

# How to reach our most difficult children: The gifts of challenging, out-of-control children

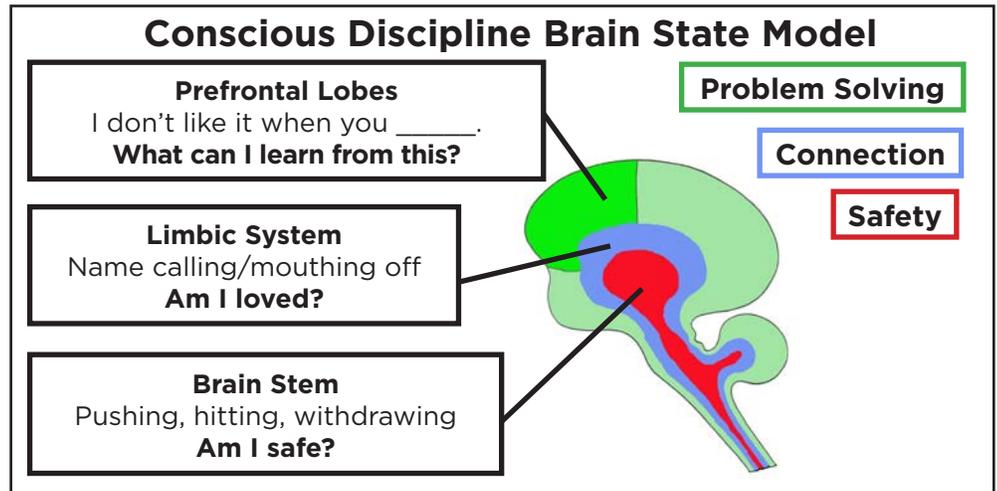
by Dr. Becky Bailey

## Conscious Discipline®

Conscious Discipline is an emotional intelligence program consisting of Brain Smart® strategies for responding rather than reacting to life events. Through responding, conflict moments are transformed into cooperative learning opportunities.

### Conscious Discipline is a research-based program proven to:

- Increase academic achievement
- Decrease problem behaviors
- Improve the quality of relationships: student to student, teacher to student, parent to child, teacher to parent, and coworker to coworker



### For most of us, upset is scary.

So what causes upset? The world does not go our way. All conflict starts with upset. We spend enormous energy avoiding conflict. To avoid conflict, we must avoid upset. To avoid upset, we have tried to:

- Happy up the child through permissiveness.
- Bribe the child through rewards.
- Punish the child who displays upset.

**The key to managing upset is consciously knowing what you are feeling when you are feeling it. This is the cornerstone of emotional intelligence.**

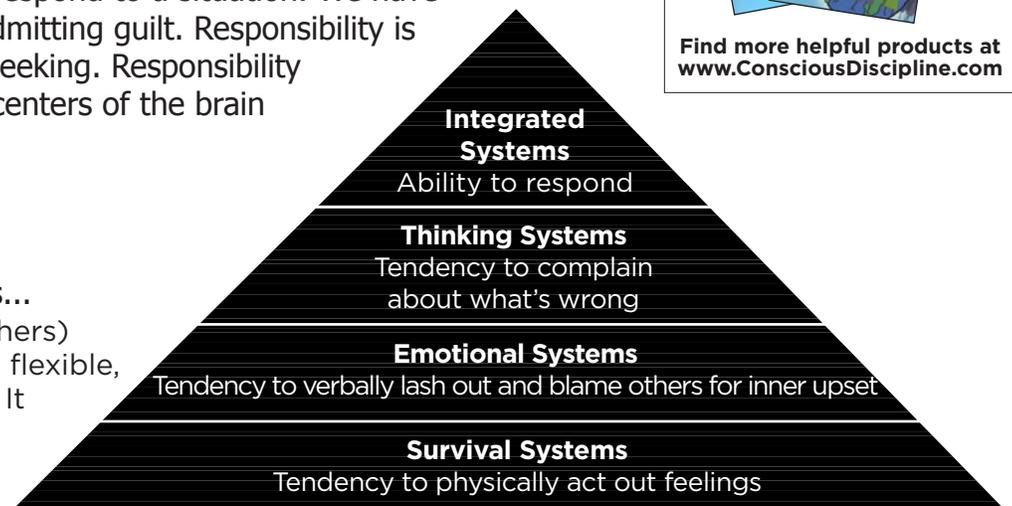
Responsibility is the ability to respond to a situation. We have confused responsibility with admitting guilt. Responsibility is not fault-finding but solution-seeking. Responsibility requires access to the higher centers of the brain (prefrontal lobes).

### Wiring the brain for personal responsibility

Research overwhelmingly says...

Attunement with children (others) creates the most stable, most flexible, most adaptive state possible. It creates the highest neural integration we can measure.

- Daniel Siegel, 2007



# State-Changing Skills

## 1. Upload and download calm: S.T.A.R., Smile, Take a deep breath, And Relax.

When two eyes meet, a wireless connection is created between the orbital frontal areas of the pre-frontal lobes. From this connection we literally download inner states into one another. The eyes contain nerve projections that lead directly to the key brain structures for empathy and matching emotions.

**Mirror neurons ensure that the moment someone sees an emotion on your face, they will at once sense that same feeling within themselves. - Daniel Stern, 2003**

## 2. Emotions are energy in motion. They begin unconsciously as vibrations in the body. Notice the body.

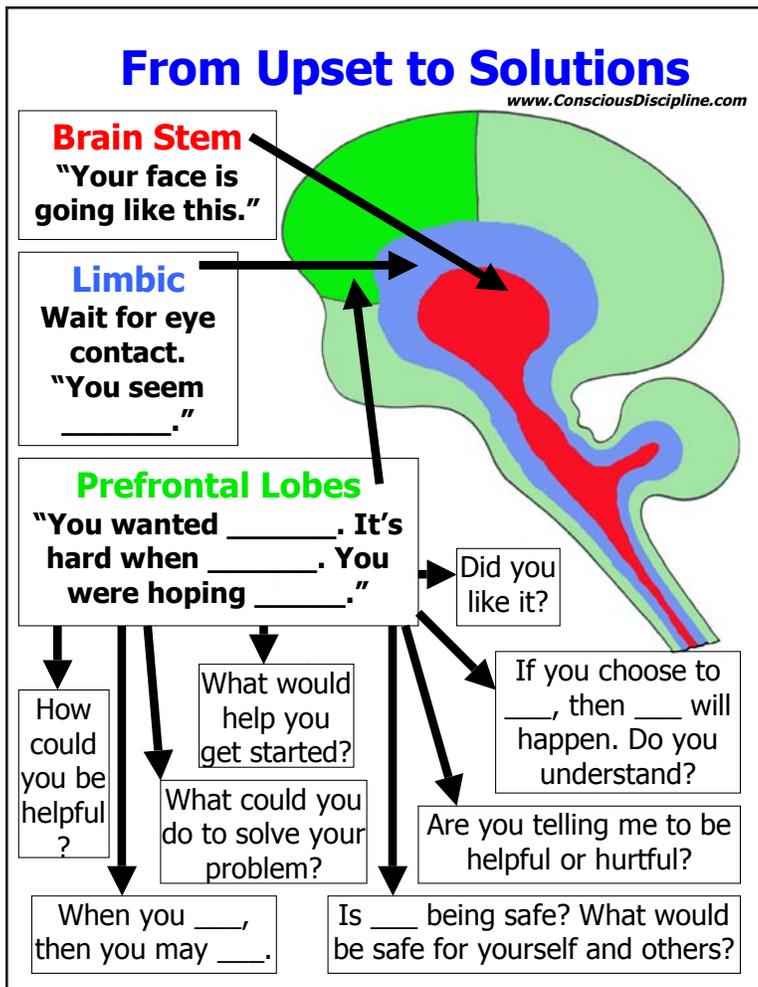
**“Your face is going like this. You arms are going like this.”**

Demonstrate the child’s actions to make contact and raise awareness.

**“You seem \_\_\_\_\_.”** Label the emotion. As emotions move up into awareness they can be named and ultimately tamed or managed.

**“You wanted or you were hoping \_\_\_\_\_.”** Once conscious, then consciously help the child shift from what they don’t want to what they do want to begin the problem solving process. In this final shift the brain becomes an integrated unit with one goal.

## 3. Solve the problem.



### Safe Place

The Safe Place provides an opportunity for children to remove themselves from the group in order to become calm, regain composure and maintain control when upset, angry or frustrated. Children come to the Safe Place in order to be helpful and not hurtful to themselves and others. It is the keystone to your anger management curriculum.

### Safe Place set up:

- Space:** A corner or other area in the classroom or home that is away from distractions (or portable Safe Place mat).
- Visuals:** Label the center and have pictorial reminders of relaxation techniques. (*Go to [www.ConsciousDiscipline.com](http://www.ConsciousDiscipline.com) and look under “Free Stuff” to download the breathing icons.*)
- Materials:** Add calming items that are age appropriate and child specific.
- Tape recorder with recording of deployed

parent saying "You're safe. Keep breathing. You can handle this. I love you."

- Blanket or beach towel
- Wave bottle
- Hard plastic toys
- Squeeze balls
- Stuffed animals
- Note pad and pencil

### Routines

**M.A.P.** - **M**odel it, **A**dd visuals and **P**ractice your routines.

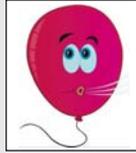
Make books for your family. Lend your prefrontal lobes.



### How to:

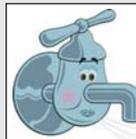
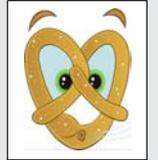
**S.T.A.R.** - **S**mile, **T**ake a deep breath **A**nd **R**elax.

Encourage belly breathing where the tummy goes out when the air goes in, and in when the air goes out. Also help children learn to exhale slower than they inhale.



**Balloon** - Place your hands on top of your head and interlace your fingers. Breathe in through your nose as you raise your arms, inflating an imaginary balloon. Release the air in the balloon by pursing your lips, exhaling slowly, lowering your arms and making a "pbbpbbpbb" sound.

**Pretzel** - Standing up, cross your ankles. Now cross your right wrist over left, turn your hands so your thumbs are facing the floor, put palms together and interlace fingers. Bend your elbows out and gently turn your hands down and toward your body until they rest on the center of your chest. Put your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Relax and breathe. For young children you can modify the pose and help them be successful by singing the following song to tune of "I'm a little teapot." "I can be a pretzel. Arms and legs out." (Sit on floor, extend arms & legs) "Cross them over and watch me pout." (Cross arms & cross legs) "When I feel all angry, a pretzel I'll be." (Breathe) "Squeeze together 123." (Pull crossed arms & legs up tightly to the body)



**Drain** - Extend arms out, pretending your arms are faucets. Tighten arm, shoulder, and face muscles. Exhale slowly making a "ssshhh" sound and release all your muscles, draining out the stress.

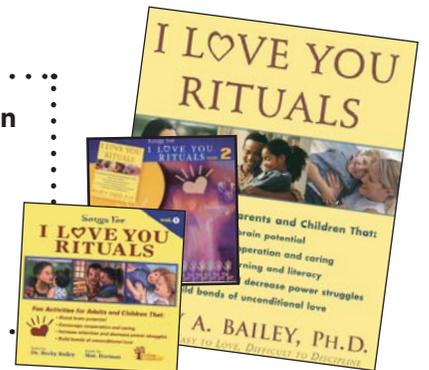
### Suggested I Love You Rituals

#### Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
What a wonderful child you are!  
With bright eyes and nice round cheeks,  
Talented person from head to feet.  
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
What a wonderful child you are!

#### Round and Round the Garden

Round and round the garden  
Goes the teddy bear.  
One step, two step  
Tickle under there.



### The Story Hand

Tell the child, "It's story time." Take his/her hand. Start with the pinky finger, giving it a deep massage and saying, "This little finger went to school today." Go to the next finger and continue the same process of offering a deep finger massage and telling a story of the child's day. "This little finger played with her friend, Emily." Continue with story using highlights from the child's day for each finger until you get to his thumb. The thumb represents something that might be creating anxiety. For example, "I wonder who will keep me safe when Mom and Dad go to work?" Tuck the thumb into the palm of the child's hand and cover that concern with the child's other fingers. Then wrap your hands securely around the child's. With a firm touch and a reassuring voice say, "Ms. Kelly in the yellow room will keep you safe until your Mom comes back." Substitute other reassuring words as necessary, depending on the child's anxieties and situation.

