

Do the following to discern what jobs your class needs:

- Make a list of all the class management tasks you do. **Decide which jobs can be turned over to children.**
- Involve the children. Ask for their assistance in **coming up with the jobs, writing job descriptions and creating the Job Board.**
- Think in terms of jobs that can provide the **social and emotional support children need and enjoy.**

Below are a handful of class jobs that support the Power of Unity and the School Family:

**Morning Message Writer:** This person's job is to write (or draw a picture of) a welcoming and encouraging idea for children to see as they enter the classroom in the morning.

**Greeter:** This job involves greeting children as they enter the classroom. The greeters give handshakes, pinky hugs or thumb touches to students as they enter class. The class may create additional greetings, for example:

- **Butterfly:** Lock right hand thumbs and wiggle fingers as you fly up and down.
- **Fireworks fist bump:** Fist bump, followed by making motions and sounds to represent fireworks.
- **Multiplication:** On the count of three, both children hold out a number of fingers. The child being greeted multiplies the two numbers together. If correct, high five each other. If incorrect, the greeter says, "Oops," they work together on the correct answer and then give a high five.

**Encourager:** This person's job is to notice children who are feeling discouraged with schoolwork, home life or friends, and to offer encouragement. The encouragement can be a poem, a note saying, "Hang in there," a pat on the back or a class heart that says, "We care about you and want you to succeed." Older children can write and design encouragements as part of their language arts program. Younger children can draw pictures or hand out prefabricated hearts.

**Absent Child Committee:** This job can belong to a person or a committee. The job is to do something for an absent child that communicates the message, "We noticed you were gone. We are glad you are back." They might make a welcome back card, song or poem, or use the I Love You Ritual "You've Been Gone" shared in Chapter 4. Video of Absent Child Rituals can be found in Shubert's Classroom by clicking on the Wish Well Board.

**New Child Buddy:** This person's job is to be the buddy of a new child who enters the school and classroom. Ask the children, "How would it feel to enter a new classroom not knowing anything about the school?" From this discussion, develop a list of duties the buddy would be involved with. The following are example duties:

- Sit next to the new child and introduce him to others.
- Give the new child a tour introducing the office staff, media specialist, etc.
- Walk in line with the new child and play with him at recess.
- Sit together at lunch, showing the new child the necessary rules and procedures.
- Help the child learn the daily routine, secure necessary supplies and understand how we treat each other in the School Family.

***Be creative and use symbols that are important to your classroom. For example, a Native American school put feathers on an eagle to symbolize kind acts.***

The **Kindness Recorder** is appropriate for older classrooms and is a wonderful literacy-building tool. This structure requires a notebook, pen or pencil, and the Kindness Recorder School Family job. This person is responsible for recording kind acts he sees and those that are reported to him by classmates throughout the day. At the close of the day, the Kindness Recorder reads several kind acts to the class, reinforcing the belief that we are all in this together.

Older classrooms may choose to use both a Kindness Tree and a Kindness Recorder. In this case, the students would write notes to put on the tree and the Kindness Recorder would read the acts of kindness off of the tree at the end of the day (instead of out of the notebook). One middle school teacher posts magnetic hands by the door. As children change classes, they slap up high fives for kindnesses witnessed during their class period.



***All classroom structures can also be used with staff or faculty. Start noticing and recording acts of kindness in staff meetings, and watch the same systems appear in the classrooms. See examples of this on your portal.***

## Structure: Job Board

Being of service activates the optimal learning state of relaxed alertness, which leads to greater academic gains. As each child contributes to the wellbeing of the School Family by completing a job, he experiences the brain benefits of being of service. It is essential that children understand their jobs are meaningful to the functioning of the classroom. If a job is not perceived as meaningful, teach it with more understanding or remove it from the job list. Props often increase interest in the jobs.

In a Conscious Discipline classroom, each child in the classroom will hold a job. If you have 28 children, you will have 28 jobs. The Job Board helps manage the jobs. The *School Family Job Board* from Conscious Discipline provides extensive instructions, job cards and a Job Board to help you establish this essential classroom structure. Alternately, you could create your own Job Board by gluing library card pockets on a poster board. On each pocket, put a picture of the job and write the job's title. Have each child glue a photo of herself on a popsicle stick. Place a stick in each of the pocket holders to designate who is responsible for each job. Rotate the sticks weekly as children change jobs. You will teach children how to do each job at the beginning of the year. The best way to do this is to teach each job as the need for it arises.



Teaching jobs takes time and lesson planning, but it is time well spent. Integrate the teaching of these jobs into your language arts program. After the initial lessons, each child teaches the next child who will serve in that position.

in a class book. Help children be specific in this process. Children may suggest being nice, sharing, taking turns and being respectful. Guide them with specific scenarios and examples so they know the exact language and actions to use to accomplish these goals.

Children's brains encode information in pictures rather than with words. Showing helpful acts visually provides information in a form their brains can readily use, so they are better able to integrate the helpful act into their regular behavior. These visual depictions scaffold children's creation of positive mental models for progressing through the school day.

Begin the year with a classroom bulletin board that shows ways to be helpful using a combination of art, photographs and words. If "lending supplies to a friend in need" is a way to be helpful in your class, photograph one child lending another a pencil. If "taking turns" is a way to be helpful, include a photograph of children taking turns. Share what you are doing with parents. Have children make Ways To Be Helpful books for home and school, and send them home to be read. Ask parents to take Ways To Be Helpful photographs and post them on the refrigerator at home.

## Structure: Kindness Tree and Kindness Recorder

The Kindness Tree and Kindness Recorder are commonly used forms of the kindness rituals described in Chapter 3. They honor kind and helpful acts, help adults and children shift from focusing on what is wrong to what is going well (what you focus on you get more of), and help highlight the many ways we serve one another. Be conscious of your intention when using the Kindness Tree and Kindness Recorder; they are ways to notice innate goodness, not catch children being good.

The **Kindness Tree** takes on many forms (not all of them are trees), depending on the age of the children. It is easily integrated with math, language arts, social studies and science. You will need various props and may combine the Kindness Trees with a Kindness Recorder, depending on the age of the students. Some examples of Kindness Trees include:

- A felt tree with Velcro heart-shaped leaves encourages students to place a leaf on the tree to honor each kind, caring or helpful act they experience in the classroom. At the end of the day, the teacher leads students in counting the number of kind acts, sharing several and celebrating the group's helpfulness.
- A designated space for written notes encourages students to write out acts of kindness and place them in the space for all to see. A Kindness Recorder might read several of the notes at a kindness celebration at the end of the day.
- Sticky notes, pens and a centrally located bulletin board encourage faculty and staff to notice the kindness of coworkers.



*School-wide Kindness Tree*

Watch video examples on the portal.



## Music and Movement

The music CDs offered by Conscious Discipline are designed to connect children to each other (Chapter 4). Older children enjoy using popular music. Simply cut an appropriate song down to about two minutes and have children create partner motions that foster eye contact, touch, presence and playful situation.

## Brain Breaks

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Partner up for quick activities that help children refocus and hit the refresh button on their brains. Again, eye contact, touch, presence and playful situation are needed to reap the brain-boosting benefits of connection. The ideas below will help you get started. Find additional brain breaks on your portal.

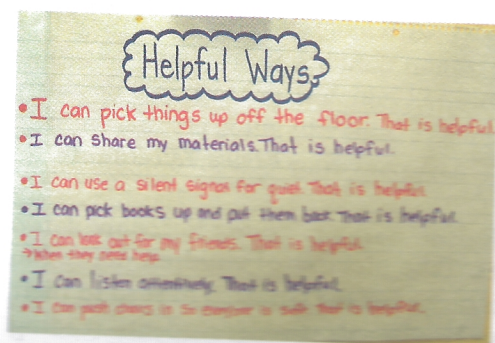
**Handshakes:** Have children create handshakes. Older children can repeat the handshake with the left hand and with both hands simultaneously, or conduct a cumulative handshake. In a cumulative handshake, each person conducts the existing handshake and then adds something new. For example, Person A does a knuckle bump, Person B does a knuckle bump and adds a high five, etc.

**Quickmath (based on an activity by Jean Blaydes Madigan):** Face a partner and put your hands behind your back. On the count of three, each person holds out a different number of fingers. Add the numbers together and say the answer. Celebrate success in a way that focuses on eye contact and caring touch.

**Slap Letter (by Scott Miller):** Face your partner with hands forward and face up. The one with the largest hand goes first and is Person A. Person A takes her right hand and crosses over to slap Person B's right hand lightly, saying the letter A. Then Person B takes her left hand and crosses over and slaps Person A's left hand lightly, saying the letter B. Next comes C and D. Repeat this process all the way through the alphabet. Older children can say the alphabet backward or forward, saying only every other letter.

## Structure: Ways To Be Helpful Board or Book

The Ways To Be Helpful Board or Book accomplishes two main goals: 1. It provides visual images that concretely illustrate expected behaviors in order to scaffold children's attention and encourage helpfulness. 2. It honors the ways children are helpful to each other.



Announce the School Family job descriptions (as discussed in the Composure chapter) on the first day of school: "My job is to keep you safe. Your job is to help keep the classroom safe." Work with students to discern what is helpful in keeping the classroom safe and teach them how to accomplish their helpful job.

Lead discussions about what it looks like, feels like and sounds like to be helpful. Have children draw

# Ritual: Connecting Rituals

Connecting rituals were discussed in Chapter 3, the School Family. Hopefully you've watched the videos on the portal and have begun implementing them. Connecting rituals provide excellent brain breaks for your classroom. With infants and toddlers, connection comes from the adult through one-on-one attunement. By preschool, children begin partnering with peers. At any age, it's essential we find ways to embed caring touches and face-to-face connection in our schools. When we touch one another, it releases a hormone called nerve growth factor that is essential to neural function and learning. The following are suggestions and resources for connecting rituals. Watch examples of the items below on your portal.



**Remember, connection involves eye contact, touch and presence in a playful situation!**

## I Love You Rituals

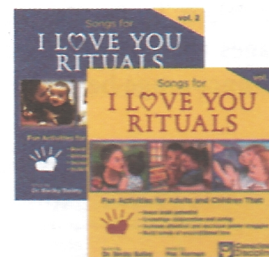
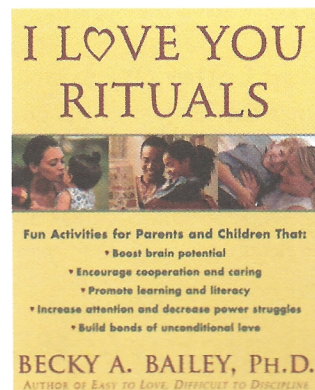
We explored these as part of your Brain Smart Start in Chapter 4. These activities do four things: 1. Increase a child's attention, impulse control and willingness to cooperate, 2: Increase a child's learning potential through caring touch, 3. Promote literacy and social skills, and 4. Enhance attachment and bonding. Conduct connecting rituals in whole groups or with partners.

### **Peter, Peter (*I Love You Rituals*, page 62)**

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater.  
*Pump your arms and shake your hips.*  
Had a friend he (she) loved to greet.  
*Reach out and shake your partner's hand.*  
Treated her with kind respect.  
*Put your left arm on the right shoulder of your partner.*  
And in the morning hugged his (her) neck.  
*Move into a gentle hug.*

### **Twinkle, Twinkle (*I Love You Rituals*, page 63)**

Twinkle, twinkle, little star.  
*Hold arms up and wiggle your fingers together.*  
What a wonderful friend you are!  
*Place arms on each other's shoulders.*  
With bright eyes and nice round cheeks,  
*Point to your eyes and to your cheeks.*  
A talented person from head to feet.  
*Touch partner's head and feet.*  
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.  
*Hold arms up and wiggle your fingers together.*  
What a wonderful friend you are!  
*Give a gentle hug, high five or thumbs up.*



*I Love You Rituals*

Extend the above nursery rhymes into literacy lessons. Take pictures of children doing the activities to create class-made books. Send these books home for the children to read to their parents and conduct the activities with them. Add I Love You Rituals to older students' reading buddy programs with younger children.

# Encouragement Builds Connection in the School Family

As we practice the perceptual shifts and skills from this chapter, the following routines, rituals and structures help us create a strong sense of belonging and a felt sense of connection in our School Family. The top 10 School Family rituals discussed in Chapter 3 are also essential in this effort.

The first six weeks of school is a time to really focus on routines and rituals. Routines will provide safety, while rituals will provide connection. The sooner children can answer the two fundamental questions “Am I safe?” (routines) and “Am I loved?” (rituals) in the affirmative, the sooner we can focus on achieving our academic goals.

## Ritual: “I See” Song

The I See Song is a ritual for noticing. In the I See Song, the teacher connects with and demonstrates valuing each child as an individual by noticing (not judging) her.

Conduct the song during circle time. Within the framework of the song, notice two things each child is doing by saying, “His     (name the body part)     is going like this,” and then demonstrating the posture or movement. Be certain to say, “Going like this,” and demonstrate (rather than describing the action verbally) in order to help achieve eye contact. After singing the verse, share a moment of delighted connection through eye contact and then continue to the next child.

It is extremely important **not** to mention physical attributes, clothing, jewelry, etc. during this ritual. The goal is to achieve a moment of connection and to train ourselves and children to see others for who they really are, not for what they might wear or possess. Place your focus squarely on the essence of the child as demonstrated below:

### I See Song

*Sing to the tune of “Frère Jacques”*

“Hello Marcy.” *Children echo.*

“I see Marcy.” *Children echo.*

*Now, look to see what Marcy is doing. Are her hands folded in her lap? Then sing:*  
“Her hands are going like this.” *Demonstrate by folding your hands in your lap.*  
*Children echo and fold their hands.*

*What else is Marcy is doing? She moved her foot! Sing:*

“Her foot is going like this.” *Demonstrate by moving your foot.*  
*Children echo and move their feet.*



7 Watch videos of young children, including those with hearing impairments, using the I See Song on your portal.

### The formula for noticing helpful and kind acts:

You \_\_\_\_ so \_\_\_\_\_. That was \_\_\_\_\_.

“Jonas, you saw that Becca needed some paper so you offered her some of yours. That was helpful.”

**Step 1: Start the sentence with the child’s name or the pronoun “you.”** This is an important step in breaking the judgment habit. Judging statements generally start with the words “good” or “great.” Start with a name, “You,” “You did it,” or “Look at you,” to help break the judgment habit. “Kevin, you...” “You did it! You...”

**Step 2: Describe what the child did in detail.** Pretend you are a video camera. Before you speak, ask yourself, “Can a video camera record what I am about to say?” If not, then you are still judging. You might be about to say, “Thank you, Kevin, for being so kind.” A camera cannot record that! Rephrase the statement. “Kevin, you found Mia’s blanket and gave it to her...”

**Step 3: Relate the child’s behavior to how it helped someone else or the entire class.** Stating the behavior’s impact on others demonstrates that we are all in this together while teaching the value of connection and helpfulness. “So \_\_\_\_\_,” accomplishes this goal. “Kevin, you found Mia’s blanket and gave it to her so she could cuddle it in the Safe Place.”

**Step 4: End the description with a tag.** Tags can help us wean ourselves off of judgments and toward acceptance. At first, it may feel odd to describe without judging “Good job” or “Thank you.” Start using the tag “That was helpful.” Then broaden the tags to describe attributes or values. Eventually, drop the tags entirely and just notice. Below is a list of tags and suggested uses.

#### Tags that describe attributes—use regularly:

- That took determination.
- That was gutsy.
- You sure are organized.

#### Tags that describe values—use lavishly:

- That was helpful.
- That was thoughtful.
- That was kind, caring, loving, etc.

You may ask, “Can’t I ever tell children they did a wonderful job?” Of course you can, but don’t overuse this kind of general praise. Such comments are like antibiotics—when overused they can cause long-term problems.



***Judgment demonstrates conditional love—love that makes demands. Acceptance demonstrates unconditional love—love that makes no demands. Judging makes it about us, while noticing makes it about the children.***

We will get more of the behaviors on which we focus (Power of Attention, Chapter 5). Our focus also determines what we strengthen within ourselves and others. When we focus on children being good, we teach them to please others and seek specialness (to be better than others) in order to feel worthy. When we focus on children being bad, we teach them to rebel and seek specialness through negative attention or being less than. When we notice their strengths, we teach them about their abilities. When we notice their choice to comply with an assertive command, we increase compliance. When we encourage their contributions to others, we teach them the importance of sharing their strengths. We can use noticing to encourage children in a variety of situations. For now we will focus on noticing to encourage compliance after giving an assertive command, to highlight kind and helpful acts, and to encourage children's unique gifts.

## **Noticing to Encourage Compliance After an Assertive Command**

It is essential to use noticing for children who choose to comply with our commands. As we recall from Chapter 5, a request is optional and can be appropriately acknowledged with a "thanks." However, if we use "thank you" with an assertive command, it sends the message that compliance is about our approval instead of their accomplishment. The same is true when we respond to a child's compliance to a nonnegotiable command with "Good job." Good job is about our evaluation of the child's initiative, while "You did it" or "Good for you" is all about the child's autonomy. To encourage compliance and praise effectively, use noticing.

### **The formula for noticing compliance with an assertive command:**

You did it!

You \_\_\_\_ (describe in detail without judgment).

"You did it! You put on your backpack and stood by the front door."

**Optional ending:** Tag with "Good for you!" "Way to go!"

Noticing compliance focuses on the behavior we want to see and brings children's awareness to all they have accomplished. Choosing to comply with an assertive command is a major achievement! Encourage children using the formula for noticing compliance, even after repeating the command five times. A child's decision to cooperate is always worth encouraging, even if it sometimes takes longer than we think it should. Use phrases like "You did it," "Good for you," and "Way to go," rather than "Good job," or "Thank you."

## **Noticing to Encourage Kindness and Helpfulness**

"My job is to keep the classroom safe. Your job is to help keep it safe," is the Safekeeper's mantra. Children's main job in the classroom is to be helpful. We must notice their helpful acts in order for them to be successful at this job. Notice helpful acts privately to each child and publicly to the class. During the first six weeks of school, notice at least 10 kind and helpful acts per day.

and reward removes the social problem solving that is crucial for **prefrontal lobe development**. Each person in a group (whether it be a school, family or society), **requires social connection** and encouragement to know how important her unique contribution is to the whole system. We need to offer each other comfort, support, ideas, feedback and **encouragement to help build** our own and each other's prefrontal lobes and self-worth.

***In Conscious Discipline the children's job is "To help keep the classroom safe." When children contribute to others by being helpful, the brain's natural joy juice serves as a powerful replacement for external rewards.***

Relationships shape the function and structure of our brain. The prefrontal lobes develop in reciprocal and attuned interactions with others. The days in school where we demand six hours of looking at your own paper, eyes forward, with no talking and minding your own business have got to give way—not to distract from education but to enhance it. We must teach children to seek help from each other, offer help to each other, and create relationships based on trust, caring and mutual respect.

## The Skill of Encouragement

Encouragement is about noticing, connecting and accepting children. Most of us have heard young children say, "Look at me!" a million times or so. Children want and need to be seen. Our focused attention (as described in the last chapter) is a powerful force, and the way we express that focused attention can be encouraging or discouraging. Children's growth can be stymied when we repeatedly judge them by saying, "Good job," "Good girl," or "You're the best." Children will be tickled when we respond, "Yes, I see you." Children's brain development will be optimized when we notice by saying, "Wow! You are balancing on one foot and your arms are like this (demonstrate arm position for the child)." If our goal is to meet the developmental needs of children in optimal ways, all we really need to do is describe the efforts and accomplishments we see through noticing.

Noticing, as discussed earlier, is essentially the act of reflecting the child's actions back to him without judgment. It is essential to encouragement.

***When we judge too often, the excited 4-year-old child who shouts, "Look at me!" grows into an anxious 8-year-old who asks, "Is this okay?"***

## Noticing for Encouragement

Encouragement is about accepting children for who they are. When we judge children, we tell them who we think they should be by putting a label on them and their behavior. Judgment demonstrates **conditional** love—love that makes demands. Acceptance demonstrates **unconditional** love—love that makes no demands. Judging makes it about us, while noticing makes it about the children. Judgment comes from our emotional state and stimulates the emotional state of children. Noticing comes from our executive state and stimulates the executive state of children. Noticing tends to connect us with others while judgment disconnects us.

is no more helpful than ignoring attention-seeking behaviors. Look at celebrities; they receive enormous amounts of attention and many of their lives are a mess. The solution can only come when we meet the underlying need for connection.

**Attention** is a call for help. It is an effort to draw others' attention to a missing skill, thing or quality. Calling for attention is something we do when we fall overboard on a ship: We make as much noise as possible in hopes that we are seen, our need is realized and someone tosses us a lifeline! Calling for attention says, "Something within me is missing," and the missing need is often related to connection and the beneficial joy juice that comes with it.

**Connection** is a form of responsive attunement. It is a gift we give when we relinquish our self-centered view of the world in order to participate fully with another person. When we connect, we let go of our judgments about how others should be, release our biases of how things should go, stop listening to the false messages chattering in our heads and become present. In these moments of connection, all is well.

Children require authentic connection (with eye contact, touch, presence and playfulness as previously discussed) for growth and development. Children who seek attention are defending against connection. They learned early in life that the vulnerability of connection generates pain and loss. So, they traded in connection with its feel-good, brain-building joy juice and settled for whatever bits of positive or negative attention they could get. Many educators have compounded this problem by trading the joy juice of connection for the "stuff" of tangible rewards.

We've already discussed how connection fast tracks our access to joy juice. Being of service to others has a similar effect. Research demonstrates the following:

- Being of service to others changes our brain chemistry, activating our prefrontal lobes and integrating the brain for optimal learning.
- Helping others triggers the reward centers in the brain. MRI studies show that cooperative and kind acts arouse the brain's reward centers and flood the brain with happiness-inducing dopamine (Emory University Health Sciences Center, 2002).
- Being of service to others helps regulate the clacker of our autonomic nervous system and turns off the fight-or-flight response in the body.
- People who offer compassion to others experience increased oxytocin levels. Oxytocin promotes long-term bonds, caring and commitments to others, and gives us a feeling of trust and connection (Keltner, Marsh, & Smith, 2010).

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Rubin is a young boy attending public school at Alkali Creek Elementary in Billings, Montana. His story demonstrates the power of being of service. Rubin has a very difficult time regulating himself, especially during loosely-structured times like the beginning of school. His school had been implementing Conscious Discipline for years and knew he needed additional assistance regulating himself. Their answer was to give Rubin more opportunities to be helpful to others. On Monday, Rubin was the office helper, on Tuesday he helped the librarian and so on. Rubin said the following in a recorded interview, "I like helping because it shows I care and it helps me not be mean to others." Watch Rubin share his wisdom in a video on the portal.

The adults' job in Conscious Discipline is to keep the classroom safe and the children's job is to help keep it safe. Essentially, the children's job is to be helpful. When children contribute to others by being helpful, the brain's natural joy juice serves as a powerful replacement for the "stuff" of external rewards. Any system that relies on controlling others through punishment

You Rituals.” They’re face-to-face, high intensity, relational moments that involve eye contact, touch and presence in a playful situation. These moments produce joy juice, a combination of positive brain chemicals including dopamine, oxytocin and opioids. This brain chemistry creates joyful feelings that literally wire the brain for impulse control and willingness. Using our highway metaphor, it paves a road through the swamp from Miami to Orlando! Joy juice enhances the regulatory functions of the prefrontal lobe to a degree scientists say is similar to the positive effects of a dose of Ritalin (Panksepp & Burgdorf, 2003). Joy juice also promotes resiliency in the face of stress and creates a “Yes I can!” life attitude (Sunderland, 2006).

***Joy juice is a combination of positive brain chemicals including dopamine, oxytocin and opioids. This brain chemistry creates joyful feelings that literally wire the brain for impulse control and willingness.***

Our social brains are wired to benefit from connecting activities like I Love You Rituals. They’re not just for infants and preschoolers. Loving moments of connection that involve eye contact, touch and presence in a playful situation are essential at all ages. Watch the “I Love You Rituals - Your Guide For Meaningful Connections” video on your portal. Children who have trouble with eye contact, touch, being present, engaging and being appropriately playful are our most challenging children. They have not formed the roads from our highway metaphor needed for regulation. No reward or punishment can make a child behave appropriately without this integrated wiring; it’s like asking a child without arms to throw a ball. It is essential that our school cultures include connection-intensive activities daily so both children and adults get regular doses of brain-enriching joy juice. Remember, these activities require face-to-face interactions that involve eye contact, touch, presence and a playful situation. All of us could use a little help managing our thoughts, emotions and behaviors, being more willing to work with others, keeping our attention system online, and handling stress more effectively. Connection-intensive activities provide the top-down brain integration necessary for all this and more.



Neuroscientist Dr. Candace Pert (1999) says each of us has a drugstore within us, with the finest drugs at the cheapest cost. Some of the hormones and neurochemicals that surge through our bodies feel great and some feel awful. Too much relational stress in childhood robs many of us of steady access to the feel-good chemicals. Connection, belonging and being of service to others stimulate the brain’s reward pathway to release joy juice. Without these beneficial chemicals, many children will trade inner joy for a quick high from external drugs.

## **Connection vs. Attention**

Connection floods our systems with beneficial joy juice. Unfortunately, connection is often confused with attention. I would love to have a dime for every time I have heard a teacher or parent say, “Ignore him, he just wants attention.”

“Ignore him, he just wants attention,” never made sense to me. All behavior is a form of communication. If a child is communicating to us, why would we ignore the communication and think a problem is going to improve? I am also very clear that getting too much attention

# Becoming Brain Smart

“The Golden Rule is genetically embedded deep in our neurobiology (Cozolino, 2013). Relationships are the cradle of all learning. Brains grow best when they are face-to-face, mind-to-mind and heart-to-heart with caring others.” Our brains are wired to connect, attune with, resonate with and learn from each other. For this reason, a child must be able to answer the questions “Am I safe?” and “Am I loved?” in the affirmative in order to develop skills like goal achievement, self-regulation and getting along with others. Without these skills, education reform is no more than rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. At birth, a human is essentially helpless. Biology creates an innate need for connection to ensure the baby survives. Our basic need to connect with others jumpstarts a 24-year process of prefrontal lobe development.

At birth, the prefrontal lobes are particularly undeveloped and require social nurturing and attuned relationships to develop into the goal-achieving, problem-solving, empathetic powerhouse it is capable of becoming. Being excluded from a group is painful and derails the functioning of the brain, significantly dampening academic achievement. Yet the majority of common discipline practices are designed to exclude.

*Did you know? Social and emotional pain is mediated by the same neural systems that regulate physical pain.*

## Wiring the Brain Top-Down for Impulse Control and Willingness

When we examine all the fascinating research about the brain, one gem emerges: Nurturing, attuned connections with others builds neural connections within the brain that literally wire it for willingness and impulse control. Our attachment with our babies and our connection with our students integrates the brain. The survival state communicates with the emotional state, which communicates with the executive state. These systems must work in an integrated fashion for optimal success, with the higher systems regulating the lower systems. We call this top-down brain integration.

Imagine we live in Orlando, Florida and want to drive to Miami, Florida. It would be helpful to have a road. It would be extremely helpful if that road was a major highway. Without such roads, we would be trudging through swamps amid spiders, snakes and alligators! We might find ourselves giving up on the journey or living in such terror that every shadow looks like a wolf (or in this case an alligator). This is what can happen to children who lack nurturing relationships. The neural pathways (roads) from the lower centers of the brain (brain stem and limbic system) to the higher centers of the brain (prefrontal lobes) are unpaved, making them difficult to travel. This causes children to get stuck in unregulated, stressful states where they may react explosively or rigidly try to control everything. We pave our neural pathways through face-to-face interactions that involve eye contact, touch and presence in a playful situation.

Most everyone has played a social game with a baby (patty-cake, peekaboo) or has giggled with glee roughhousing with preschoolers. One of my favorite games with my granddaughter is adapted from Baby Doll Circle Time: “All around the room I look. Where is Maddie? I look up high, I look down low. BOO! Maddie was hiding.” I call these types of social games “I Love

### **The Two-step Call for Help Teaching Process**

#### **Step 1: Empower the students to respond to Jeb**

The teacher walks over to the table. She speaks first to the children who seem distraught with Jeb's behavior by saying, "Is Jeb's talking and fidgeting bothering you?" If the response is affirmative, the teacher then coaches the students to assertively communicate with Jeb. She might say, "Tap Jeb on the shoulder, wait for him to look at you and say, *I can't focus on my work when you are talking. Please be quiet.*"

#### **Step 2: Using a Call for Help perceptual frame**

The teacher then turns to Jeb. She might say, "Jeb, it seems you are having trouble focusing on your journal. What could you do to help yourself stay focused?" The teacher could also elicit assistance from the children by saying, "Jeb seems to be having trouble staying focused on his journal. What could we do to help him?"

### **Labeling the Child Bad, a One-step Process**

#### **Step 1: Deliver the prescribed consequence to Jeb**

The teacher sees the disruption and walks over to the table. She speaks firmly and directly to Jeb. "Jeb, what should you be doing? It is time for journal writing. You are bothering the other students at your table. Go move your sign to yellow."

## **Situation 2: Eileen Needs Help Managing a Difficult Morning or Eileen is Being Rude**

Eileen enters the classroom with a grumpy look on her face. Her body is tense. She ignores the greeter and bumps into several children, knocking them out of the way. The children scream for the teacher.

### **The Two-step Call for Help Teaching Process**

#### **Step 1: Empower the students to respond to Eileen**

The teacher responds to the situation by going to the children who were bumped and notices, "Eileen bumped into you as she walked by. Did you like it?" Several children shake their heads. "Then tell Eileen, *Please watch where you are going. It hurt when you bumped me.*"

#### **Step 2: Using a Call for Help perceptual frame**

The teacher then turns to Eileen and notices, "Eileen, you seem grumpy and tense this morning. Something seems to be frustrating you. What could you do that would help you handle this moment?" The teacher could also elicit assistance from the children in the classroom by saying, "Eileen seems to have had some frustrations getting to school this morning. What could we do to help her calm herself?" (Remember to say, "Help her feel better," instead of, "Make her feel better.")

### **Labeling the Child Bad, a One-step Process**

#### **Step 1: Deliver the prescribed consequence to Eileen**

The teacher hears the children's cries and goes directly to Eileen. She looks at her disapprovingly and says, "Eileen, it is not nice to push your friends. Pay attention to where you're going. How would you feel if they bumped into you like that? Take a slip from the box. If you get two more slips, you will not have recess today."

## The “Call for Help” Perceptual Frame

Teachers play a significant role in how children perceive each other and misbehavior. We have a choice. We can teach children to see others who act inappropriately as bad and deserving rejection, or we can teach children that these behaviors are a call for help. The choice to teach condemnation or compassion is ours.

Conscious Discipline asks us to use compassionate eyes to see **all** misbehavior as a plea that says, “Help me handle this in a successful way.” Take a deep breath and then think about the following common occurrences:

- A child bumps into another on his way to the bathroom.
- A child pushes another aside while selecting her crayons.
- A child calls his friend a big, fat snob.

Which of these children need help learning a new skill and which are troublemakers?

Conscious Discipline teaches that all of these children are missing important skills. The first child may need help in focusing attention, becoming aware of his body’s cues and/or managing spatial relationships. The second child may need help with impulse control and the social skill of asking for a turn. The third child may need help learning to manage and express powerful emotions (like frustration) constructively.

At any given moment, children feel safe and are extending love to others through helpful behaviors, or they feel threatened and are calling for help by acting in ways that are hurtful to themselves or others. We can judge and punish children for behaviors like the ones in the examples above, or we can see the call for help and teach new skills. The way in which we choose to perceive misbehavior dictates both how we will resolve the situation and how the rest of the class will perceive the misbehaving child. One perception creates a discouraging culture and a need to be “good enough” in order to belong. The other creates an encouraging culture with a felt sense of belonging. Seeing the call for help is not about letting children get away with poor behavior; it is about teaching children what we expect them to do and holding them accountable to those teachings.

A two-step process guides our path when we choose to respond to a child’s call for help. This process teaches new skills to the misbehaving child, to the children she has impacted and to bystanders who are observing. Step one involves approaching the children who were impacted and teaching them to set an assertive limit. Step two teaches the misbehaving child a helpful way to get her needs met.

Below are two situations where teachers respond to a child’s call for help. One teacher responds by unconsciously labeling the child as bad. The other sees the child’s call for help. Which perception would you rather model for yourself and the children in your care?

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### **Situation 1: Jeb Needs Help Focusing or Jeb is Being Disruptive**

Jeb is sitting at a table with four other children. The class is independently working on journal writing. Jeb is not focused on his writing. Instead, he is talking and fidgeting. The other children look distracted and annoyed.

are through our interactions with others. The way we perceive and interact with each other answers, "Who am I?" in one of two ways: "I am worthy," or "I am unworthy." The way we answer this fundamental question colors how we interact with the world.

***The way we answer the fundamental question, "Who am I?" colors how we interact with the world.***

We do not earn self-worth through accomplishments and getting. We reaffirm or deny our worthiness every day in interactions with other people. When we see others as lacking, we feel inadequate ourselves. In this state of inadequacy, we experience ourselves as isolated and separate. We feel lonely, and we project our fears and insecurities onto others. We spend our lives trying to get our needs met. Life becomes about getting instead of giving.

Seeing the best in others creates worthiness within us and defines others as worthy. From this state of worthiness and equality, we can experience our true connection with others. Life becomes about giving instead of getting. A teacher who sees through the eyes of unity might say to a fidgety, disruptive child, "Looking at all those problems can be overwhelming. What help do you need to get focused?" She encourages a sense of worthiness in the child and herself. We cannot create an encouraging School Family unless we change our perceptions and children's perceptions of misbehavior and conflict.

We place value on and give meaning to situations based on our mental models. As we've already discussed, our perceptions saturate our world with meaning. Because of this, teachers have an awesome responsibility to be conscious of the meaning they attribute to life events. Our internal state dictates the meaning we will attribute, so we must vigilantly commit to the Skill of Composure in order to stay in the higher centers of our brains. The way we perceive others, events and situations trains our students to see these things in the same way. It also defines each child as worthy or unworthy.

Whatever we offer others (love, judgment, criticism, compassion), we strengthen within ourselves. We exist, not in empty space, but in a sea of information and energy that is transferred from one to another. In the material world, when we give something (a toaster) to someone else, we no longer possess it. The other person has the toaster and we do not. The same does not apply in the realm of thoughts and emotions. We can't get rid of negative, positive or guilty thoughts by giving them to someone else. Unlike toasters, thoughts never leave their source. The judgments, criticisms, complaints, encouragement, joy and love we think we are giving to others are really gifts to ourselves.

The situations below seek to clarify these concepts:

Teacher A sees a child off task and comments, "What should you be doing? You better get busy. You will never finish if you continue to waste time." This teacher did not err in what she said; her mistake was her perception. In seeing the child off task, the teacher judged the child to be acting poorly. She discourages herself first by seeing what was not good enough, then discourages the child as she speaks from that perception. Both teacher and child are left feeling disconnected, discouraged and inadequate. In addition, the teacher has trained the other children in the class to view this child in the same negative light.

Stressful Way to Perceive Behavior		Healthy Way to Perceive Behavior	
Good	Bad	Safe	Unsafe (dangerous)
Deserving	Undeserving	Calm	Distressed
Should feel good	Should feel bad	Helpful	Hurtful
Innocent	Guilty	Solutions	Calling for help

***Safe behavior implies an inner state of peace or appreciation. Unsafe behavior indicates some form of distress.***

Traditional systems based on rewards, punishments and specialness teach children that positive attention is better than connection and negative attention is better than no attention at all. It takes away from our essential message of belonging: “We are all in this together, and each person’s unique talents are essential.” Focusing on specialness instead of seeing children as unique, essential contributors is counterproductive to creating a felt sense of belonging. If we recall the highlighter and flashlight example from the Power of Attention, our focus illuminates the aspects of life we deem valuable. One teacher might say, “Good job, Beth. You got a 100 percent on your spelling test. Three more of these and you will earn a pencil with your name on it.” Another teacher might say, “You did it, Beth. You worked hard on your spelling and look what you accomplished! You can now help others with spelling difficulties.” Both responses comment on the child’s success, but they do it in different ways. The first response fosters specialness and values the accumulation of material goods. The second one supports unity, connection and service to others. We have the fundamental choice to teach children to value their own personal specialness or we can teach them to value contributing their unique talents for the betterment of all. The choice is ours.

Children need to be of service. Whom and how they serve must be developmentally appropriate in order to be meaningful. A child’s understanding of the world expands with age. Kindergarteners best understand being of service to their families and class members. By fourth grade, they can also relate to the benefits of community service. Developmentally, asking kindergarteners to participate in a food drive is not as effective a form of service as having them carry groceries into their own homes. Younger students can be cheerleaders for older students who take part in state and national tests. Older children can do community projects like adopting “grandparents” at a nursing home or helping the homeless. These efforts may be tied to curriculum areas, adding meaning to academics.

## How We See Defines What We See

Our unity yields some profound truths that impact the way we define our world, each other and ourselves.

True connection flows from one worthy person to another in the form of giving. Each of us has tried to answer the question, “Who am I?” We have assigned ourselves numerous traits and roles based on our expectations and judgments, yet we can only truly discover who we

categorizes people as good and bad, haves and have-nots, or winners and losers. In order for one person to be special (better than), someone else must be less than. This creates a persistent state of stress as children live in constant fear of becoming the lesser person. Many will simply give up or seek to find their specialness outside the norm through negative attention rather than connection.

***Essentially, specialness happens in one of two ways: By seeking to be the best, have the best or do the best, or by seeking to be the worst, be oppositional or be shut down.***

Specialness is the antithesis of unity, based on comparisons instead of contributions. Separating people into the two categories of good and bad provides children with two conceptual buckets they will fill with prejudicial views of humanity. Some may come to believe that good people are Caucasian, while bad people are people of color. Others may come to see good people as thin, while heavy-set people are bad. These buckets become the lens they use to separate each other into "us" and "them," forgetting that our true nature is the unity of "we." Institutions that seek to embrace diversity, yet utilize systems relying on specialness (including rewards and punishments), will not obtain their most valued goals. Diversity can only be accepted on a foundation of unity.

I remember attending my first World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) Conference. It was held in Poland. I was young, the cold war was raging and Poland was a communist country. Growing up, I was taught communism was a serious threat. Arriving in Warsaw, I saw men with guns, which further solidified my fears. I was literally sick to my stomach. My mind held all Polish people as the bad guys, and I was the good guy. It took less than a day for me to interact with enough people to see our commonality. My Polish neighbors were people just like me who wanted to raise their children to be healthy, have loving relationships and earn a decent living. I remember my anger at the United States for the propaganda I had received and even more angry with myself for believing that people are their governments. My commitment to myself at that young age was to see all people as an extension of myself, to see past their beliefs, see past their behaviors and see the unity underlying us all. It was a profound trip that changed the course of my life.

If we see behavior through the lens of good and bad, we create two categories of people and two value systems for their treatment. Children judged to be good deserve to be treated with respect, deserve to be a part of the group, deserve to feel worthy and are often seen as innocent victims of circumstance when they misbehave. Children judged to be bad deserve whatever it takes to put them in line, deserve to be excluded from the group, deserve to feel unworthy and are seen as flawed when they misbehave.

Instead of systematically judging good and bad, Conscious Discipline offers a healthier perception by focusing on safety. Perceiving behavior as safe or unsafe sets us up to see misbehavior as a call for help rather than disrespect. Safe behavior implies an inner state of peace or appreciation. Unsafe behavior indicates some form of distress. If a child's inner state is one of peace, his behavior is most likely helpful and he is willing to look for solutions. If a child's inner state is one of upset, his behavior is most likely hurtful. He is calling for help. The following chart summarizes these two views of behaviors

wishes for himself." All religions point us to an idea of oneness and compassion that basically says, "We are all in this together. When one is harmed, all are harmed. When one is helped, all are healed." The School Family is built upon a foundational belief in our connection to each other. It goes beyond creating a positive school climate or a cooperative learning community, to creating a compassionate school culture based on the principles of unity. Thus, the Golden Rule is the law of the land in the School Family.

**Commitment:**

I am willing to acknowledge that on some level we are all interconnected to each other. This oneness cannot be seen, but is sensed and felt on a deeper level. I am willing to embrace everyone as part of my extended family, treating each person as I wish to be treated.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Uniqueness Unifies, Specialness Divides

We are all unique expressions of a common energy. Our true nature is both unity and uniqueness. Our interconnectedness does not erase our individuality; it accentuates it. No two people are alike and each person has the opportunity to contribute her unique talents to the success of the whole. The body, as I described it earlier, is a good metaphor for the simultaneousness of integration and uniqueness. All cells in the body are interrelated. Yet each cell performs specific, unique functions to support the whole. Without each and every cell contributing its unique function, the whole organism suffers. (Imagine how poorly our bodies would function if the liver said, "I refuse to work with the lungs; they're stubborn and incompetent!") We are all cells in the body of humanity and we can no longer operate under the notion that we're separate. As such, our job is to discover our unique gifts and offer them to the whole.

Traditionally, we have utilized specialness as a way to build self-esteem. We asked children to be special helpers and write, "I am special because \_\_\_\_." Unfortunately, programs that seek to help children feel special teach them to focus on being better than or less than others. Getting ahead through competition becomes more important than getting along with others. This "getting" relies on external forces to deliver a sense of worthiness. (Adults operating under the same mindset seek fulfillment through external means like getting a new car, getting children to behave or getting others' approval.)

Programs based on the Power of Unity operate differently. They teach children to focus on giving. Giving relies on our internal resources to bring about a sense of worthiness. Giving is transformative in that it requires us to be the change we want to see instead of getting others to do things differently. We break the cycle of "Do what I say, not what I do" and become models for the behaviors we seek. To access the Power of Unity, we must relinquish the need to be special (which comes from judging behavior as good or bad) in favor of embracing our innate uniqueness and need to be of service. We ask children to write, "I am unique because \_\_\_\_ and it helps my School Family by \_\_\_\_."

As discussed in the School Family chapter, most schools have competitive, individualistic school climates. Children who are good (special) are rewarded, often sacrificing our intrinsic desire for connection with a drive to be better than others. This competitive striving systematically

# The Power of Unity

Have you ever wondered how wireless communication works? Recently, I called a friend in Africa on my cell phone. Shortly following that, I called my neighbor. Both calls made a wireless connection with the other person almost instantly. That seems like a miracle to me! Wireless technology works because of electromagnetic waves that pass through the air at the speed of light. We can't see these waves, but they carry energy and information. Evidently, the empty space between us is not so empty!

Research indicates humans also communicate wirelessly. Most of us know this from our life's experiences as we sense someone is looking at us as, know the phone is going to ring right before it happens, or sense our loved ones' distress. It seems we, too, can communicate energetically through the sea of electromagnetic waves in which we live. The electromagnetic waves humans emit can be measured through devices like the electrocardiogram (EKG) and the electroencephalogram (EEG). The amount of electromagnetic energy emitted by our brains can run a 10-watt light bulb (McCraty, Tiller, Atkinson, 1996). Everything we see and don't see around us is vibrating at one frequency or another, and so are we. We all live in the same ocean of energy and information, and so we are quite literally "all in this together."

It is a basic physiological fact that our heart and brain exchange information that governs how we think, act and feel. Research at the Institute of HeartMath.org shows that heart-brain interactions also occur between individuals. The findings show that at a conversational distance, the electromagnetic signal generated by one person's heart can influence the other person's brain rhythms (McCraty, Deyhle & Childre, 2012). Most of us have experienced this by being around a person we instantly enjoyed or with whom something felt slightly off. Both of these interactions changed our internal states and biased our perception of the other person. We also feel this energy when walking into schools. Some feel happy and welcoming, while others feel tense and negative. This is due to resonance, a term referring to the act of frequencies of energy lining up and beating in unison. When an extremely high energy meets a lower energy, the energies must harmonize by reaching some form of equilibrium. The stronger vibration almost always wins. If one child in a classroom is experiencing rage and the rest of the classroom is being a S.T.A.R. (Smile, Take a deep breath And Relax) and wishing well, the raging child will calm. Of course, the reverse is also true: If a raging child is in a classroom with the teacher yelling, "Calm down," and the rest of the class feels the threat, they all will eventually end up in a survival state. That is the Power of Unity.

## Activity for Wishing Well

Try this experiment: Take a deep S.T.A.R. breath and wish well from deep in your heart the next time you encounter a grumpy, complaining person. Don't say a word; just notice if any changes occur through wishing well in that "empty" space.

Accepting the fact that we are all in this together leads us directly to a compassionate worldview. It is amazing to look at all the world's religions and discover they each call upon some version of the Golden Rule: to treat others the way you want to be treated. This concept is an ethical code that has guided much of humanity's morality. Christianity states, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In the Talmud, Rabbi Hillel is believed to have said, "What is hateful to yourself, do not do to your fellow man. That is the whole Torah; the rest is just commentary." Islam states, "None of you (truly) believes until he wishes for his brother what he

Chapter 6

# ENCOURAGEMENT

*Building the School Family*

*Encouraging children to help others  
creates a sense of belonging in which  
the intrinsic desire to be of service  
outshines attention-seeking behaviors.*



Let's pretend for a moment that all of humanity is one entity with many cells working together, similar to our bodies. Imagine each person you encounter represents a cell whose unique, healthy functioning is essential to your wellbeing. Would you choose to bathe your cells in the stress chemicals produced by judgment, criticism and condemnation, or would you prefer to bathe them in the feel-good, brain-building chemicals of joy and connection?

The Power of Unity operates from the notion that the above "pretend" scenario is essentially true: we are each unique, yet intricately and inextricably connected to one another. Our drive for connection is hardwired into our DNA. Some of our thoughts and actions strengthen this wiring, while others poison it.

The Power of Unity reminds us we are interconnected; we are all in this together. In Conscious Discipline, we express this belief by creating a School Family, as described in Chapter 3. All of the powers and skills of Conscious Discipline are embedded in the School Family, however, that they are nearly inseparable. The Power of Unity, as expressed through the School Family, creates a compassionate culture that is scientifically and practically designed to correct the life paths of disconnected, hurtful children while simultaneously encouraging all children to contribute to the health of the whole. The icon for the Power of Unity is a globe. Watch a video about the Power of Unity on the portal for a more in-depth understanding.

