

	<b>Survival State</b>	<b>Emotional State</b>	<b>Executive State</b>
<b>Belief</b>	I am under attack. I am not safe.	I am not loved/valued/ respected/appreciated.	I am safe enough/loved enough/capable enough. I am enough.
<b>Emotions</b>	Anxiety, anger, fear, terror, hopelessness, depression	Sadness, hurt, frustration, irritation, disappointment, guilt, helpless	Calm, peaceful, coherent, grateful, content, relaxed, attentive, present, alert, confident, competent
<b>Behaviors</b>	Physical aggression, screaming, withdrawal, run, surrender, disassociate	Social aggression, name calling, victim, martyr, guilt, manipulation	Goal directed, problem- solving, solution oriented, caring and motivated, responsible
<b>Awareness</b>	Unconscious	Unconscious	Conscious
<b>Free Will</b>	Physically reactive, instinctual DNA program, stimulus- reaction	Verbally reactive, preprogrammed CD- Rom, stimulus-reaction	Conscious choice of response Stimulus-pause-response
<b>Questions</b>	Am I safe?	Am I loved?	What can I learn from this?
<b>Need</b>	Safety	Connection	Problem-solving in social settings
<b>Discipline Style</b>	Threats, spanking, fear me	Egoic, bribes, manipulation, rewards and punishments, guilt, withdrawal of love, reasoning, please me	Cultural-relational based intrinsic motivation model, e.g. Conscious Discipline
<b>Regulation</b>	Arousal, clacker	Emotions	Behavior, thoughts, emotions, arousal

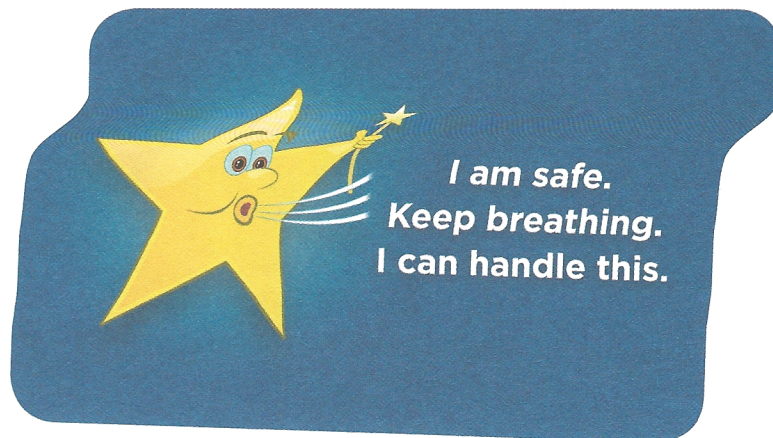
3. **Assisting the child in achieving an executive state for optimal learning.** Safety calms the survival state, connection soothes the emotional state and problem-solving in social settings maximizes the executive state. As you proceed through this book, each chapter provides specific tools and interventions to facilitate the move from a lower to a higher brain state. Each chapter also contains a Brain Smart section that deepens your understanding of the relationship between our brains and behavior. Once we have assisted the child in achieving an optimal state for learning, we are ready for a fourth endeavor: Teaching a new skill.

***Much like adults scaffold emerging executive skills for children, Conscious Discipline scaffolds the skills adults need to transform their own skill set.***

4. **Addressing the behavior by teaching the new skill.** The fourth and final stage of transforming behavior is teaching a new skill. You will accomplish this by scaffolding children's emerging executive skills using the tools, interventions and structures found throughout this book. Successful teaching can only happen once you have completed the first three steps of the process.

Development proceeds from the bottom up. How we manage one developmental level impacts the success of the next. If we think of a building, safety is the basement/foundation, connection is the ground floor and problem-solving is the top floor. When we start with a strong foundation of safety and build each floor securely upon the next, both children and adults gain access to their brilliance and are able to make the wisest choices possible in a situation. When our foundations and/or ground floors are insecure or damaged, it behooves us all (homes, schools and communities) to do the repair work needed to secure our buildings.

Now that we have a substantial understanding of the brain as it relates to social-emotional learning, we will hone in on shifting from traditional role-based, fear-based discipline models to creating the inclusive, compassionate school climate we call a "School Family." As we prepare to delve into the School Family chapter, let's take a deep breath together and say, "I'm safe. I am in charge of the process of change. How much or how little I choose to change is my decision. I will continue reading with an open mind and open heart, and embrace this journey to the best of my ability."



Now, let's take a few moments to review our original goals for learning about the Brain State Model: 1. Remain in an executive state ourselves while interacting with children, 2. Identify the internal state a child is most likely experiencing, 3. Address the internal state by assisting the child in achieving an optimal state for learning new skills and 4. Address the behavior by teaching a new skill.

- 1. Remaining in an executive state ourselves.** Our perception will shift as our internal state changes. If we feel frustrated and are experiencing an emotional state, we tend to see the child as mean or rude instead of a child who is missing a skill. From this viewpoint, we cannot access the skills we need to teach rather than punish. If we can remain relaxed and alert without judgment, we begin to see that the child does not possess or cannot access the skill needed, regardless of his intention. When we change our state, we change our perception, which changes our intent, which changes our response to the child. One of the principles of Conscious Discipline is adults must discipline themselves first and children second. This means we must change our internal state from upset to calm before attempting to help children change theirs.
- 2. Identifying the child's internal state.** Once we have calmed ourselves, it is imperative that we identify the brain state the child is most likely experiencing. Use the chart below to review.

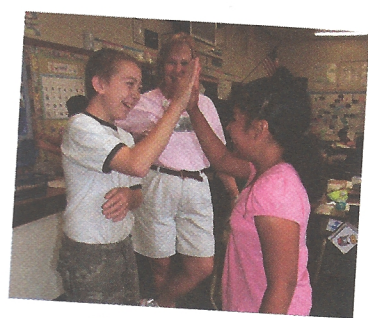
State	Behaviors (Most Likely)
Survival state skills tend to be physical	Fight by hitting, pushing, kicking, spitting, screaming; Flight by running, hiding, withdrawing; Freezing by surrendering, crying, giving in, giving up
Emotional state skills tend to be verbal	Blaming, back-talking, name-calling, social exclusion, social aggression, guilt, attention-seeking, clinging, neediness
Executive state skills	Wise advocate, problem-solving, empathy, win-win solutions



*Survival State*



*Emotional State*



*Executive State*

# Safety, Connection and Problem-Solving: Building Brain Smart Classrooms and Schools

Children come to school asking, "Am I safe," "Am I loved," or, "What can I learn." Effective schools create cultures that answer the first two questions in the affirmative, and then provide the academic and social-emotional skills necessary for optimal growth. The graphic below summarizes helpful skills Conscious Discipline uses with each brain state.

## Survival State: Safety

Combined Tools	Characteristics	Conscious Discipline Skills
<b>N</b> = Noticing <b>A</b> = Assertiveness (adults) <b>R</b> = Routines with pictures <b>C</b> = Composure <b>S</b> = Safe Place and Safekeeper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No eye contact</li> <li>Resistance to questions, touch and understanding</li> <li>Tense face/body</li> <li>Feels cornered and powerless</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Composure: S.T.A.R., upload, breathe with me</li> <li>Noticing: Your arm is going like this</li> <li>Language of safety: You are safe</li> <li>Assertiveness: Voice of no doubt</li> </ul>

## Emotional State: Connection

Combined Tools	Characteristics	Conscious Discipline Skills
<b>R</b> = Rituals <b>E</b> = Encouragement <b>J</b> = Jobs <b>E</b> = Empathy <b>C</b> = Choices <b>T</b> = The School Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Body relaxes</li> <li>Eye contact and touch are helpful</li> <li>Seeking connection, understanding and/or power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouragement: You can do it</li> <li>Choices: You have a choice</li> <li>Empathy: You seem ___</li> </ul>

## Executive State: Problem-Solving

Combined Tools	Characteristics	Conscious Discipline Skills
<b>S</b> = Solutions (class meetings) <b>P</b> = Positive Intent <b>A</b> = Academic Integration <b>C</b> = Consequences <b>E</b> = Executive Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tend to focus on what you don't want first</li> <li>Willing and ready to learn a new skill</li> <li>Able to reflect and plan</li> <li>Sees impact on others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive intent: You wanted ___ or you were hoping ___</li> <li>Natural Consequences: Did you like it?</li> <li>Logical Consequences: You have a choice! You can choose to (<u>helpful skill</u>) and (<u>positive consequence</u>) or (<u>hurtful skill</u>) and (<u>negative consequence</u>).</li> <li>Problem-solving: P.E.A.C.E., class meetings</li> </ul>

In order to make this shift from attempting to control children's behaviors to helping them consciously choose to change, we must lend our prefrontal lobes to our children. We do this by using the seven skills in this book (composure, encouragement, assertiveness, choices, positive intent, empathy and consequences), and structuring the environment in a way that helps children internalize these skills for the future. Lending our prefrontal lobes is as easy as A, B, C:

Accessing our executive state through active calming.

Being willing to perceive children's misbehavior as a communication or call for help.

Coaching new skills as necessary.

There are two huge challenges to this plan that must be addressed:

1. **The prefrontal lobe goes offline when we become stressed, and we cannot lend skills we don't have access to.** If we remain in a state of chronic stress and refuse to consciously calm ourselves and change our perceptions, we cannot be present with our children. It is easier to write a child's name on the board or give out treats from the treasure box than it is to manage our stress so we can lend children our prefrontal lobes. At some point (and I believe that point has arrived), we must consciously say, "There is a better way and I want to be part of it!"
2. **We can't lend prefrontal lobe skills to children if they are weak suits of ours, nor can we do it from a distance.** Even when we're not stressed, some of our executive skills are more developed than others. I am always amazed at teacher/parent conferences. The parent conference for a child who has attention issues often results in twenty minutes of rerouting the conversation back toward the goal. The children who can't seem to do their homework on time often have parents who forget the meeting or show up late. Every person is born with a certain set of genetic predispositions. These tendencies can be compounded or alleviated by caregivers' ability to teach and coach us through the missing skills. Parents are often deficient in the same skills as their children and therefore struggle to scaffold those skills for them. On your portal, you can view a powerful video in which a former gang leader's grandmother shares how she did her best to help him and how his Conscious Discipline-trained teacher was able to lend her prefrontal lobe skills to scaffold his success.

3

We cannot lend our prefrontal lobes from a distance or when we lack the skills children need help with. Imagine your neighbor needs to borrow a wrench so she can stop a leaky faucet. Try to lend her your wrench without walking over and delivering it. How helpful is that wrench? Now imagine you are standing next to her, but neither of you know how to use a wrench. How helpful is your presence? Each of us has a unique set of strengths and weaknesses when it comes to executive skills. Conscious Discipline purposefully scaffolds these skills with classroom structures. This empowers adults to strengthen our weak suits while helping children develop their own emerging skills.

act as external prefrontal lobes to support the emerging skills. Moving a child's clip, changing the color of her card from green to red, offering trips to a treasure box and giving out referrals do not help develop the higher centers of a child's brain. Yet, often teachers and administrators insist these behavioral systems work. The children sit still and the classroom appears orderly. I would offer the following food for thought in regard to simple behavioral systems based on rewards and punishments like those mentioned above:

- These systems **do** temporarily work for children who come to school already knowing they are safe and loved. These children will comply with the rules; however, these systems hinder their executive skill development. We are trading these children's long-term ability to set and achieve goals for short-term compliance and obedience.
- These systems **do not** work for children who come to school without the security of feeling safe or loved. These children will lose whatever privilege is at stake and will fail to earn whatever privilege there is to earn. They become increasingly discouraged as their years in school progress. Their view of themselves becomes one of incompetence, their view of the world becomes one of increasing injustice, and their view of their future becomes distorted into self-sabotage or revenge against society.
- These external control systems have been shown to reduce discipline referrals, however, they also increase the negativity of the school culture. Negative school cultures impede learning, foster bullying, increase dropout rates and increase teacher turnover (Hoffman, 2008).

## The Developmental Question, "What Can I Learn?"

The executive state leaves us receptive to learning. When we are in an executive state, we are metaphorically asking, "What can I learn from this encounter, this lesson or this problem?"

Answering "Am I safe" and "Am I loved" in the affirmative creates willingness. Learning new social-emotional skills is futile without the willingness to change existing behaviors. Our most difficult children are not just missing skills, they are unwilling to learn new ones due to their self-preservation goals. Children in an executive state are more willing to let go of primitive skills, impulsivity and defensive strategies in favor of learning advanced new skills. They are willing to use words instead of hit, to ask for help instead of quietly fail and to learn how to calm down instead of throw fits. They just require us to scaffold their emerging executive skills by being their teachers, coaches and mentors.

Conscious Discipline asks teachers to shift from the traditional task of making children behave to an enlightened vision of helping children be successful. Instead of asking ourselves, "What will make/get this child \_\_\_\_\_?" we must ask the new question, "What will help this child more likely be successful at \_\_\_\_\_?" Then we can look at the list of executive skills and see where the child needs scaffolding. By approaching classroom management in this fashion, we sustain a positive school climate called the School Family, develop higher order thinking skills, and encourage children to learn how to set and achieve their own goals.

**Instead of asking, "What will make/get this child to \_\_\_\_\_?"  
we must ask the new question, "What will help this child  
more likely be successful at \_\_\_\_\_?"**

their prefrontal lobes as needed to scaffold her development until her prefrontal lobes have matured enough to reliably accomplish the tasks independently.

2 Developmental neuroimaging shows that the prefrontal cortex develops rapidly in early childhood, with important changes occurring at particular ages (at 12 months, between 3 and 6 years, and around puberty) and then continues to develop into adulthood (Zelezko, 2002). A chart on the portal shows the approximate times when different executive skills begin their developmental journey.

The skill of impulse control comes online around five months old, meaning our response at this age can begin to enhance its development. Consider the situations below. Which one scaffolds the development of impulse control?

**Situation 1:** Baby Tyra is hungry. She begins to cry. Her mother takes a few slow breaths to calm herself and responds soothingly, “I hear you, sweetie. I’m making your bottle now. It is coming very soon.” Breathing deeply, she continues, “Your face is going like this (she mirrors Tyra’s face). Your body is saying, ‘Hurry up, Mom, I’m hungry.’” Mom describes what she’s doing out loud as she prepares the bottle, “The milk is warm now! I’m pouring it in. It’s almost ready. You can handle this. Look at you waiting! Breathe with me (Mom takes a deep breath). Here it comes!” Mom gives Tyra her bottle and says, “You did it! You waited until Mommy got the bottle ready.”

**Situation 2:** Shelley is hungry. She begins to cry. Her mother is anxiously working to make a bottle. “Shhshhshh,” she says, continuing to work as fast as possible. As Shelley cries harder, Mom says, “Shelley, please, I’m going as fast as I can. Ssshhh!”

The first interaction scaffolds impulse control development by helping the baby make tiny bits of progress toward delaying gratification. The second interaction inhibits executive skill development and derails the mother-child relationship. Responsive, attuned relationships fulfill the need for safety and connection, making them key for executive skill development.

The power of scaffolding the prefrontal lobes is evident all around us. Each holiday season, our office adopts a local family in an effort to experience our oneness and give of our goodness. We provide groceries and gifts, and enjoy a small celebration with the family. This tradition includes responsibilities for the family like writing letters to Santa so we know what gifts to purchase for the children, a visit with an office member, setting a time for the celebration and securing transportation to the celebration. This seems pretty straightforward to those of us who possess reliable access to our “A TOP WIFE Makes Good TEa” skills, but it can be daunting for a family living in a prolonged survival state. To help them be successful, an office member must lend his or her prefrontal lobes to the family by structuring everything from basic communication to arranging transportation to the celebration. One year, even with our scaffolding, the family was so overwhelmed by meeting the responsibilities that they declined our help two weeks into the endeavor. It’s not that they didn’t want or appreciate our efforts; they simply lacked the prefrontal lobe skills necessary to meet this handful of expectations, and we lacked the ability to scaffold them sufficiently. The added stress of the situation prompted the family to decline our efforts. This served as a powerful reminder to the office of the power of the executive skills!

Lending our prefrontal lobes does not mean doing the work for someone. It means prompting, helping and structuring their executive skills in a way that empowers them to do it for themselves. Teachers lending their prefrontal lobes and structuring the environment to actively support emerging skills are the only ways to ensure children will experience social, emotional and academic success. In Conscious Discipline, we use classroom structures that

If you look closely, you will discover a connection between the development of executive skills and what is typically referred to as "discipline problems." Most discipline problems are simply an indication of missing and/or underdeveloped executive skills.

Think of all the time you spend helping children do the following tasks:

**Attention:** "Leo, it's time to clean up." "Tyler, put down the pencils and focus on your math." "Gianna, it is Brandon's turn to talk. Let's give him our full attention." "Leo, it is time to clean up. Stop playing with the toy cars and start putting them away. Leo! What did I tell you? Do you want to play with the toy cars tomorrow? Then put them away NOW!"

**Time Management:** "Boys and girls, you have five more minutes before clean up time." "Jonathan, you have only two more minutes to finish your math. I am not going to tell you again." "It is time for recess; you need to have finished cleaning up and be sitting on the carpet. If the class is not ready by the time I count to three, then we will just have to miss recess! 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77-78-79-80-81-82-83-84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91-92-93-94-95-96-97-98-99-100-101-102-103-104-105-106-107-108-109-110-111-112-113-114-115-116-117-118-119-120-121-122-123-124-125-126-127-128-129-130-131-132-133-134-135-136-137-138-139-140-141-142-143-144-145-146-147-148-149-150-151-152-153-154-155-156-157-158-159-160-161-162-163-164-165-166-167-168-169-170-171-172-173-174-175-176-177-178-179-180-181-182-183-184-185-186-187-188-189-190-191-192-193-194-195-196-197-198-199-200-201-202-203-204-205-206-207-208-209-210-211-212-213-214-215-216-217-218-219-220-221-222-223-224-225-226-227-228-229-230-231-232-233-234-235-236-237-238-239-240-241-242-243-244-245-246-247-248-249-250-251-252-253-254-255-256-257-258-259-260-261-262-263-264-265-266-267-268-269-270-271-272-273-274-275-276-277-278-279-280-281-282-283-284-285-286-287-288-289-290-291-292-293-294-295-296-297-298-299-300-301-302-303-304-305-306-307-308-309-310-311-312-313-314-315-316-317-318-319-320-321-322-323-324-325-326-327-328-329-330-331-332-333-334-335-336-337-338-339-340-341-342-343-344-345-346-347-348-349-350-351-352-353-354-355-356-357-358-359-360-361-362-363-364-365-366-367-368-369-370-371-372-373-374-375-376-377-378-379-380-381-382-383-384-385-386-387-388-389-390-391-392-393-394-395-396-397-398-399-400-401-402-403-404-405-406-407-408-409-410-411-412-413-414-415-416-417-418-419-420-421-422-423-424-425-426-427-428-429-430-431-432-433-434-435-436-437-438-439-440-441-442-443-444-445-446-447-448-449-450-451-452-453-454-455-456-457-458-459-460-461-462-463-464-465-466-467-468-469-470-471-472-473-474-475-476-477-478-479-480-481-482-483-484-485-486-487-488-489-490-491-492-493-494-495-496-497-498-499-500-501-502-503-504-505-506-507-508-509-510-511-512-513-514-515-516-517-518-519-520-521-522-523-524-525-526-527-528-529-530-531-532-533-534-535-536-537-538-539-540-541-542-543-544-545-546-547-548-549-550-551-552-553-554-555-556-557-558-559-560-561-562-563-564-565-566-567-568-569-570-571-572-573-574-575-576-577-578-579-580-581-582-583-584-585-586-587-588-589-590-591-592-593-594-595-596-597-598-599-600-601-602-603-604-605-606-607-608-609-610-611-612-613-614-615-616-617-618-619-620-621-622-623-624-625-626-627-628-629-630-631-632-633-634-635-636-637-638-639-640-641-642-643-644-645-646-647-648-649-650-651-652-653-654-655-656-657-658-659-660-661-662-663-664-665-666-667-668-669-670-671-672-673-674-675-676-677-678-679-680-681-682-683-684-685-686-687-688-689-690-691-692-693-694-695-696-697-698-699-700-701-702-703-704-705-706-707-708-709-710-711-712-713-714-715-716-717-718-719-720-721-722-723-724-725-726-727-728-729-730-731-732-733-734-735-736-737-738-739-740-741-742-743-744-745-746-747-748-749-750-751-752-753-754-755-756-757-758-759-760-761-762-763-764-765-766-767-768-769-770-771-772-773-774-775-776-777-778-779-780-781-782-783-784-785-786-787-788-789-790-791-792-793-794-795-796-797-798-799-800-801-802-803-804-805-806-807-808-809-810-811-812-813-814-815-816-817-818-819-820-821-822-823-824-825-826-827-828-829-830-831-832-833-834-835-836-837-838-839-840-841-842-843-844-845-846-847-848-849-850-851-852-853-854-855-856-857-858-859-860-861-862-863-864-865-866-867-868-869-870-871-872-873-874-875-876-877-878-879-880-881-882-883-884-885-886-887-888-889-890-891-892-893-894-895-896-897-898-899-900-901-902-903-904-905-906-907-908-909-910-911-912-913-914-915-916-917-918-919-920-921-922-923-924-925-926-927-928-929-930-931-932-933-934-935-936-937-938-939-940-941-942-943-944-945-946-947-948-949-950-951-952-953-954-955-956-957-958-959-960-961-962-963-964-965-966-967-968-969-970-971-972-973-974-975-976-977-978-979-980-981-982-983-984-985-986-987-988-989-990-991-992-993-994-995-996-997-998-999-1000-1001-1002-1003-1004-1005-1006-1007-1008-1009-1010-1011-1012-1013-1014-1015-1016-1017-1018-1019-1020-1021-1022-1023-1024-1025-1026-1027-1028-1029-1030-1031-1032-1033-1034-1035-1036-1037-1038-1039-1040-1041-1042-1043-1044-1045-1046-1047-1048-1049-1050-1051-1052-1053-1054-1055-1056-1057-1058-1059-1060-1061-1062-1063-1064-1065-1066-1067-1068-1069-1070-1071-1072-1073-1074-1075-1076-1077-1078-1079-1080-1081-1082-1083-1084-1085-1086-1087-1088-1089-1090-1091-1092-1093-1094-1095-1096-1097-1098-1099-1100-1101-1102-1103-1104-1105-1106-1107-1108-1109-1110-1111-1112-1113-1114-1115-1116-1117-1118-1119-1120-1121-1122-1123-1124-1125-1126-1127-1128-1129-1130-1131-1132-1133-1134-1135-1136-1137-1138-1139-1140-1141-1142-1143-1144-1145-1146-1147-1148-1149-1150-1151-1152-1153-1154-1155-1156-1157-1158-1159-1160-1161-1162-1163-1164-1165-1166-1167-1168-1169-1170-1171-1172-1173-1174-1175-1176-1177-1178-1179-1180-1181-1182-1183-1184-1185-1186-1187-1188-1189-1190-1191-1192-1193-1194-1195-1196-1197-1198-1199-1200-1201-1202-1203-1204-1205-1206-1207-1208-1209-1210-1211-1212-1213-1214-1215-1216-1217-1218-1219-1220-1221-1222-1223-1224-1225-1226-1227-1228-1229-1230-1231-1232-1233-1234-1235-1236-1237-1238-1239-1240-1241-1242-1243-1244-1245-1246-1247-1248-1249-1250-1251-1252-1253-1254-1255-1256-1257-1258-1259-1260-1261-1262-1263-1264-1265-1266-1267-1268-1269-1270-1271-1272-1273-1274-1275-1276-1277-1278-1279-1280-1281-1282-1283-1284-1285-1286-1287-1288-1289-1290-1291-1292-1293-1294-1295-1296-1297-1298-1299-1300-1301-1302-1303-1304-1305-1306-1307-1308-1309-1310-1311-1312-1313-1314-1315-1316-1317-1318-1319-1320-1321-1322-1323-1324-1325-1326-1327-1328-1329-1330-1331-1332-1333-1334-1335-1336-1337-1338-1339-1340-1341-1342-1343-1344-1345-1346-1347-1348-1349-1350-1351-1352-1353-1354-1355-1356-1357-1358-1359-1360-1361-1362-1363-1364-1365-1366-1367-1368-1369-1370-1371-1372-1373-1374-1375-1376-1377-1378-1379-1380-1381-1382-1383-1384-1385-1386-1387-1388-1389-1390-1391-1392-1393-1394-1395-1396-1397-1398-1399-1400-1401-1402-1403-1404-1405-1406-1407-1408-1409-1410-1411-1412-1413-1414-1415-1416-1417-1418-1419-1420-1421-1422-1423-1424-1425-1426-1427-1428-1429-1430-1431-1432-1433-1434-1435-1436-1437-1438-1439-1440-1441-1442-1443-1444-1445-1446-1447-1448-1449-1450-1451-1452-1453-1454-1455-1456-1457-1458-1459-1460-1461-1462-1463-1464-1465-1466-1467-1468-1469-1470-1471-1472-1473-1474-1475-1476-1477-1478-1479-1480-1481-1482-1483-1484-1485-1486-1487-1488-1489-1490-1491-1492-1493-1494-1495-1496-1497-1498-1499-1500-1501-1502-1503-1504-1505-1506-1507-1508-1509-1510-1511-1512-1513-1514-1515-1516-1517-1518-1519-1520-1521-1522-1523-1524-1525-1526-1527-1528-1529-1530-1531-1532-1533-1534-1535-1536-1537-1538-1539-1540-1541-1542-1543-1544-1545-1546-1547-1548-1549-1550-1551-1552-1553-1554-1555-1556-1557-1558-1559-1560-1561-1562-1563-1564-1565-1566-1567-1568-1569-1570-1571-1572-1573-1574-1575-1576-1577-1578-1579-1580-1581-1582-1583-1584-1585-1586-1587-1588-1589-1590-1591-1592-1593-1594-1595-1596-1597-1598-1599-1600-1601-1602-1603-1604-1605-1606-1607-1608-1609-1610-1611-1612-1613-1614-1615-1616-1617-1618-1619-1620-1621-1622-1623-1624-1625-1626-1627-1628-1629-1630-1631-1632-1633-1634-1635-1636-1637-1638-1639-1640-1641-1642-1643-1644-1645-1646-1647-1648-1649-1650-1651-1652-1653-1654-1655-1656-1657-1658-1659-1660-1661-1662-1663-1664-1665-1666-1667-1668-1669-1670-1671-1672-1673-1674-1675-1676-1677-1678-1679-1680-1681-1682-1683-1684-1685-1686-1687-1688-1689-1690-1691-1692-1693-1694-1695-1696-1697-1698-1699-1700-1701-1702-1703-1704-1705-1706-1707-1708-1709-1710-1711-1712-1713-1714-1715-1716-1717-1718-1719-1720-1721-1722-1723-1724-1725-1726-1727-1728-1729-1730-1731-1732-1733-1734-1735-1736-1737-1738-1739-1740-1741-1742-1743-1744-1745-1746-1747-1748-1749-1750-1751-1752-1753-1754-1755-1756-1757-1758-1759-1760-1761-1762-1763-1764-1765-1766-1767-1768-1769-1770-1771-1772-1773-1774-1775-1776-1777-1778-1779-1780-1781-1782-1783-1784-1785-1786-1787-1788-1789-1790-1791-1792-1793-1794-1795-1796-1797-1798-1799-1800-1801-1802-1803-1804-1805-1806-1807-1808-1809-1810-1811-1812-1813-1814-1815-1816-1817-1818-1819-1820-1821-1822-1823-1824-1825-1826-1827-1828-1829-1830-1831-1832-1833-1834-1835-1836-1837-1838-1839-1840-1841-1842-1843-1844-1845-1846-1847-1848-1849-1850-1851-1852-1853-1854-1855-1856-1857-1858-1859-1860-1861-1862-1863-1864-1865-1866-1867-1868-1869-1870-1871-1872-1873-1874-1875-1876-1877-1878-1879-1880-1881-1882-1883-1884-1885-1886-1887-1888-1889-1890-1891-1892-1893-1894-1895-1896-1897-1898-1899-1900-1901-1902-1903-1904-1905-1906-1907-1908-1909-1910-1911-1912-1913-1914-1915-1916-1917-1918-1919-1920-1921-1922-1923-1924-1925-1926-1927-1928-1929-1930-1931-1932-1933-1934-1935-1936-1937-1938-1939-1940-1941-1942-1943-1944-1945-1946-1947-1948-1949-1950-1951-1952-1953-1954-1955-1956-1957-1958-1959-1960-1961-1962-1963-1964-1965-1966-1967-1968-1969-1970-1971-1972-1973-1974-1975-1976-1977-1978-1979-1980-1981-1982-1983-1984-1985-1986-1987-1988-1989-1990-1991-1992-1993-1994-1995-1996-1997-1998-1999-2000-2001-2002-2003-2004-2005-2006-2007-2008-2009-2010-2011-2012-2013-2014-2015-2016-2017-2018-2019-2020-2021-2022-2023-2024-2025-2026-2027-2028-2029-2030-2031-2032-2033-2034-2035-2036-2037-2038-2039-2040-2041-2042-2043-2044-2045-2046-2047-2048-2049-2050-2051-2052-2053-2054-2055-2056-2057-2058-2059-2060-2061-2062-2063-2064-2065-2066-2067-2068-2069-2070-2071-2072-2073-2074-2075-2076-2077-2078-2079-2080-2081-2082-2083-2084-2085-2086-2087-2088-2089-2090-2091-2092-2093-2094-2095-2096-2097-2098-2099-2100-2101-2102-2103-2104-2105-2106-2107-2108-2109-2110-2111-2112-2113-2114-2115-2116-2117-2118-2119-2120-2121-2122-2123-2124-2125-2126-2127-2128-2129-2130-2131-2132-2133-2134-2135-2136-2137-2138-2139-2140-2141-2142-2143-2144-2145-2146-2147-2148-2149-2150-2151-2152-2153-2154-2155-2156-2157-2158-2159-2160-2161-2162-2163-2164-2165-2166-2167-2168-2169-2170-2171-2172-2173-2174-2175-2176-2177-2178-2179-2180-2181-2182-2183-2184-2185-2186-2187-2188-2189-2190-2191-2192-2193-2194-2195-2196-2197-2198-2199-2200-2201-2202-2203-2204-2205-2206-2207-2208-2209-2210-2211-2212-2213-2214-2215-2216-2217-2218-2219-2220-2221-2222-2223-2224-2225-2226-2227-2228-2229-2230-2231-2232-2233-2234-2235-2236-2237-2238-2239-2240-2241-2242-2243-2244-2245-2246-2247-2248-2249-2250-2251-2252-2253-2254-2255-2256-2257-2258-2259-2260-2261-2262-2263-2264-2265-2266-2267-2268-2269-2270-2271-2272-2273-2274-2275-2276-2277-2278-2279-2280-2281-2282-2283-2284-2285-2286-2287-2288-2289-2290-2291-2292-2293-2294-2295-2296-2297-2298-2299-2300-2301-2302-2303-2304-2305-2306-2307-2308-2309-2310-2311-2312-2313-2314-2315-2316-2317-2318-2319-2320-2321-2322-2323-2324-2325-2326-2327-2328-2329-2330-2331-2332-2333-2334-2335-2336-2337-2338-2339-2340-2341-2342-2343-2344-2345-2346-2347-2348-2349-2350-2351-2352-2353-2354-2355-2356-2357-2358-2359-2360-2361-2362-2363-2364-2365-2366-2367-2368-2369-2370-2371-2372-2373-2374-2375-2376-2377-2378-2379-2380-2381-2382-2383-2384-2385-2386-2387-2388-2389-2390-2391-2392-2393-2394-2395-2396-2397-2398-2399-2400-2401-2402-2403-2404-2405-2406-2407-2408-2409-2410-2411-2412-2413-2414-2415-2416-2417-2418-2419-2420-2421-2422-2423-2424-2425-2426-2427-2428-2429-2430-2431-2432-2433-2434-2435-2436-2437-2438-2439-2440-2441-2442-2443-2444-2445-2446-2447-2448-2449-2450-2451-2452-2453-2454-2455-2456-2457-2458-2459-2460-2461-2462-2463-2464-2465-2466-2467-2468-2469-2470-2471-2472-2473-2474-2475-2476-2477-2478-2479-2480-2481-2482-2483-2484-2485-2486-2487-2488-2489-2490-2491-2492-2493-2494-2495-2496-2497-2498-2499-2500-2501-2502-2503-2504-2505-2506-2507-2508-2509-2510-2511-2512-2513-2514-2515-2516-2517-2518-2519-2520-2521-2522-2523-2524-2525-2526-2527-2528-2529-2530-2531-2532-2533-2534-2535-2536-2537-2538-2539-2540-2541-2542-2543-2544-2545-2546-2547-2548-2549-2550-2551-2552-2553-2554-2555-2556-2557-2558-2559-2560-2561-2562-2563-2564-2565-2566-2567-2568-2569-2570-2571-2572-2573-2574-2575-2576-2577-2578-2579-2580-2581-2582-2583-2584-2585-2586-2587-2588-2589-2590-2591-2592-2593-2594-2595-2596-2597-2598-2599-2600-2601-2602-2603-2604-2605-2606-2607-2608-2609-2610-2611-2612-2613-2614-2615-2616-2617-2618-2619-2620-2621-2622-2623-2624-2

Accessing our executive skills is only possible when we reach an optimal integrated state of relaxed alertness fostered by positive emotions. From this state of consciousness, there are two voices, one acting on the other. We are able to be a witness to our thoughts, feelings and actions rather than becoming them. As the witness (the wise advocate) we are able to make choices about which thoughts, feelings and actions support our highest goals in a certain situation. We no longer demand the world go our way; we respond wisely to whatever comes our way through new eyes. We have a choice to see things differently.



**Heart glasses represent the executive state's ability to see from many perspectives.**

## A TOP WIFE Makes Good TEa

The executive tool set, when functioning properly and online, allows us to meet any situation with wisdom. So what exactly comprises this wonderful yet elusive set of skills? Many researchers and theorists have attempted to define them, and there are several variations of agreed upon "executive skills." In general, they empower us to do the following:

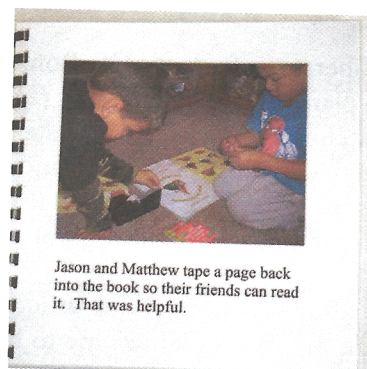
1. Set and achieve goals despite distractions
2. Regulate our emotions and inhibit impulsive behaviors
3. Self-monitor and reflect
4. Develop empathy and problem solve

Drs. Peg Dawson and Richard Guare (2009) distill these global abilities into a more defined skill set that is helpful in a classroom application, so Conscious Discipline uses an adaptation of their work. It is essential to understand that the executive skills listed below are highly interrelated. The list is simply a tool to help us understand the many complex functions of an executive state so we can more easily improve these skills in ourselves and teach these skills to children. All the skills on the list integrate with all of the others, ultimately enabling us to adapt our behavior to meet the needs of our social environment. Visit the portal to read about each of these skills and complete a self-assessment.

1

Conscious Discipline uses the acronym "A TOP WIFE Makes Good TEa" to help us remember the executive skills. As you read the list below, ask yourself, "Is this skill a strong suit of mine or a weak suit?"

Attention  
Time Management  
Organization  
Prioritization  
Working Memory  
Impulse Control  
Flexibility  
Empathy  
Metacognition  
Goal Achievement  
Task Initiation  
Emotional Regulation



*Helping others*

Responding to a child's emotional upset isn't usually our strong suit. Unless we actively intervene to calm ourselves, a child's upset tends to trigger our own CD-Rom and our emotional gatekeeper funnels our energy to the lower centers of the brain. When we allow ourselves to persist in a lower brain state like this, we pass down the false messages associated with the trigger, burning the same trigger and reaction onto the child's CD-Rom. It's a "gift" that keeps on giving from one generation to the next. The voice we use to discipline children is a reflection of the voice we use to discipline ourselves and it will be the voice children use to discipline themselves in the future. We have a choice to use the voice of our wise advocate or the voice on our preprogrammed CD-Rom. The voice we choose will direct our behavior.

***We have a choice to use the voice of our wise advocate or the voice on our preprogrammed CD-Rom. The one we choose will direct our behavior.***

Most of us who have been in the workforce a while have had at least one supportive and encouraging boss, a critical and micromanaging boss, and an absentee boss who does very little. Now take a moment to read the following question slowly and reflect upon the answer: What type of boss do you have in your head most of the time?

If you have a critical internal CEO who berates you for not being good enough, is that the type of boss you want running the minds of the future generations? What about an absentee boss? We are going to pass a voice down to the children in our care. Unless we consciously choose to change it, the kind of CEOs we have managing our thoughts, feelings and actions are also the kinds of CEOs we will instill in the minds of our children.

Being an exceptional boss or manager requires a certain skill set. Effective CEOs must be organized individuals who are able to set goals, make plans, prioritize, manage their time effectively, focus attention despite distraction and be flexible enough to shift their attention when needed. They must be able to communicate effectively with all other departments in the company. They must be able to problem-solve under pressure, empathetically understand employees' needs, have the impulse and emotional control to weather all sorts of challenges, and possess the ability to reflect on their actions and change course as needed.

Both neuroimaging research and clinical research with brain-injured individuals have demonstrated that the prefrontal lobes of the cortex (which lie roughly behind your forehead) are the epicenter for all the skills mentioned above, collectively termed "the executive skills." When this skill set is online and active, our internal voice can be the supportive, efficient, flexible, encouraging, wise and successful boss of our dreams. When this skill set is offline, our CEO bows to the voice on the CD-Rom of our emotional state.

Our executive skills liberate us from the CD-Rom of false messages and our metaphorical wolves. They help us create a plan and hold strong to it regardless of outside temptations and empower us to make mindful new choices. The executive state frees us to move beyond the "Do what I say, not what I do" syndrome that plagues our homes and schools. It allows us to consciously choose our response instead of simply reacting to life and it widens our view, enabling us to see from many perspectives. For this reason, we use the symbol of heart glasses to represent an executive state.

Our executive state allows us to find our unique gifts and share them with others, reaching our true potential. In my case, it allows me to be Becky... not a set of preprogrammed, false messages and reactions from my early upbringing and genetic past, but the Becky I choose to be now in this moment.

# The Executive State: “What Can I Learn?”

I talk to a lot of people each year. Sometimes I am in the zone, and my presentation is sensational. Sometimes my presentations seem average to me and the information doesn't seem to flow. I will never forget the night in Tennessee when I received a call from my brother telling me my mother had passed away. Alone in the hotel room, I had to decide whether to do the keynote address in the morning or catch the earliest flight out. I decided I would keep my news quiet and do the keynote for Mom. In my mind, she would be able to see and hear me for the first time due to years of Alzheimer's disease that had kept her away. I nailed that keynote, one of the best I have ever done. Words flew effortlessly out of my mouth. Theory and practice weaved together like a beautiful tapestry, and everyone seemed to understand the message clearly. The last slide in my presentation was a picture of my mom. As I dedicated this presentation to her and in honor of her love that has inspired me daily, I broke down and sobbed.

During that keynote to over 2,500 people, I had set a goal and achieved it. I regulated my thoughts, emotions and actions. My belief that Mom could hear and see me was so strong that gratitude was my only feeling while I was presenting. When the presentation was over, sadness and grief flooded me.

Every person has experienced being in the zone, accessing brilliant moments when all things come together. That is the power of the integration of an executive state. The executive state is a state of relaxed alertness where we have the capacity to notice our thoughts, notice our emotions, be conscious of our actions, and possess the ability to pause and plan a wise response. We can make choices free from insecurities and impulses. We can see conflicts from multiple perspectives, offer empathy to others and solve problems. Essentially, we have the opportunity to be our best selves. In this way, the executive state puts us in touch with our wise advocate (Schwartz & Gladding, 2011). Our wise advocate can see the bigger picture, which includes our inherent worth.

The executive state represents the chief executive officer (CEO) of the brain, a magnificent integrated system within us that allows us to regulate our thoughts, emotions and behavior, and override the impulses of the lower centers of the brain. Instead of physically fighting, fleeing or verbally overreacting from an old CD-Rom, the executive state allows us to pause and plan a wise response. This pause is also where self-regulation occurs.

## The Voice of Your Wise Advocate

Most of us are aware that we talk to ourselves. Adults have independent inner speech they can use as a source of self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1986). This inner voice can also be used for dysregulation. A dysregulating inner voice might say, “If one more person tells me how tired I look today, I'm going to smack him.” In the same situation, the voice of self-regulation might say, “Take it easy. You had a tough night. Just two more hours and you're out of here.”

Children do not generally develop mature inner speech until around age seven. So, how do young children self-regulate? They don't! Adults are children's regulators and co-regulators. How we respond to children's upset will inhibit or enhance their self-regulatory skills.

Family, his teacher spent a good deal of time helping him answer the questions, "Am I safe?" and, "Am I loved?" in the affirmative. I asked him, "Which feels better to you, being able to calm yourself down and problem solve in a way that helps you feel closer to others or earning enough points to get something really special from the treasure box at your old school?" He said, "I like being able to calm myself down. Sometimes it's scary inside me, and the toys never helped that." Then he said something I will never forget, "I guess no one at my old school thought I was able to be the boss of me." How many children do we shortchange each day by having them move a clip, pull a card or get a happy sticker instead of creating relationship-based cultures where they can learn to manage themselves? When we provide an environment and skills to help children say, "Yes, I am safe; yes, I am loved," we help them create healthy set points for life and the self-regulation required for success.

### **"Yes, I Am Loved" Encourages the Flow of Energy Toward an Executive State.**

The emotional state is the gatekeeper of the brain, regulating the flow of information and energy. Our emotions are the lens through which we see the world. When that lens perceives a consistent, "Yes," to the question, "Am I loved?" the flow of information and energy is more likely to go up toward an integrated state for problem solving and self-regulation. When our emotional state perceives a, "No," or a chronically inconsistent answer, the information and energy tends to flow down to the lower centers where we become preoccupied with safety and are unable to learn a better way of managing our behavior.

## **Emotional State Summary Chart**

<b>State:</b>	Emotional
<b>Perception/trigger:</b>	World is not going my way
<b>Conscious awareness:</b>	Unconscious
<b>Accessible skills:</b>	CD-Rom
<b>Behaviors you might see:</b>	Attention seeking, relationship resistance, clinginess, perfectionism, name calling, social exclusion
<b>Developmental question:</b>	Am I loved?
<b>Developmental need:</b>	Connection
<b>Intention:</b>	Make me feel better and have the world go my way

**Combined tools for creating connection in our classrooms to optimally regulate our emotional states:**

Rituals  
Encouragement  
Jobs  
Empathy  
Choices  
The School Family

**“Yes, I Am Loved” Creates Healthy Set Points and Skills for Managing Stress.**

Everyone reading this book has experienced a coworker, administrator or child who does not deal well with life's challenges. Emotional connections, especially in our early years, are essential to creating our “set points” and mental models on our CD-Roms. Essentially, we can think of set points as optimal operating ranges to the brain. Set points inform us about our needs (i.e. hunger, thirst, safety) and are key to determining how we respond to life. They are maintained in the limbic structures of the brain, which are continually comparing our actual physiological state to our preferred state. The preferred state, especially the preferred emotional state, of any given human is established early in life and is based on how our needs were met. Anything outside of our narrow set points feels unfamiliar and dangerous, and our bodies respond accordingly (Berridge, 2004).

As an adult, I moved from Florida to New Mexico to Montana and back to Florida. Each move required huge climate adjustments. Growing up on the east coast, I was used to humidity. You could say I had a humidity set point of about 80 percent. In other words, days with 80 percent humidity felt comfortable and normal to me. When I moved to New Mexico, the *average humidity was seven percent. It took a solid year of gasping for air with moisture in it, nosebleeds and humidifiers before I slowly began to adapt.* I lived there six years, and even though I adapted some, it never felt right to me. Biologically I felt a yearning. My humidity set point was established early in my life; resetting it 30 years later was a challenge. The summer I moved to Montana, which has an average of 14 percent humidity (doubling that of New Mexico), I had a huge biological exhale. Just seeing the green trees and grass felt more like home! It felt good to be closer to my set point of 80 percent humidity. All this goodness quickly dissipated in winter when 20-below-zero temperatures challenged my temperature set point. I thought I would die and they would find my frozen body perfectly preserved months later. I had three job offers when I left Montana. I took the job in Florida and adjusted back to high humidity and high temperatures within about three months. Even though I don't particularly like the climate, Florida does feel familiar because of my set point.

Because the brain is a social organ, we create and change our set points through relationships. Early experience has a powerful and lasting influence on how the brain develops. Relationships, especially early relationships, establish our set points for handling stress. These experiences set up physiological expectations as to what “normal” levels of biochemicals are. These levels become written into our physiology. They also impact the amounts of chemicals we produce in response to particular situations. A child living with stressors creates an alarm set point that is on high. It feels normal for this child to be overwhelmed. In future relationships, stress and crisis will feel more familiar than caring and calmness. At school, she will prefer chaos to order. She may try to create a chaotic environment that is more comfortable to her biochemical set point.

Some people love to watch those reality TV shows where everyone bickers and backstabs; they are too crazy for me. Some people enjoy horror and suspense movies; my set point simply doesn't allow me to be entertained. I had a friend who I thought often yelled at me. I would say, “It's hard for me to listen with you yelling.” She would insist she was not yelling, nor was she angry. The yelling set point was much higher in her family of origin. To her brain, she was enjoying a lively discussion. To my brain, the volume level had the same frightful effect as the wolf in our survival state metaphor. Our set points were very different. Consistently being able to answer the question, “Am I loved?” with a resounding, “Yes!” establishes healthy set points for life.

Cameron is a child with special needs. He had been on a point system for behavioral issues since he was very young. When I met him, he had recently transferred to a self-contained third grade classroom in Arizona that was using Conscious Discipline. When he entered the School

## The Developmental Question, "Am I Loved?"

The developmental question asked by someone in an emotional state is, "Am I loved?" We need to know we are loved, loving and lovable for healthy brain development. Our brains are built to link us together in families, societies and humankind as a whole (Cozolino, 2006). Being excluded or unloved is a universal fear and huge emotional trigger.

Optimal development of our relationship system requires secure attachment formed through attunement with our caregivers, especially during the first three years of life. Emotional upset creates a clacker imbalance. The way an adult responds to a child's distress determines whether their attachment bond is secure or insecure. Secure attachment requires us to be seen, be soothed and feel safe. A toddler may feel distress due to hunger, not getting what he wants or feeling tired. An attuned adult would respond to this distress in a soothing way that encourages the toddler's clacker to return to balance with a steady beat. This would promote secure attachment. A lack of attunement means the adult's response (or failure to respond) offers no relief, increasing the clacker imbalance. This would promote insecure attachment.

Just as the brain allows us to see, smell, taste, think, talk and move, it is also the organ that allows us to love (or not). While we are born with a natural capacity to nurture and be nurtured, our bonds with caregivers wire our brain systems for building and sustaining relationships. The first three years of life are critical in shaping our capacity to form healthy relationships and etching our core answer to "Am I loved" on our CD-roms. An adult with an unloveable message from childhood recorded on her CD-Rom may enter a relationship with a very loving person, yet be unable to accept that love because her mental model for attachment says, "This can't be real because I'm not that lovable."

We can easily recognize securely attached children: they are able to use friends or adults to help them through stressful situations. We can also recognize children with insecure attachments: they withdraw from the help they desperately need and/or actively fight when offered soothing nurturance during difficult times. Children with insecure attachment can seem like wounded animals. Even when we approach with loving intentions and a compassionate heart, they may metaphorically (or literally) bite us if we try to get too close.

The brain grows and develops through social interactions. A young child's brain asks, "Am I loved?" constantly as it seeks life-giving connections with caregivers, teachers and peers. "Am I loved" is the gatekeeper for the flow of information and energy. As information enters the brain through the emotional state, the gatekeeper responds, "No, I feel threatened," sending the information down to the survival centers, or "Yes, I am loved," sending the information up to the higher centers of the brain. Using a building metaphor, it would be like entering through a door on the ground floor emotional state. When we feel threatened by the person at the door, we slam it shut and hide in the basement (survival state) as we call the police. When we feel good about the person at the door, we invite him in to learn and engage (executive state).

The answer to "Am I loved" determines whether we use our energy for processing information in the higher centers of the brain or for self-protection in the lower centers of the brain. To transform our education system, each child must be able to say, "Yes, I am loved, loving and lovable. I belong." This "yes" answer impacts the brain in two very important ways:

# The Emotional State: "Am I Loved?"

Imagine you are driving to the store with a carload of children when a car cuts in front of you. Your survival state kicks in, and you automatically swerve to avoid an accident. As you begin to relax, the survival system turns off and your upset emotional state turns on. You yell, "You idiot! What are you trying to do, kill us? What were you thinking? No one thinks about anyone but themselves." As the children in the backseat watch the event unfold, you are teaching them it's okay to call people names and yell harsh judgments when the world does not go your way. Imagine how this lesson might transfer to the checkout line at the store when the children ask, "Can we have a piece of candy?" and you say, "No." From the children's point of view, you have just cut them off in traffic. It's not surprising that they might yell, "You're stupid. You don't care about anyone but yourself. I hate you."

In addition to the genetic past that's hard-wired into our survival state, our emotional state provides us with some interesting software by recording our personal past. As we form memories, our emotional state tags them with both the verbal content and the emotional experience. Our brains store memories in this state-dependent way, creating mental models of how we believe things should be. If things don't go according to these conditioned models, the brain signals red alert as if a wolf is coming.

If our parents yelled at others and looked for someone to blame during moments of frustration, that script is coded into our frustrated emotional state like a file on a CD-Rom. All we have to do is find ourselves in a physiological and emotional state of frustration, and the CD-Rom within us begins to yell at others and look for blame. Of course, our parents are not the only voices recorded on our personal CD-Rom under the file named "frustration." We also have friends, family members, teachers and television.

At one time or another, most of us have said, "When I have my own children, I will never \_\_\_\_\_ them!" Yet how many of us have already \_\_\_\_\_-ed them? It's as if we open our mouths and out come the words of our mother (father, aunt, grandmother). It can feel like a CD-Rom of unhealthy beliefs and skills is recorded in our brains, and the right trigger presses the play button automatically.

In the simplest terms, we become triggered into an upset emotional state when we perceive the world is not going our way. We often say someone or something is "pushing our buttons." If we observe ourselves in a triggered state, we will hear the internal chatter of our CD-Roms playing in our heads. This negative self-talk relentlessly plays the false messages generated from the programmed mental models on our CD-Roms. These mental models, which are really networks of neurons firing together, were handed down through our relationships with our early caregivers (which in turn were handed down from their early caregivers, who got them from their caregivers, etc.).

We are not our CD-Roms. Our CD-Roms generally contain inaccurate stories and explanations that cause us to act in ways that aren't necessarily beneficial. Over time, we start believing the false messages on the CD-Roms are true. One of the stories I tell myself is, "If I'm not responsible for everything, it will all fall apart." When I get triggered by a problem at work, my CD-Rom kicks in and the voice in my head righteously recites worst case scenarios and reasons I need to stay ultra-involved in every aspect of my business. "After all, here's another example of exactly why..." the CD-Rom barks in my head. I can see the family pattern of workaholics who have believed this thinking, when in reality it's just another false message recorded on my CD-Rom! (FYI: I'm not involved in every aspect of my business and yet it does run quite successfully.)

We can think of an over-aroused autonomic nervous system like a clacker going crazy all day long. How hard it would be to pay attention, sit still or focus on the task at hand? We can think of an under-aroused autonomic nervous system as one with an internal clacker that only claps its hands every five minutes or so. Imagine how this slow, spaced-out state of lethargy would make learning difficult.

Some children are born over-aroused or under-aroused due to genetic abnormalities, prenatal or perinatal experiences, or difficult temperaments. Others experience environmental stressors that yield the same results. We know the frustration of trying to reach and teach these children. Their brains sacrifice learning in favor of defending against new information, defending against (yet yearning for) connection with others and defending against class rules. Though most children do not fall into this category, all children experience stressors that result in an over or under-activated arousal. When the arousal system isn't functioning optimally, it doesn't matter how wonderful our curriculum is or what standards we expect them to achieve; it is impossible for the child to be successful with a clacker that's out of whack. In order to facilitate learning, we must first help them manage their arousal and alarm systems optimally. We do this by providing physical and psychological safety.

## **The Developmental Question, "Am I Safe"**

For the optimal development of the systems activating and managing the survival state, the child must be raised in safe environments and go to safe schools. The developmental question being asked by the survival state is, "Am I safe?" (I call these "developmental questions" because an affirmative answer is needed for the brain to continue to develop in optimal ways.) We must experience enough physical and emotional safety for the body to move out of surviving and into being receptive. The developmental question "Am I safe?" is basically an adaptation of pioneering developmental psychologist Erik Erikson's first stage of psychosocial development, asking, "Is the world a trustworthy place?"

Years ago I was asked to go to the United Nations to develop a document about the rights of children. The other two people invited, T. Berry Brazelton and Penelope Leach, were like demigods to me. I had no idea why I was invited, felt severely non-deserving and experienced an overwhelming sense of threat. Metaphorically I saw wolves everywhere. I felt like I was walking through the streets screaming, "Am I safe?" Of course, the answer in my mind was, "NO!" I absolutely did not feel safe. In my survival state, it was impossible for me to focus on the intellectual task at hand; I was focused on simple survival. My hope was to get through the meeting without destroying my career or making a complete idiot of myself. Eventually, I reached a slightly calmer state where I could come up with a plan to help deal with the terror raging inside me. My solution was to go to New York, attend the meeting and not say a word. At least this plan turned down my alarm system enough that I could get some sleep and hold down food. As to what happened at the meeting, I cannot recall because I was basically unconscious (but I did survive).

Think of the most difficult children you have had in your classroom or school. They come to school aggressive and defiant, or, like me in the United Nations project, they show up completely shut down. Luke came to school, nonverbally refusing to be greeted by anyone. His eyes were downcast and his body pulled away from the adult's welcoming hand on his back. He would enter the classroom, pushing people out of his way, slinging his backpack down and preparing to fight. It would take only the slightest provocation for him to go ballistic and be hauled out of the classroom. Most teachers do not look at children like Luke and see a child who is asking, "Am I safe?" We see a defiant, aggressive child who makes it hard for us

## The Alarm System Wolf Metaphor



Our alarm system is embedded in our survival system. The goal is for the alarm to sound, causing us to take fast and immediate action, and then for the alarm to shut off. In prehistoric times, when our fight, flight or freeze response evolved, fight was manifested in aggressive, combative behavior; flight was manifested by fleeing potentially threatening situations; and freeze meant being quiet so we could not be seen. In the Conscious Discipline model freezing also represents surrendering. Surrendering is a form of giving in or giving up because of adults' threats.

A healthy survival system sounds the alarm when the real or imagined wolf comes. It reacts by fighting, fleeing or freezing, and then shuts the alarm off once the wolf is gone. This system that worked so well for prehistoric humans was not created to withstand the lengthy, repeated imagined threats we experience today. In modern times few of us are literally being chased by wolves, yet our perception of an everyday irritation can trigger a survival state. One friend of mine perceived things like her husband's laundry in a pile next to the hamper as a wolf (a threat to their love). She reacted by fighting at first and then fleeing (she divorced him). Many adults perceive drivers on the road as wolves. Their reaction is often to drive aggressively. Children react similarly when triggered into a survival state. Some children see a wolf as soon as you say, "Open your math book," or, "It's clean up time." These situations can automatically throw us back to a prehistoric fight, flight or freeze reaction unless we learn to consciously choose a different response.

When children are in a survival state, they possess the fight, flight or freeze skill set our ancestors and all animals possess. It is difficult to fight with or run from someone four times your size, so young children will often freeze or surrender to the adult's demands more often than older children. Young girls tend to surrender more than young boys, and firstborn children tend to surrender more than children born second. The behaviors you will see from a child in a survival state are:

**Fight:** Hit, push, scream, bite

**Flight:** Withdraw, run away, hide

**Freeze:** Surrender by complying, apathy by giving in or giving up by crying.

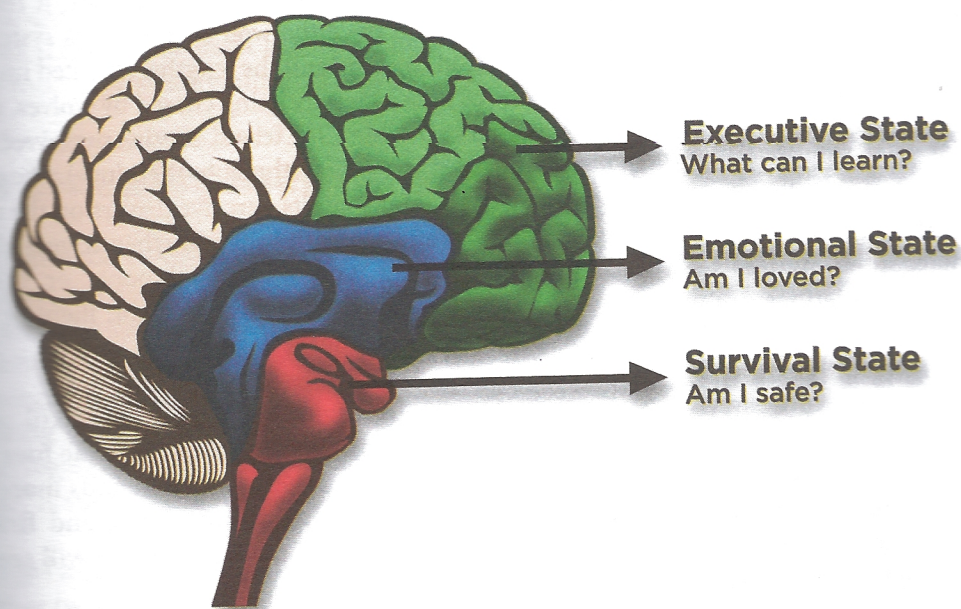
## The Arousal System Clacker Metaphor



Arousal is generally defined as our level of alertness. Arousal is largely a survival state function of the autonomic nervous system (though the emotional state also plays a role). In Conscious Discipline, we use the metaphor of a clacker to demonstrate the function of our arousal system. My neighbor's child had a birthday party. The party favor was a plastic toy hand clacker for the children to use to give the birthday boy a "hand." After he opened each present, the children would give their clackers a shake and the plastic hands would clap together. Some party attendees clacked appropriately and some shook their little clackers until I was ready to scream.

**Executive State:** The executive state represents the optimal integrated learning state, one of relaxed alertness. The Brain State Model depicts all the integrated systems that regulate executive functions as the prefrontal lobes of the cortex. The prefrontal lobes have been called the CEO of the brain due to the regulatory function they serve. When integrated, they allow us to inhibit preprogrammed reactions, see from others' points of view, manage our emotions, and access goal achievement and problem-solving skills. The executive state is a state of mindful, conscious integration where feelings and thoughts align, where we can access our intuitive knowledge and brilliance, and hear the voice of our "wise advocate" within. In this integrated, responsive state, we can direct our thoughts and feelings rather than be driven by them. We are integrated within ourselves and attuned with others in a way that allows us to look for solutions instead of ruminate on problems and blame.

Let's look a little closer at each of these brain states.



## The Survival State: "Am I Safe?"

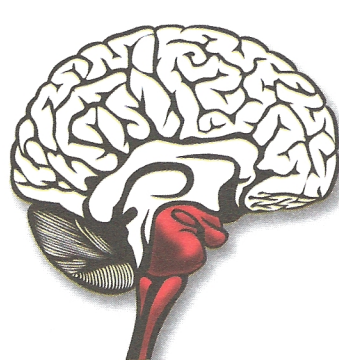
The survival state represents our body's alarm and arousal system. Humans are hard-wired with a set of fast-reacting skills that automatically emerge when a survival state is triggered. Our genetic past has wired our brains to access these skills when we find ourselves threatened. We access these skills unconsciously, nonverbally and automatically. The intent behind these skills is self-defense at all cost.

If someone throws a rock at your head, immediately ducking is the best course of action. It would be somewhat ridiculous to appraise the situation, go over the pros and cons of ducking, and prepare your future response to the attacker. By the time you do all this, you would need stitches where the rock hit you. The survival state is beneficial in this case because it allows us to avoid the oncoming rock without conscious thought. However, when a child spills her milk and we become triggered into a survival state, our unconscious reaction might be to yank her arm. In this case, it would be helpful to be able to access a brain state where we could appraise the situation and choose a wiser course of action.

# The Conscious Discipline Brain States

*Knowing about the brain can help us move from self-judgement to self-acceptance.*

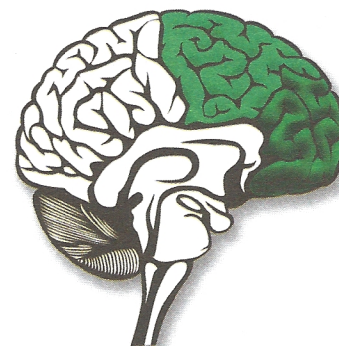
The Conscious Discipline Brain State Model recognizes three basic brain/body/mind states. Instead of referring to them as states of brain/body/mind each time, we simply call them “brain states” or “internal states.” The purpose of learning about these states is to help identify the internal state a child is most likely experiencing, and then assist him in achieving an optimal state for learning new skills before attempting to address his behavior. The model shows these states as specific regions within the brain; however, it is imperative to understand that each state includes the integration of brain, body and mind.



**Survival State**



**Emotional State**



**Executive State**

As you can see above, the three states of the Brain State Model are a survival state, an emotional state and an executive state. Each internal state carries with it a certain skill set. When we understand which state the child is operating from, we can choose strategies that will help him achieve a more integrated internal state with a more advanced skill set. The Brain State Model also empowers adults with the knowledge and skills to maintain better control over our internal states. Addressing our own internal state is always the first step in addressing the child's internal state and, ultimately, external behavior.

**Survival State:** The survival state represents our animal, genetic past. The survival state is activated under threat. It is a reactive state in which self-defense is the primary goal and intention. The model represents all the varied systems that regulate survival functions as the brain stem because it is phylogenetically the oldest, most primitive part of the brain. When activated, it results in some of our most primitive behaviors: fight, flight and freeze.

**Emotional State:** When we talk about the emotional state in Conscious Discipline, we are talking about an upset emotional state activated by the world not going our way and our personal past conditioning. It represents what happens when our buttons are pushed and our conditioned reactions emerge. The Brain State Model depicts all the varied systems that activate these upset emotional functions as the limbic system. The limbic system consists of several interconnected brain structures (amygdala, hippocampus, etc.) that process memories, activate our emotions and tell us what is worth remembering. The brain would be overwhelmed if there were not some method of prioritizing, and so the amygdala serves as the gatekeeper of the emotional state. If the experience is tagged as threatening, the amygdala is activated, and self-defense (not learning) becomes the goal of the exchange.

1. To remain in a relaxed, alert state while interacting with children.
2. To identify the internal state the child is experiencing so we know which responses will more likely be helpful.
3. To assist the child in achieving a relaxed, alert state of learning **before we attempt to** teach a new skill or deliver a consequence.
4. To address the behavior by teaching an effective new skill.

All behavior is a form of communication. We acknowledge and act on **this belief with babies**. We can hear an infant's cries as a way of communicating distress. The **crying communicates** a need for a diaper change, food or other need. As we help babies **soothe their inner states** by meeting their needs, the crying shifts to engagement. Seeing infants' behavior as a form of communication is easy for most of us. The challenge is holding onto **this truth as the child matures**. With older children, our perception often shifts to seeing disobedience, disrespect or defiance. As we shift our perception, we also shift our intent. Instead of **trying to discern** the communication behind the behavior, our goal becomes stopping it. When we expend our efforts on stopping behaviors, we ignore children's unmet needs and missing skills, sometimes with extreme results like bullying, suicide and school shootings. Zero tolerance zones and exclusionary tactics (like suspension and expulsion) simply hide the problem, compound it or make it someone else's issue to deal with. We are better served by welcoming the important communication behind the misbehavior so we can transform it from a socially unacceptable form of communication to one that is acceptable, safe and healthy.

Read the examples below. Determine which perspective makes the most sense to you.

<b>Child Behavior</b>	<b>Child Communication</b>
Child grabs another child's toy.	I want to play with the toy.
<b>Adult Response</b> "It's not nice to grab from others."	<b>Adult Implied Communication</b> You are not nice for wanting the toy.
"Gentle touches, gentle touches."	Take the toy gently.
"You know the rules about grabbing. Turn your card to red and you will lose recess."	Wanting the toy is a punishable act.
"You wanted to play with the toy. When you want a turn say, <i>May I have a turn with the toy, please?</i> "	You wanted to play with the toy. <b>Saying, "May I have a turn with the toy, please?" is an acceptable way to get your needs met.</b>

## Chapter 2

# BRAIN STATE MODEL

## Why Use a Brain State Model?

*“Behavior management systems that focus on controlling behaviors from the outside will never build deep values and internal control.”*

— Sir Peter David Gluckman

While conducting a workshop in New York City, I used my greeting apron to welcome attendees. The apron has four images on it, a fish, a skunk, a butterfly and a happy face. Each of these images represents a unique handshake. I asked each individual, “Would you like a fish, skunk, butterfly or happy face greeting this morning?” About midway through my greetings, a woman looked straight at me and said, “I would like you to move so I can get some coffee!”

In that instant, this stressed-out attendee demonstrated what we all know to be true: Our internal state dictates our external behavior. When we are feeling calm and appreciative, we are more likely to let cars merge on the freeway and overlook the lady with 15 items in the “10 items or fewer” line at the grocery store. However, if we are feeling harried, frustrated or overwhelmed, we inch toward the bumper in front of us so no one can merge and ruthlessly count the items in other people’s carts to determine if they deserve the express line. State dictates behavior! Yet when it comes to discipline, historically our focus has been on behaviors (usually with the goal of stopping them).

If you imagine an iceberg, there is more ice beneath the water than above it. Behavior is the part of the iceberg we see above the water. Our internal state, made up of conscious and unconscious beliefs about the world and ourselves, is the part below the surface of the water. The tip of the iceberg did not sink the Titanic; the unseen mass beneath the surface did. Discipline must start with what’s beneath the surface. Adults and children must learn to manage their internal states instead of acting them out in tirades or tantrums. The Conscious Discipline Brain State Model is a simple, hierarchical model that provides a concrete way to show the relationship between internal states and external behaviors. It helps us understand the states that are driving the behaviors, so we can address them effectively before attempting to teach new skills. This model helps us meet four core objectives: