



Welcome & Introductions

Hybrid Gathering

Tonight, we welcome both in-person and Zoom participants to our Early Childhood Coalition Community of Practice.

Our Purpose

We're here to learn, reflect, and grow together as professionals, supporting one another as we navigate the challenges and joys of early childhood education.

*Early Childhood Coalition Communities of practice Collaborative:
Expertise, Compassionate Care, Lasting Impact.*

The ECC Community of Practice is dedicated to creating safe, caring, and empathetic communities that empower children and families to build strong relationships, fostering a foundation for lifelong learning through collaborative expertise and compassion.

Understanding
Behavior as
communication

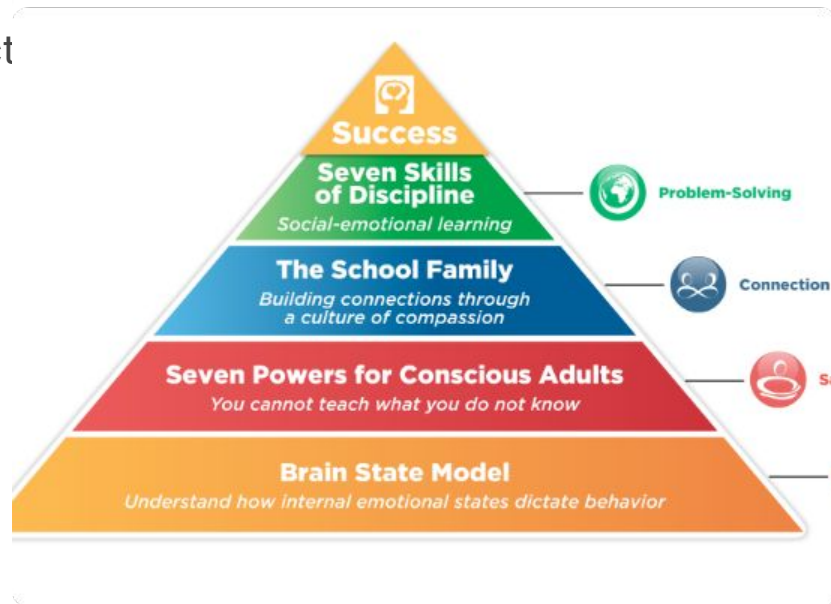


ACTION IS A MESSAGE

What is the child saying?

In Conscious Discipline and the Pyramid Model, behavior is seen as a signal. When a child acts out, they are expressing a need or a lack of self-regulation skills.

- ✓ **Forms of Communication:** Crying, hitting, withdrawing, or compliance.
- ✓ **Functions (EATS):** Escape, Attention, Tangible gains, or Sensory needs.



The Iceberg of Classroom Behavior

Visible Classroom Behavior

(Actions we see)

Hitting & Pushing



Yelling & Screaming



Refusal to Cooperate



Running from the Classroom (Bolting)



Shutdown & Disengagement

Sensory Overload/
Dysregulation



Difficulty in
Communication



Lagging Executive
Function Skills



Unmet Physiological
Needs (Hunger/Sleep)



Perceived Threats
to Safety



History of Trauma

Functional Drivers

(Root causes & Skill gaps)



Brain States & Their "Voice"



SURVIVAL

The Voice of Alarm

Primary Question: "Am I safe?"
Behavior: Non-verbal, physical, reflexive.



EMOTIONAL

The Voice of Upset

Primary Question: "Am I loved?"
Behavior: Verbal, blaming, shaming, seeking attention.



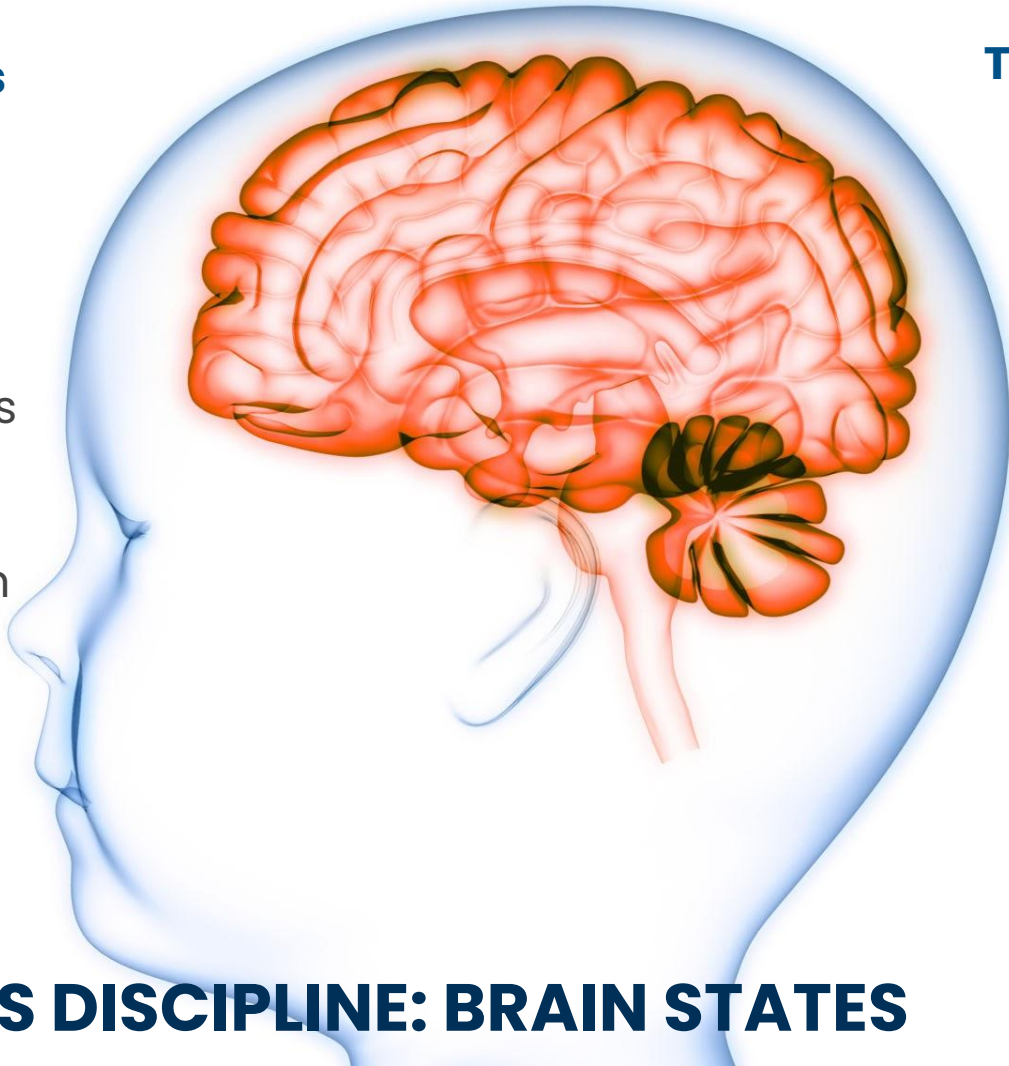
EXECUTIVE

The Voice of Reason

Primary Question: "What can I learn?"
Behavior: Flexible, empathic, reflective.

The Neural-Basis

Dr. Becky Bailey's model categorizes child (and adult) states into three distinct areas that govern our ability to respond to the world around us.

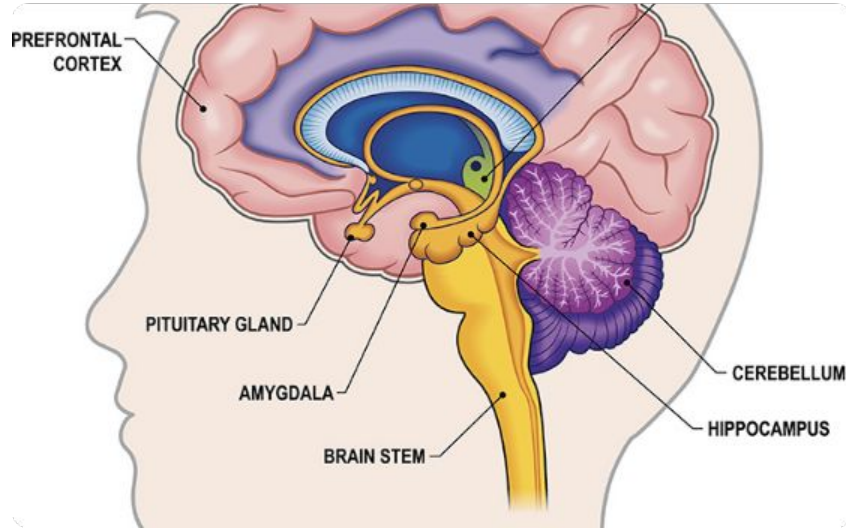


The Adult's Role

We cannot teach what we do not possess. Our internal state dictates the child's ability to regulate. We must be "conscious" to be effective.

CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE: BRAIN STATES

The Neurosequential Model



Hierarchical Organization

The brain develops and functions from the **bottom-up**:

- 1. Brainstem:** Survival, autonomic functions.
- 2. Diencephalon:** Motor regulation, sleep.
- 3. Limbic System:** Emotional reactivity, attachment.
- 4. Cortex:** Executive function, logic, reasoning.

"You cannot reach the cortex without passing through the lower brain states first."

SURVIVAL AND EMOTIONAL STATES

Survival State (Brain Stem): "Am I Safe?" Triggered by threat. Results in fight, flight, or freeze. In this state, a child needs physical safety and composure, not lectures.

Emotional State (Limbic System): "Am I Loved?" Triggered by upset or social exclusion. Results in verbal aggression or crying. In this state, a child needs connection and empathy.



Survival Dialect: "Am I Safe?"

Brain Stem Survival State



The Survival State | Brain Stem

- In this state we are asking: Am I safe?
- The developmental need is safety.
- A trigger for this state can be a perceived or real threat.
- Behaviors exhibited in this state are fight, flight or surrender.
- Structures or skills to use when in this state:
 - = Notting (Your face, arm, etc. is going like this.)
 - A = Assertiveness (Adult)
 - B = Boundaries in pictures
 - C = Composure (S.T.A.R.)
 - S = Safe Place



Conscious
Discipline

Aggression (Fight): Hitting or biting is often a reflexive attempt to push a perceived threat away.

Bolting (Flight): Running away is a signal that the sensory environment is overstimulating or terrifying.

Withdrawal (Freeze): Staring blankly or hiding is a signal of "dissociation"—the brain is trying to mentally escape.

The Message: "I am overwhelmed. I need you to be my external regulator."

Safety: The Survival State

Calming the Brainstem

When in a Survival State, the brain is scanning for threat. Regulation requires:

Predictability: Consistent routines.

Rhythm: Walking, drumming, breathing.

Presence: A regulated adult (Self-regulation is the first step).



Emotional Dialect: "Am I Loved?"



Whining

Translation: "I don't feel powerful or connected enough to use my 'big' voice right now."



"You're Mean!"

Translation: "I am hurting inside and I don't know how to handle these big feelings of rejection."



Clinging

Translation: "My internal battery is low. I need to borrow your calm and presence to feel secure."

WORDS THAT HELP CALM A CHILD'S EMOTIONAL BRAIN

WHEN FEELINGS TAKE OVER,
CALM WORDS HELP THE BRAIN FEEL SAFE AGAIN.

www.SocialWorkersToolbox.com

SAFETY AND CONNECTION

I am right here with you.

You are safe with me. ♥

I will stay until
this feels easier. ♥

UNDERSTANDING

I can see this is
really hard for you.

Your body is having
a big feeling. ♥

Something does not
feel right now.

REDUCING OVERWHELM

Your body is reacting
strongly right now. ♥

We can slow this down together.

You do not need to do
anything right now.

HELPING THE BODY SETTLE

Let us take a slow
breath together.

Put your feet on
the floor with me.

Feel the chair or the
ground holding you.

SUPPORT AND REASSURANCE

I will help you
with this.

We can work it out
together.

This feeling will pass.

AFTER THE PEAK

Thank you for telling me.

That was a lot for your body.

You did really well getting
through that.

Fun ATi Callbacks

ADULT SAYS



Banana Split



Oh me



Zip, zip, zap



Hands



Popcorn pop



Bubble gum



Tooty fruity



Wiggle wiggle



Ready to roll?

KIDS SAY

I know how to sit



Oh my



We're all that



Are at my sides



Time to stop!



Here we come!



Goody, goody



Freeze and giggle!



Rock and roll!



Tier 1: Relationships are the Tool

The Power of "Connection"



Dr. Perry notes that **brief, frequent relational interactions** are more powerful than occasional long therapy sessions.

"The most powerful therapy is a healthy relationship... it provides the 'dose' of regulation needed to change the brain."

A Unified Strategy

"We do not learn from people we do not like, and we cannot learn when we are afraid. Neurology dictates that connection must precede curriculum."

Neurology
The "Why"

Conscious Discipline
The "How-To"

Pyramid Model
The "Framework"

THE EXECUTIVE STATE

"What Can I Learn?"

The prefrontal cortex is the seat of problem-solving and logic. This is the only state where true learning and skill-building occur.

The Strategy: We must move the child through safety and connection to reach this state before attempting to solve the problem.

Dr. Bruce Perry's Key Insights

- ✓ **State-Dependent Function:** How we think is determined by how we feel.
- ✓ **Experience-Dependent Growth:** The brain reflects the nature of its environment.
- ✓ **The Relational Dose:** Relationships are the primary tool for healing.

State-Dependent Functioning

IQ ↓

Cognitive Drop During Stress

The Arousal Continuum

As stress increases, we move down

CALM: Cortex (Reasoning)

ALARM: Limbic

FEAR: Diencephalon (Subcortical)

TERROR: Brainstem (Reflexive)

"Think of a recent challenging behavior. What brain state was the child in, and more importantly, what brain state were you in?"

Self-Reflection Workshop
Exercise

The Sequence of Engagement: 3 R's



1. Regulate

Calm the survival system. Use rhythmic, repetitive somatosensory activities.



2. Relate

Connect with the child. Use empathy and tone to signal safety and belonging.



3. Reason

Engage the cortex. Only now can we talk about rules, consequences, or logic.

TIER 1: FOUNDATIONS



Relationships & Environments

The base of the Pyramid Model is **Nurturing and Responsive Relationships**.

Without a secure attachment, no other intervention will be effective.

High-quality supportive environments include predictable routines, clear visual schedules, and spaces that promote autonomy and safety for every child.



TIERS 2 & 3: TARGETED SUPPORT



Social Skills

Tier 2: Explicitly teaching friendship skills, empathy, and emotional regulation to those who need extra guidance.



Individualized

Tier 3: Intensive, individualized interventions for persistent challenges, involving functional behavior assessments (FBA).



Team-Based

Collaborative planning between families and educators to create a unified support plan (PTR-F process).

Reframing the "Why"

1

Ask: Is this child Safe?

Discussion 2: Reframe a "stubborn" child as "lacking flexible thinking." How does this change your response?

2

Ask: Is this child Connected?

Discussion 3: Collaborative Planning. Identify one environmental change you can make today to

3

Ask: What skill is missing?

increase safety or connection.

Implementing the Science

Start with Rhythm

Morning songs, clapping patterns, and rhythmic transitions to keep the brainstem calm throughout the day.

The "Safe Place"

A dedicated space for self-regulation (Conscious Discipline) that supports the 'Regulate' phase of NMT.

Emotional Piggybank

Deposit "connection doses" frequently. Build the relational buffer (Pyramid Model) before challenges occur.

Key Takeaway:

Discipline is not about punishment; it is about **teaching**. And teaching can only happen in the Executive State.

June 11, 2026

Handling Tantrums & Frustration Fits



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Resource Name	Type	URL / Source
Conscious Discipline Free Tools	Printables/Breathing	consciousdiscipline.com
NCPMI (Pyramid Model)	Articles/Strategies	challengingbehavior.org
Understood.org: Behavior Guide	Teacher/Parent Guide	understood.org
Becky Bailey: Brain States	Video Series	YouTube Channel
Brazelton Touchpoints	Webinar/Support	brazeltontouchpoints.org

Questions? Let's connect and build a supportive community together.

georgiastear@gmail.com

Resources:

The 3 Rs: Reaching the Learning Brain

The Neurosequential Model

Perry, B.D. (in press) The Neurosequential Model: a developmentally-sensitive, neuroscience-informed approach to clinical problem solving in (Janise Mitchell, Joe Tucci & Ed Tronick, Eds), *The Handbook of Therapeutic Child Care: Evidence-informed Approaches to Working with Traumatized Children in Foster, Relative and Adoptive Care*. Jessica Kingsley, London

Perry, B.D. (2014) The Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics in Young Children. In (Kristie Brandt, Bruce D. Perry, Stephen Seligman & Edward Tronick, Eds) *Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health*. pp. 21-47 American Psychiatric Press, NY

Perry, B.D. & Dobson, C. (2013) Application of the Neurosequential Model (NMT) in maltreated children. In (J. Ford & C. Courtois, Eds) *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Children and Adolescents*, pp 249-260. Guilford Press, New York

IMAGE SOURCES

https://consciousdiscipline.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/1_success-10376.png

Source: consciousdiscipline.com

https://www.challengingbehavior.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PyramidModel_ORANGE_rightface.png

Source: www.challengingbehavior.org

