4. The brain functions optimally when the child feels safe.

**Remember:** *We can’t teach children skills we don’t have. We can’t teach skills we are not willing to do ourselves.*

## CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE: SKILL OF ENCOURAGEMENT

*"We are all in this together."*

Encouragement allows us to deeply connect with others, fully appreciating their unique qualities. Relationships are the motivation and cradle of all learning. These relationships are an integral part of the school family.

The Power of Unity reminds us we are all on this journey together. It teaches us that what we offer to others, we experience within ourselves.

It is important to give children hope that they can work it out. Children need hope to feel safe.

One last thought: Two major ingredients necessary to effectively encourage children:

1. **Notice your child instead of judging.**
2. **Connect your child's actions to enjoyment and satisfaction instead of tangible rewards.**

### Practice, Practice, Practice

- Notice how often you tend to judge your child.
- Consciously notice and encourage your child. Use: "You \_\_\_\_\_, so \_\_\_\_\_. That was \_\_\_\_\_." Example: "You put that book back on the shelf so we can find it to read it again. That was helpful."
- Praise your child for cooperating after being given a command (even if you have to repeat the command several times). Any kind of cooperation deserves celebration.
- Create rituals. Do you do anything now that your family counts on regularly?
- Create a responsibility or job for your child that will help contribute to the family.

## CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE: SKILL OF ASSERTIVENESS

*"We are all in this together."*

**Assertiveness** means setting limits respectfully. Healthy boundaries are essential for all relationships. Assertiveness is the medium through which we teach children respect.

**The Power of Attention** states that what you offer to others, you experience in yourself. If you focus on what someone is doing wrong, you will feel inadequate. If you focus on what they did well, you will feel at peace.

**Brain Smart Principle:** Telling children what to do aligns their physiology with their willpower. Focusing on what you don't want creates conflict between body chemistry and willpower and cuts down chances for success. You must tell your brain what to do.

**Using the "Tell and Show" method:**

- Give an assertive command. If the child complies, praise him!
- If the child does not comply:
  - Wait for the child's attention. Say, "There you are" when he/she makes eye contact. Repeat the command.
  - Say, "I'm going to show you what I want you to do." OR "I'm going to show you how to get started." OR "How can I help you get started?"

Practice, Practice, Practice

- Consciously pay attention to your focus. **Are you focusing on what you *do* want to happen, or what you *don't* want?**
- Pivot when you are upset. **Say to yourself, "Okay, I'm upset. If I'm upset, I am focusing on what I don't want. Do I want more of this in my life?" If the answer is no, breathe deeply (be a S.T.A.R.). Then pivot (physically or mentally). Tell your child specifically and firmly what to do. If a "why" is needed, relate the command to safety.**
- Breathe deeply and affirm the following principles three times a day. **"What I focus on, I get more of. When I'm upset, I always focus on what I don't want."**
- Go to the victim first in conflict situations.
- Consciously practice giving assertive commands.
- Practice using the "tell and show" method.
- Use "I" messages.

## CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE: SKILL OF CHOICES

*“The only person you can make change is yourself!”*

Choices build self-esteem and willpower. Fundamentally, we have two choices:

1. Accept what is and focus on solutions.
2. Resist what is and focus on the problems.

### **Five Steps in Delivering Two Positive Choices:**

1. Breathe deeply. Think about what you want the child to do. Make a conscious decision.
2. Tell the child, “You have a choice!” in a positive tone. Your positive attitude will lighten up the situation, especially if the child seems resistant. It will also help the child in perceiving the options as choices.
3. State the two choices you have created to achieve your goal. Say, “You may \_\_\_\_\_ or you may \_\_\_\_\_.” For older children: “Feel free to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.” What would be better for you?”
4. Complete the process by asking the child for a commitment. You might say, “What is your choice?” If the child hesitates, you may want to repeat the options.
5. Notice your child’s choice. Say: “You chose \_\_\_\_\_!” in an encouraging, loving voice. Be sure to make this final comment. It will bring crucial awareness to your child about his choice.

*(Taken from Conscious Discipline by Dr. Becky Bailey, p. 142.)*

### **Practice, Practice, Practice**

- ❖ Listen consciously to your inner and outer speech. Notice how often you say the words *get, have to, should, ought to, must* and *don’t make me*.
- ❖ Catch yourself saying, “How can I make the child \_\_\_\_\_?” and “How can I get the child to \_\_\_\_\_?” Change the question to: “How can I help the child be more likely to choose to \_\_\_\_\_?”
- ❖ Change “should” to “could.” Own your choices. There is no *should* or *ought to*, only choices.
- ❖ Practice allowing others to have their own thoughts and feelings. Resist the urge to try to make others happy or convince them you have all the answers.
- ❖ For one day, give up the attitude, “I don’t know and I don’t care.” It allows you to avoid making choices.
- ❖ Post picture rule cards and use them to help children learn rules and make choices.
- ❖ Use the skill of two positive choices.

## CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE: POWER OF LOVE (POSITIVE INTENT)

*See the best in others*

- What you offer to others you experience in yourself.
- The Power of Love allows you to access your frontal lobe.
- Children cannot behave differently until they are seen differently.

### Judging the intention of others

Attributing positive intent creates teaching moments by transforming resistance into cooperation. Children will oppose you. Their ongoing development indicates that they will violate the rules and limits at certain times and in certain situations. Start out by assuming that the child's motives are positive. Instead of assuming the child is bad or trying to make your life difficult, you can shift your perception. When we define children positively, we hold them in high esteem.

### Formula for Positive Intent

**Step 1:** State the child's positive intention, usually by completing the sentence, "You wanted \_\_\_\_\_."

*\*\*This builds security and cooperation.*

**Step 2:** State for the child the skill she/he used in obtaining what they wanted. Describe the action without judgments, usually by completing the sentence, "So you \_\_\_\_\_."

*\*\*This builds consciousness.*

**Step 3:** State for the child the skill s/he is missing. This would usually be, "You didn't know what else to do" or "You didn't know the words to use to \_\_\_\_\_."

*\*\*This builds a positive self-concept.*

**Step 4:** State the limit. "You may not \_\_\_\_\_. It hurts. (is hurtful, is not safe)"

*\*\*This sets the limit and shows the child how his/her actions impact others.*

**Step 5:** Teach the child another way of getting his/her needs/desires met. "When you want \_\_\_\_\_, say, '\_\_\_\_\_'. Say it now for practice."

*\*\*This teaches communication skills.*

## CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE: SKILL OF EMPATHY

*“The moment is as it is.”*

Empathy comes from the Power of Acceptance which states “the moment is as it is.” Empathy is the skill to use to cope with upset, temper tantrums, and fits, and to help children take ownership of their upset.

Resisting the moment as it is creates upset. Upset prevents you from giving empathy to others. The only way to process your upset is to reframe your perception of the situation. Upset is caused when the world as we perceive it does not go our way.

### DEALING WITH TEMPER TANTRUMS....

1. Offer empathy. Say what you see, hear, and feel.
2. Restrain the child, if necessary for safety reasons.
3. Say: “I will keep you safe. I will not let you hurt yourself or anyone else.”
4. Say: “I will be happy to let you go when your body is relaxed and you are breathing like me.”

### PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

- Feel your own feelings. **Focus on the feeling and release the thoughts.**
- Catch yourself. **Change “I shouldn’t feel \_\_\_\_” to “I feel \_\_\_\_ and all is well.”**
- Practice saying: **“The moment is as it is.” Relax, breathe, then solve the problem. *Do this every time you feel upset.***
- Reflect back what you see. **Focus on the child’s body. Pay close attention to facial expressions and posture. Be a mirror for the child. (“You seem \_\_\_\_.”)**
- Reflect back what you feel. **Focus on the child’s body language to discern the emotion. (When a child resorts to name calling, you reflect back the feeling under the hurtful act. Deal with the hurtful act later.)**
- Reflect back what you hear. **Listen closely to the child, then summarize the essence of his/her statements, paraphrasing in your own words what you think was communicated.**
- Remember: Understanding does not change the limits on behavior, it just helps children to become better able to accept them.

## CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE: SKILL OF CONSEQUENCES “Helping Children Learn from Their Mistakes”

*The Power of Intention States that Mistakes are Opportunities to Learn*

**“Consequences help children think about the effects of their choices, then draw conclusions about the wisdom of their actions. Children can learn to examine their own behavior and make changes until their true goals are reached. Children who learn to *reflect* on their choices and the outcomes that result become conscious of their own actions.”** (p. 228 Conscious Discipline by Dr. Becky Bailey.)

If we are focused on what we want children to feel and think, our goal is control. If our goal is to teach, we must focus on:

- What actually happened
- Aspects of the child we want to highlight
- What we want him/her to reflect upon
- What we want him/her to learn.

### Types of Consequences:

**Natural: consequences arise without any prearranged adult intervention.**

Our role: G.A.M.E.S

- G: Give Guidance and possible outcomes
- A: Allow the consequences
- M: Model self control
- E: offer Empathy
- S: new Strategies

**Imposed : consequences are prearranged. Adult create a set of behavioral expectations.**

### Steps in delivering imposed consequences:

- ✓ Present the child with the choice of skills to use or the rule.
- ✓ Present the child with the imposed consequence of choosing the old hurtful skill or breaking the rule.
- ✓ State why this consequence is being imposed and relate it to safety (young children) and/or logic (older children).
- ✓ Ask the child what she has heard and understood.
- ✓ Listen carefully to the child and clarify any miscommunications.
- ✓ If the child repeats the behavior, deliver the designated consequence with empathy and choices.

Concepts taken from the Conscious Discipline® program by Dr. Becky Bailey. [www.ConsciousDiscipline.com](http://www.ConsciousDiscipline.com) (800) 842-2846.