

Tips For the Top:

How the Principal, Director or Dean can Reinforce the Conscious Discipline Skills

Skill

Methods for Modeling and Reinforcing Conscious Discipline Skills

Composure



- Create a Safe Place in your office for children using the Feeling Buddies kit or with the following materials: Five Steps (I Am, I Calm, I Feel, I Choose, I Solve), Breathing icons, Emotions sheet, I Care sheet with I Love You Ritual icons, Shubert puppet, “Shubert is a S.T.A.R.” book, Safe Place Mat, journal, small blanket, Friends and Family book and other relaxing objects. For more ideas and ways to use the Safe Place, see Creating the School Family, chapter 9.
- Create a Safe Place for staff. This may be a part of the staff lounge or it may require some creativity to find a place. Include comfortable seating and some of the following: Pillows, blanket, a Friends and Family book of favorite staff pictures (vacation places, fun school events, families, etc.), music player with relaxing tracks, a tea or coffee maker, blank paper for journaling and drawing materials. Place 3x5 cards in a basket and encourage teachers to write an affirmation before they leave. Affirmations can be left to share with others or taken as a personal encouragement.
- When children come to you because of behavior issues begin with, “My job is to keep you safe. What’s your job?” This reinforces your purpose and reestablishes their responsibility to support their own safety.
- As a School Family, have a designated person lead the school in a Brain Smart Start during morning announcements, including a chant or school song that everyone does together throughout the school. Include a movement that unites, a breathing strategy (S.T.A.R., drain, pretzel, balloon), a way to connect and a School Family commitment.
- During a meeting at the start of the year, have staff share their aspirations and goals for the year. From individual goals, create a list of staff commitments for the year. This doesn’t need to be an exhaustive list, just a few to frame the direction for the year. For example, “We commit to wish each other well when we pass in the hall,” “we commit to trusting that ‘there is enough’ when we visit the supply room,” “we commit to addressing issues with the person involved using a respectful, assertive voice.” Use these commitments with the Safe Keeper box throughout the year and to reflect on how the year is going.
- Have a Safekeeper box for staff commitments. Before staff meetings, set out the box with a symbolic token for each staff member. Tokens can be staff pictures, colored stones, or something each person creates. Place a commitment sheet near the box and encourage teacher to read the commitment, make a conscious decision as to whether it is a commitment they are willing to make and, if so, place their token in the box. Sample commitments include: “I will keep our School Family safe by taking responsibility for my upsets and choosing to S.T.A.R.” or “I will choose to hear comments from parents with Positive Intent.”
- Help teachers who see all students (P.E., music, art) create a plan to begin their classes with a Brain Smart Start. This can be a quick chant or song to Unite, De-stress, Connect and Commit. Find a creative way to include a Safe Place in their classrooms. This might require a portable Safe Place if a permanent location is not feasible.
- Use the faculty bathroom to post staff commitments, inspiring messages and an encouragement to be a S.T.A.R. The bathroom is often the only place teachers have a minute to themselves, so adding thoughtful touches like hand lotion with a “Calming Cream” or “Composure Cream” label, and flowers with a “Wishing you well today” message is a great way to show support.
- Choose key phrases from the Conscious Discipline book and use them to open and close your daily announcements. Include a phrase or two, along with proper page references, in your weekly newsletter.
- Write a column for your newsletter that reflects the principles of Conscious Discipline. Include stories that highlight the value this brings to your school. This offers an opportunity for teachers and parents to share in your learning and growth.
- Consciously establish a personal support system. The Conscious Discipline Facebook page offers opportunities to share your journey and seek answers to your challenges by connecting with those who are on the same path. Attend workshops and conferences whenever possible, and seek out others with whom you can form partnerships.
- Create safety in the structures that are already in place for all staff: Policies, procedures, job descriptions, evaluations and documentation.
- Maintain a calm presence, actively model being a S.T.A.R.



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Encouragement



- Refer to your school as a “School Family.” Set up a bulletin board showing the many ways your School Family interacts in the classroom, at recess, in the lunchroom, auditorium, extracurricular activities, etc., so children understand they are a part of a supportive School Family wherever they go.
- Create routine books with the staff so every classroom has a book for each basic routine within the school day, such as what to do at recess, steps to follow in the restroom, lunchroom and library, and what to do upon arrival and during dismissal. One way to do this is to have each class prepare a book that can be reproduced for use in the other classes.
- Create a welcome box for new staff members. Include pictures of each staff member with a personal anecdote each member creates to help identify him or herself. (Tim, who always wears a cartoon tie. Jamie, who has a weakness for dark chocolate.) Add “Helpful Tips Learned Over the Years” and include humorous insider info. If the person is new to the area, add tips about staff members’ favorite shopping and eating establishments. Once you gather the materials, they can be quickly duplicated every time a new staff member arrives.
- At the start of the year, have each staff member fill out a “Top Ten” sheet of favorites from the last year. Tailor this list to your group. Examples are: Top movie, song, book, restaurant, adventure, activity, new event, “first,” accomplishment, etc. Assemble these in a book that is open for the whole School Family to read as they come in the door. Provide extra pages with an invitation for families to contribute a page to the book if they would like.
- Develop an “Expert Yellow Pages” book with each staff member’s talents so that everyone knows who to go to for help. For example, Donna is an expert at organizing materials, Jason loves to fix things, Aaron knows calligraphy, Tim is a top-notch cook, Lucia is a PowerPoint expert. There is a wealth of talent in every school just waiting to be discovered.
- Choose a School Family song and begin or end each day singing it together. It can be one of the Conscious Discipline songs like “This is my School Family” or one your school creates on its own.
- Set up a staff Job Board in the office. Staff can help determine how often to swap the jobs. Refer to teacher jobs during school announcements so students have an opportunity to see that jobs are part of everyone’s experience. Possible jobs include:
 - Wish Well Leader - Designs a wish well board in the office and share updates with the rest of the staff when needed. Create a ritual for when someone is going through a challenging situation (illness, loss) for the staff to do together.
 - Hospitality Person - Organizes monthly breakfast gatherings for staff. These can be as simple as providing fruit and muffins the first Friday of each month.
 - Friends and Family Board Coordinator - Maintains the space (usually in the office) and posts new pictures (births, visitors, etc.) as needed.
 - Morning Message Writer - Posts a daily or weekly message that echoes the mission of the School Family at the entrance.
 - Conscious Discipline Investigator - Ensures that all publications (parent newsletters, school meeting flyers, mailers) includes helpful Conscious Discipline tips.
 - Service Coordinator - Helps teachers organize service projects for their classes to help others within the School Family (reading buddies, older students teaching I Love You Rituals to younger students, encouraging cards for students during test week).
 - We Care Leader - Conducts monthly staff birthday celebrations, birthday cards, get well cards etc.
- Hold an end of year celebration with the staff. You might give flowers of appreciation (real flowers or paper ones with thankful messages from parents in the class), have a slide show, host a game night, etc. This might be a project a parent group could assist with.
- Model for your teachers what you want to see your teachers model for their students.
- Graciously take responsibility for mistakes and decisions that aren’t popular.
- When a teacher makes a mistake, extend empathy and remind him or her “mistakes are opportunities to learn.” Remember to “Oops.” There may be a consequence, but judgment is not that consequence.
- Be a reflective listener for your staff. “What I think I hear you saying is...” so they are able to express upset or opinions without judgment.
- Provide respectful, timely feedback directly to the person involved. Wish them well if they struggle with it.



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Encouragement *continued...*



- Set your goals and commitments, and enlist the staff in supporting you in abiding by them. Make sure you include personal care as one of your goals!
- Model problem solving when mistakes are made. “How could this look different the next time?” “What would help to shift this in a positive direction?”
- Use the skills and language of Conscious Discipline with students and staff. “You did it!” “I noticed___” “That was helpful.” “You wanted___ so you___” It may sound different at the adult level, but the intention remains the same: Respect others, ensure physical and emotional safety, build connections, support problem solving. You can handle it.
- Notice, notice, notice. Acknowledge staff efforts. Leave notes in staff boxes, send emails of encouragement, and put sticky notes on their doors that say things like, “Just walked by your room and heard you say___ to a student. Way to support her!”

Assertiveness



- Model an assertive voice for staff and students. Focus on what to do using a tone that says, “Just do it.” “It’s time for our meeting to begin,” instead of, “Please be quiet so we can start.” “Slow your feet and walk,” instead of, “Stop running.”
- Implement a plan that helps teachers assertively work through grievances with other staff members. Use the “I don’t like it when you ___” language model to develop a plan teachers feel comfortable using. Address the discomfort many adults feel in conflict situations and brainstorm healthy ways to overcome concerns.
- Check to make sure that posters and other messages in the school reflect what to do instead of what not to do. Replace “do not” signs with language that focuses on the positive objective. Instead of “No running,” the sign says, “Be safe. WALK.” Reinforce the message by posting visuals as well.
- Put a poster in the staff lounge that says, “What you focus on, you get more of.” Create a bulletin board where staff can leave notes about helpful, kind and considerate things noticed during the month. “Someone (or the name) cleaned out the staff refrigerator. That was helpful.” “Someone (or the name) brought healthy snacks for us. That was thoughtful.”
- Help each staff member curb gossiping by respectfully setting boundaries. “Is telling me this helpful or hurtful? How can I help you use your big voice with another staff member?”
- Set up a process for going to the time machine when staff are willing to assertively work out their disagreements.
- Help willing staff members change their passive communication like changing the use of “okay” at the end of a sentence into an assertive statement.

Choices



- Put a poster in the staff lounge that says, “The only person you can make change is yourself.”
- Model empowerment by giving staff two positive choices and the authority to carry out their choice without the need to influence it. “Which would work best for you, to have the paperwork on my desk at the beginning of the school day Friday or first thing Monday morning?”
- Give staff choice in establishing what jobs will be needed for the year, how often they will be rotated and how they will be selected.
- Be conscious of “make me” language and consciously model, “How can I (we) help this child/parent/staff member be more likely to choose ___?”
- Consciously ask staff for their opinions. Help staff choose to upgrade their skills by asking specific questions like, “What one part of your schedule would you never change? What one part of your schedule would you like to change?”
- Utilize Picture Rule Cards in common areas such as the lunchroom, playground, halls, gym, etc.



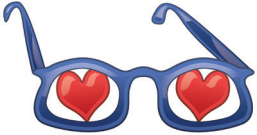
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Positive Intent



- Use and model Conscious Discipline language. “You wanted _____. You didn’t know how to get it or the words to say. When you want _____, say _____.”
- Put a poster in the office, “What I offer to others I strengthen in myself.” Consciously reframe negative comments by children/parents/staff with positive language.
- During morning announcements, celebrate new staff members, new babies, birthdays, etc.
- Remember: People won’t act differently until you see them differently. The goal is to help each person be successful.
- Celebrate with your staff. Set up a bouquet of paper flowers in the office for staff to write things they are celebrating. Mention these things during announcements. When a teacher has a birthday, engagement or other life event, honor the moment with a simple door banner that can be used for all these exciting events. When children see the banner on their classroom door, they know their teacher has some exciting news to share. The banner might say, “It’s your BIG DAY and we shout HOORAY!”

Empathy



- Have a staff We Care Center in the lounge. Provide note cards and paper for staff to write Wish Well notes to students, parents or each other. Include a We Care Basket with helpful items like bandages, personal products, chocolate, tissues, fingernail file, etc.
- Consciously provide mature empathy to staff without the need to “happy them up.” Allowing feelings without the need to change them.
- Help staff identify their feelings and listen to the messages their feelings offer.
- Attentively listen, breathe for the upset person and use Conscious Discipline language. “You seem _____. Something must have happened?” “So you thought _____ (or you were hoping_____). That is disappointing (challenging, frustrating, etc.)”
- Assess what brain state the child/adult is experiencing and remember to provide empathy instead of information to someone who feels upset.

Consequences



- Remember and model “Mistakes are an opportunity to learn.” Say “Oops” often and take responsibility for your decisions and actions.
- Give staff honest, respectful feedback with a coherent heart. Use mistakes to teach and learn. “What could we do differently?” “What are some choices for next time.”
- Use Conscious Discipline language: “If you choose to _____, then you will _____.”
- Use the P.E.A.C.E. model for problem-solving in staff meetings. Actively focus on the desired outcome and the actions needed to solve the problem.

