

Conscious Discipline by Becky Bailey

Chapter 4 Summary

SKILL OF DISCIPLINE # 1: COMPOSURE

"Being the person you want others to become"
"No one can make you angry without your permission"

- **Power:** Perception
- **Becoming Brain Smart:** Composure give you access to the higher centers of your brain
- **Skill:** S.T.A.R.: "I'm safe, Keep breathing. I can handle this."
- Notice and download: "Your face is going like this (demonstrate)."
- **School Family Structure:** Brain Smart Start, Safekeeper Ritual, Friends and Family Board, Safe Place

Principle #1: Composure is self-regulation in action. It is the prerequisite skill adults need before disciplining children. (p. 86)

- We have within us the capacity to be stressed out and overreact, but also the capacity to counter that stress and stay calm.
- Maintaining our composure is the difference between seeing a child and their behavior as "bad" and in need of punishment and seeing a child as needing help with their social skills and being willing to teach.
- The Power of Perception reminds us that Composure is a choice that we make, regardless of outside events.

Principle #2: No one can make you angry without your permission. (p. 87)

- Healthy, secure relationships require us to control our upset and take back our power.
- We must move from, "Look what you made me do," "Don't make me send you to time out," "Look how you made her feel." These statements imply that others have power over us and we are not responsible for our own actions. We teach this to children when we use statements like this.

Principle #3: Whomever you have placed in charge of your feelings, you have place in charge of you. (p. 87)

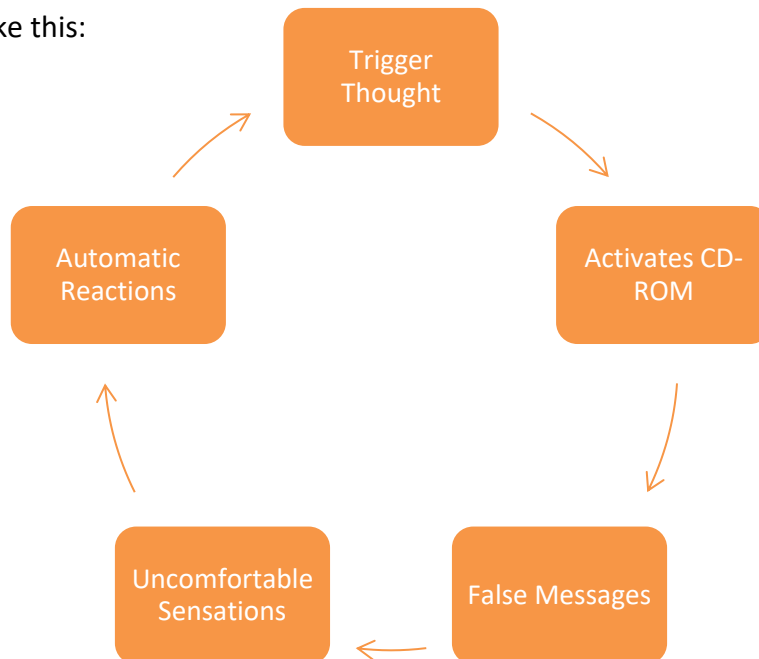
- To be in control of ourselves means we must take responsibility for our own feelings and actions and stop blaming them on others.
 - It is your perception of an experience that creates your feelings about it, not the event itself.
- We all see the world, not as it is, but through a lens of judgement about how we think the world should work.
 - We get upset when others fail to meet our conscious or unconscious expectations, when the world doesn't go the way we think it should.
- To maintain our composure, and foster healthy relationships, we must recognize that events and people trigger our upset but aren't the cause of our upset.

Principle #4: High Expectations, High Grace (p. 88)

- Most of us were brought up around the concept that mistakes were to be regretted or even punished.
 - Our inner language reflects this – “What was I thinking? I know better than that!”
- In order to learn from our mistakes, we must access our executive state by actively calming when we make a mistake.
- Conscious Discipline requires us to make significant changes in our belief, perceptions, and behaviors. It is impossible to make these changes without mistakes, and without giving ourselves the grace to learn from them.

Principle #5: It's not other people or situations that make me angry, they just trigger me. (p. 89)

- Anger = stress + trigger
 - Think of stress as the gasoline and the trigger as the match.
- A Trigger is anything that activates our perception of threat (physical or emotional).
 - Triggers are “false messages” programmed into our “CD-ROM” in our childhood by events that we still have not healed from.
 - They make all events seem bigger than they are – children’s behavior seems deliberate, and we want to judge others and deliver punishment.
 - Triggers
- We can heal from these events, soothe our triggers, and consciously choose different thoughts.
 - Breathing is one way to do this.
- The cycle looks like this:

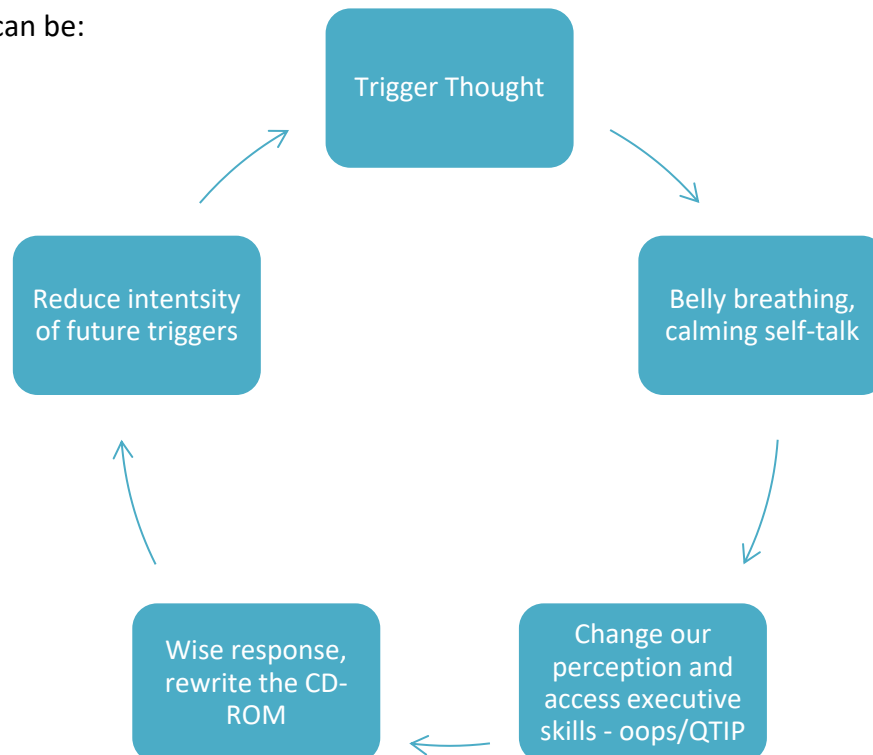


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- This cycle leaves us feeling helpless and powerless to deal with our current situation as well as preventing us from seeing the underlying causes of our behavior.
 - Helplessness and powerlessness lead to blame.
 - Blame is a form of attack.

- It prevents safety in our lives and in our classrooms because it creates danger every time we try to make someone else responsible for our upset.
- 3 main types of trigger thoughts:
 - Assumed Intent – “He’s doing that on purpose!”
 - Magnification – “If he keeps doing this _____ will happen!” or just thinking something is worse than it actually is.
 - Labeling – “He’s so aggressive and mean!”
- Check out the “Activity for Determining Your Triggers” on page. 91
- The opposite of stress is composure. We can allow stress to accumulate, ignore the triggers, and act out our anger on others, or we can manage our stress.
 - Guilt vs. Change

Principle #6: Changing Trigger Thoughts to Calming Thoughts (p. 92)

- Calming Self-Talk
 - “I’m safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this.”
 - I’m safe = turns off the danger alarms in the brain
 - Keep breathing = actually take 3 deep breaths
 - I can handle this = affirms we are capable.
- Limiting Our Trigger Thoughts
 - Realizing the negative chatter in our head is false and based on old experiences, not the now.
 - Oops – remembering it’s okay to be triggered and that you are a work in progress, and that’s beautiful.
 - Q.T.I.P. = Quit Taking It Personally. Other people’s actions are not a reflection of our own self-worth. They are a reflection of that person’s inner state.
- The new cycle can be:



- Check out “Activity to Remove Your Buttons Children Push” on page 94.

Principle #7: Recognizing children's triggers and helping them manage them goes much further in regulating behavior than seeing behaviors as a flaw in a child. (p. 95)

- Recognizing environmental triggers for children is an important first step:
 - Lack of predictability
 - Constant focus on behaviors that aren't allowed
 - Seating arrangements and class organization
 - Pace of instructions
 - Transitions
 - Lack of choice
 - Lack of student interest
 - Etc.
- Recognizing interpersonal/relationship-based triggers for children is next:
 - Identify your state, compose yourself to access executive skills, identify children's state, choose skills that will support that child and move them to an executive state.
 - Choice 1 – child is acting out of the emotional state (asking, "Am I loved?"), teacher sends him out of the classroom (abandonment, "No you're not loved, you don't belong here"), child throws chair on the way out of the room.
 - Choice 2 – child is acting out of the emotional state ("Am I loved?"), teacher actively calms to maintain composure, notices child is in emotional state, takes them to the Safe Place to breathe and connect, child is able to return to the group and be successful.
 - Remember that a child who is triggered is like a vacuum that tries to pull us and the other children into the same state. We must consciously choose to upshift our state through composure, or we will end up part of the problem instead of part of the solution.
- A person's temperament comes into play as well:
 - Temperament is a pattern of behavior that is consistent over time.
 - Children with difficult temperaments are easily triggered and have a difficult time composing themselves.
 - Some may be born with a more sensitive temperament, some born into stressful environments, some both.
 - Temperament is composed of 9 traits. It is important to note that if a person lives in survival, emotional, or executive state for very long, it can turn from a state into a trait. The 9 traits are:

Trait	Description (on an average basis)	At a difficult level it looks like:
Activity Level	How active or restless is the child?	Very active, restless, fidgety, rarely slows down, hates to be confined
Quality of Mood	What is the child's basic disposition? Positive and happy? Negative and fussy?	Often cranky or serious and seems to get little pleasure from life.
Approach/Withdrawal	How does the child respond to new experiences (approach or withdraw)?	Shy and clingy, refusing to engage in new situations, or engages without regard for safety
Rhythmicity	How regular are the child's eating, sleeping, bowel habits, etc.?	Hungry and/or tired at unpredictable times setting up conflict around meal and bedtimes
Adaptability	How does the child adapt to transition and change?	Anxious and resistant to change, inflexible, very particular
Sensory Threshold	How does the child react to external stimuli? Are they easily overstimulated?	Easily bothered by lights, sounds, textures, smells, etc.
Intensity of Reaction	How intense/loud is the child's reaction to positive or negative stimuli?	Loud and forceful with all emotions
Distractibility	How distracted is child, especially when upset? Can they pay attention?	Trouble concentrating and paying attention, often daydreams and forgets instructions
Persistence	How long can the child remain focused on one thing? When happily engaged, can they stay that way for a long time? When unhappy to they persist to get their needs met?	Difficulty getting their attention away from what they want.

Principle #8: Becoming Brain Smart (p. 96)

- The autonomic nervous system (lower brain stem) has 2 basic subsystems:
 - Sympathetic – activates the fight, flight, and freeze responses
 - Parasympathetic – fosters relaxation response
- Optimally, both subsystems are in balance, and learning can occur. Body resources move to emotional and survival systems and away from executive. The person is constantly searching for safety, perceiving threats where there are none. No learning can occur. Unbalance may look like:
 - Over-aroused – constant movement, aggression, “Stressed out”
 - Under-aroused – slow to react, rarely engages, hiding in withdrawal, “Burned out”
- We often don't see these behaviors as unbalance, but as a person's inborn traits, but unbalance occurs through conditioning.
 - How have the adults in this person's life responded to their needs for safety and connection?

Principle #9: Do as I say AND as I do (p. 99)

- Adults who have learned the skill of composure can:
 - Focus on what they want the child to accomplish
 - Utilize connection instead of control as the motivation to behave
 - Celebrate the child's successes and choices
 - See situations from the child's perspective as well as their own.
 - Teach the child how to communicate frustrations and wishes in an acceptable manner
 - Hold the child accountable to those teachings
- Composure requires the following (in children and adults):
 - Identifying trigger thoughts and situations
 - We must change our perception of our triggers if we are ever to change the response
 - Our response can either bring us closer to the executive state and more connected to others or the survival state and more separate.
 - Active calming through uploading and downloading calm
 - Uploading calm for ourselves (children can't be in a higher state than we are)
 - In survival state – be a S.T.A.R. by taking 3 deep belly breaths
 - In emotional state – “I'm safe, keep breathing. I can handle this.”
 - In executive state – Wish well, reframe as an Oops, Q.T.I.P, problem solve.
 - Downloading calm to others
 - Emotions are contagious – mirror neurons play a role in this.
 - We can either catch the child's upset, or they can catch our calmness.
 - Noticing to download
 - Noticing invites connection through consciousness and eye contact. Children resist eye contact in the survival state, noticing can help achieve eye contact.
 - Noticing is simply stating just what you see without judgment (“Your hands are going like this, your face is going like this.)
 - Once the child looks at you (usually from curiosity), you can help them calm.
 - If the child doesn't make eye contact, breath and wish well
 - Steps to download calm
 - Upload calm into your body
 - Mirror and notice the child's body language
 - When the child make's eye contact, take a S.T.A.R. breath
 - Offer the child choices or provide specific instructions
 - Reducing and managing stress
 - Belly breathing is the key to reducing stress
 - Shallow breathing can kick on our flight-fight-freeze response due to less oxygen being available
 - Deep breathing tells the brain that you are safe
 - It is important to teach breathing activities during times of calm, so they are available during times of stress.

Principle #10: Structures that support composure (p. 106)

- Routine: Brain Smart Start
 - Great to start a class or meeting, and also important to use abbreviated or in pieces throughout the day for transitions.
 - 4 components to a BSS
 - Activity to Unite
 - Activity to Disengage the Stress
 - Activity to Connect
 - Activity to Commit
- Ritual: Safekeeper Job and Ritual
 - Our job is not to control others behavior, it is to keep the classroom/center safe so everyone can learn. It is the teachers'/students' job to help keep it safe.
 - A Safekeeper must choose to:
 - Be a S.T.A.R. instead of losing it
 - Become aware of trigger thoughts and events
 - Wish children well and notice instead of judge
 - Use the language of safety instead of the language of fear
 - See conflict as an opportunity to teach
- Structure: Safe Place Self-Regulation Learning Center
 - The Safe Place is where children practice the 5 steps of self-regulation
 - I Am
 - I Calm
 - I Feel
 - I Choose
 - I Solve
- Structure: Friends and Family Board
 - Supports composure by reminding us of everyone who keeps us safe.