



Grange Primary Academy

The best in everyone™

Part of United Learning

An Introduction To Conscious Discipline

As teachers, we want to provide our children with the tools that they need to have a happy and healthy life. Teaching and indeed parenting has changed since the time of our own childhoods, and we have access to more resources and information about teaching and parenting than our own parents ever did. One philosophy and resource that is having a tremendously positive impact, both on children and the adults that support them, is called [Conscious Discipline](#).

What is Conscious Discipline?

Conscious Discipline is an evidence-based, trauma-informed approach. It is recognized as one of the top social-emotional programs available to both schools and parents. As Heather Wallace, a coach and mentor for positive parenting approaches, explains: “Conscious Discipline is a social-emotional program that teaches children how to regulate and manage emotions in order to make safe and healthy choices. But the focus FIRST is on parents.” In other words, in order to best help our children with the conscious discipline approach, we need to do the work on ourselves and our own emotions first.

How does Conscious Discipline differ from the way that discipline was used in our own childhoods?

Conscious Discipline takes a very different [approach to discipline](#) from the way we might have experienced it in our own childhoods. Conscious Discipline is all about connection rather than punishment. When we think back to how parents have traditionally responded to [big emotions](#) felt and displayed by children, we may recall reactions that ranged from being dismissive to responding with anger to minimizing feelings and concerns.

Conscious Discipline teaches adults to control their own emotional responses to children so they can stay present at the moment, connect with the child, and then work through the feelings the child is having together.

Expert Heather Wallace further explains:

[“Dr. Becky Bailey](#), author, educator, and creator of Conscious Discipline, discusses how us parents need to rethink discipline and control ourselves first before dealing with our child’s behaviour. It takes a shift in mindset from how we were raised to think about discipline as punishment, to thinking of discipline as an opportunity to teach missing skills. Parents use the tools to gain control of their emotions and upset, and in turn, download that calm to their child. The skills that Conscious Discipline teaches will ensure that the child stays connected to the parent as the parent teaches and guides the child.”

Based on research on both the human brain and child development, Conscious Discipline was designed to make changes in the lives of the supporting adult first. Therefore, this approach can be truly beneficial to the entire family.

Why should parents consider using a Conscious Discipline approach?

The Conscious Discipline approach can be helpful in so many of the most frustrating experiences in parenting that often leave us feeling out of control or with a recurring thought that we are failing as parents. If you have experienced any of the following, Conscious Discipline can help:

- Power struggles
- Defiance
- Verbal attacks
- Bullying
- Physical aggression
- Difficulty keeping your child on task

Conscious Discipline can take the frustration and feelings of powerlessness out of these every day parenting moments and turn them into teachable moments instead

What are the Seven Skills of Discipline?

According to the [Conscious Discipline website](#), the Seven Skills of Discipline have evolved from the Seven Powers for Conscious Adults. The skills are:

- Composure
- Encouragement
- Assertiveness
- Choices
- Empathy
- Positive Intent
- Consequences

Yes, there are [consequences](#) in the Conscious Discipline approach. Instead of jumping right to consequences as often happens with the traditional disciplinary approach, Conscious Discipline first provides the child with a sense of safety, compassion, and connection. When we as adults stay in control of our emotions and utilize these seven skills, we model the skills we hope to teach.

Not only can both adults and children feel better and learn from each other in these teachable moments, but we can also provide our children with a foundation to learn and grow as a person on a different level. As Expert, Heather Wallace states, “My opinion is that a child with social-emotional skills can learn anything! So using the Conscious Discipline tools will not only help your child gain emotional intelligence, but set them up for success in a school setting.”

How do I create a Safe Place for my child?

Creating a [Safe Place](#) for your child is a key component of Conscious Discipline. A Safe Place is NOT a time-out. Instead, this is a designated space that you go to with your child to help them change their inner state from upset to composed. This space can be something like a cozy corner, a beanbag chair, or a soft mat. Here you encourage your child to breathe or

use a calming tool. This is a place to practice getting outside of the big emotions, and it's a space that you can encourage your child to visit when they feel sad, angry, or frustrated.

What are some Conscious Discipline strategies that parents can try right away?

1. Model the behaviour you would like to see by displaying self-control during difficult moments and when you feel triggered by children's behaviour.
2. Take the time to understand the developmental stage that your child is in so you can consider how things feel from her perspective.
3. Tell children what they should do in a clear way rather than focusing on what they should not do. (For example, refrain from giving directions that start with Don't, Stop, or No.)
4. When children are acting bossy or unkind to others, always give your attention to the victim first to empower them to learn how to deal with the situation. Then turn to the child who is acting unkindly and help her practice clear limits and how to communicate in a more helpful way.
5. When children appear to not be listening to you, instead of yelling at them to get their attention, go to them instead and make eye contact to form a connection.

By helping your child develop social-emotional skills, you are equipping them with tools that can help them thrive and learn. You are also bettering your personal social-emotional skills through the Conscious Discipline approach. As a whole, your family environment can feel stronger, calmer, and more connected by implementing Conscious Discipline in your home.