



ConsciousDiscipline

# Empathy: The Highest Cognitive Skill Possible and the One Everyone Needs to Survive

Keynote presentation by:

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**Empathy is not a luxury skill. It is essential for our survival.**

Self-Regulation = Safekeeper Requirements

- Respond instead of react
- Realize we are all in this together (not us and them)
- Wish Well instead of judge
- Focus your attention on what you want and hold it there
- Accept the moment as it is (externally & internally)
- Choose thoughts that are helpful instead of hurtful
- Connect instead of control
- Reflect and be conscious of your intention

## Power-Skill-Structures

Powers	Skills	Structures
Perception	Composure	Brain Smart Start, Safe Place
Attention	Assertiveness	Visual Routines, Class-Made Books
Unity	Encouragement	Jobs, Connecting Rituals, Kindness Tree
Free Will	Choices	Visual Rules, Behavior Chart
Acceptance	Empathy	We Care Center
Love	Positive Intent	Wish Well, Celebration, School Family Assemblies
Intention	Consequences	Class Meetings, Time Machine

### Power of Acceptance

Acceptance is the ability to allow people, circumstances, situations, emotions, and thoughts to be as they are. It is a conscious choice to not fight the experiences of your life.

### Belief

When the outside world is not going my way, the answer is to change those circumstances through force and effort.

This shouldn't be.

Acceptance is the most economical use of energy. Fighting against the entire universe takes an enormous amount of psychological resources.



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## Resistance and Opposition

Acceptance – It is what it is.

Acceptance is NOT passivity or resignation.

It allows you to expand your energy in other ways.

All upset is created by resisting what is!

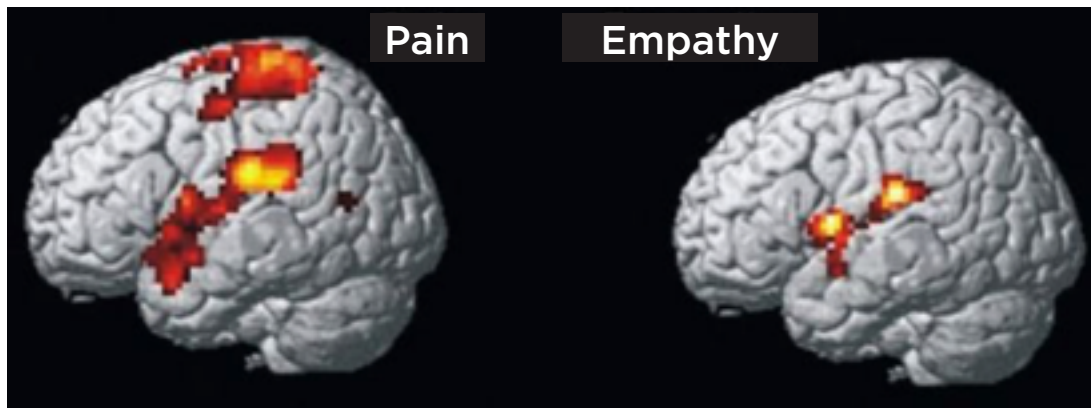
## Three Types of Empathy:

**Emotional Empathy:** I feel your pain.

**Cognitive Empathy:** I can see your perspective.

**Compassion Empathy:** I can help alleviate distress and be of service.

## I Feel Your Pain – It's more than words.



### Mirror Neurons

When you're sad, I'm sad...

When you hurt, I hurt...

So... STOP IT!

## Perspective Taking/Noticing

See her/his face. Her/his face/body is saying \_\_\_\_\_.

We are genetically wired to be compassionate.

## We Care Center

Center that promotes the practice of seeing the emotions of others, resonating with the emotions of others and expressing empathy through compassion.

From school to home.

Wish Well and We Care Center complement each other.



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## Empathy:

- Perceive the emotions of others – “I see you.”
- Resonate with them emotionally – “I feel you.”
- Cognitively take the perspective of others – “I understand you.”
- Distinguish between our emotions and others – “That makes sense.”

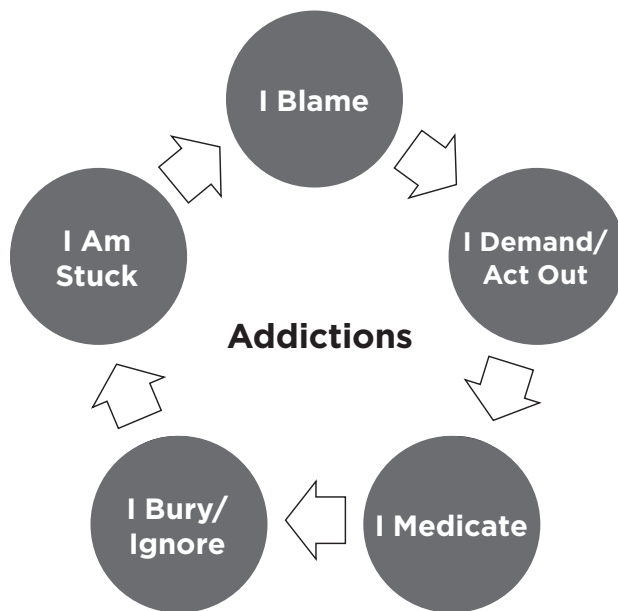
## 40% Reduction in Empathy

1. Reduction in unstructured free time for children (1981 – 2003, 35%).  
Kindergarten today – 30 minutes less
2. Screen time
3. Self-Esteem Movement: “How great you are!”
4. Economic inequity beginning Reagan years. De-regulation and reducing taxes on the rich – greater gap between “us and them.”

## Five-Step Process

Unconsciously Reacting → Consciously Responding  
Essential Foundation for Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience

### The Cycle of Self-Sabotage



Healthy Relationships require we own our own upset. Look what you made me do!

### The Cycle of Self-Regulation



Resilience = *Unconscious to Conscious Team of Two*



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## I Am Triggered

Brain's biological imperative is to survive.

We are automatically programmed to react to any cue indicating the possibility of danger.

I am in DANGER NOW!

## I Calm

Breathe + Notice Non-Verbal Cues

We take 17,000 breaths per day. How many are you conscious of?

Breathing pauses us and slows down our inner rhythm.

**Allows space and time for emotional regulation.**

## I Feel

Negative Emotions

Positive Emotions

Good vs. Bad Emotions

I feel bad = I am bad

As children, we can't distinguish our feelings from our "self."

If feelings aren't acceptable in certain situations, then neither am I.

While parents mean well and hate to see their children hurt, parents often deny their children's feelings. "Don't feel bad - you're okay."

Our response to our children's distress is the buffering agent like a probiotic for wellbeing and resilience.

## How many bits of information does the brain process?

400 billion bits of information per second

We are conscious of 50 bits per second

## The body gets your attention through emotions

### 10 Things that happen when you hide your true feelings:

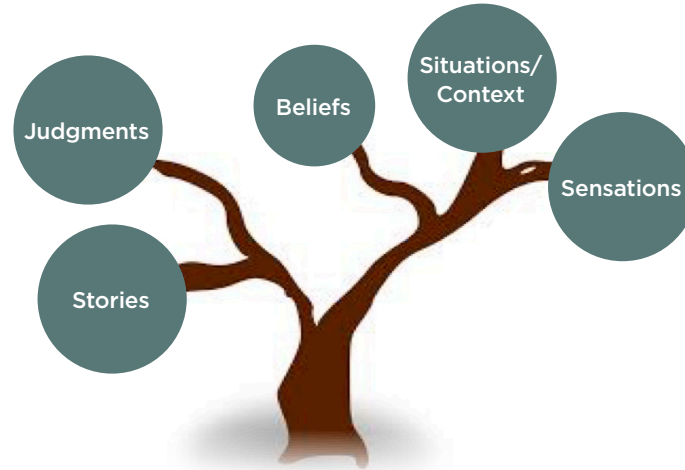
1. You disappear from the ones you love.
2. You forget to take care of yourself.
3. You tell everyone you are "fine."
4. You start to develop anxiety.
5. You stay busy.
6. You have a constant need for control.
7. You seek out bad relationships.
8. Everything becomes a joke to you.
9. You create a false sense of positivity.
10. You present a tough exterior.

**Acceptance** – puts you in contact with your feelings. It allows you to feel feelings without being overwhelmed by them.



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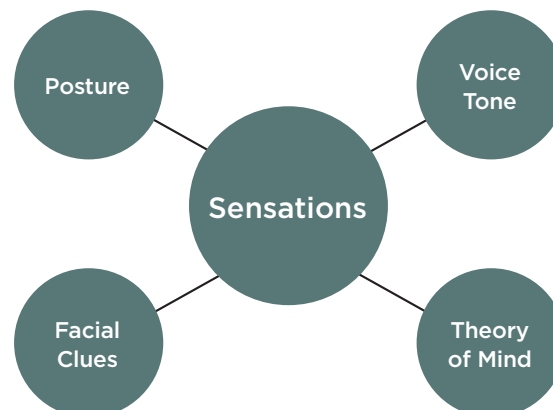
## Emotions



## Emotional States

- Like weather patterns – our job is to manage, modulate, and discipline the emotional states
- As effective at stopping emotions as we are at preventing a sneeze

## Feelings



## Natural Process: Emotions Become Feelings

- When the emotion rises to a level of consciousness (you are the last to know) we can name it, pulling the feeling out of the story in order to tame it.
- Feelings are conscious and manageable. We can regulate feelings.  
Feelings happen now: Emotions stay with beliefs created at age \_\_\_\_\_.
- Cause and effect happen together.
- I'm worried that my child might not get into Harvard. (future)
- I'm so angry at what my mother-in-law did at my wedding. (past)
- I'm feeling something that hasn't happened or already happened years ago.  
Self-regulation requires the self-acting on itself instead of each other

“Emotions and thoughts are not the self but are felt and thought by the self.”

– Schmeichel and Baumeister, 2004



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## It takes 2!

Higher Self Modulating Lower Self

I feel my anger vs. I am angry

I am thinking my thoughts about my mistakes made vs. I am stupid

I am choosing my actions vs. I have to, should, must

Without self-regulation we act out our distress instead of manage it.

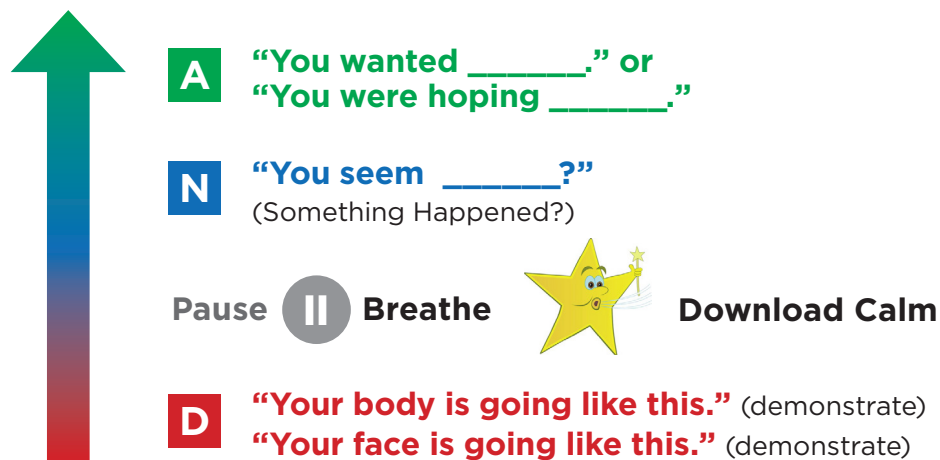
I feel my sadness.

## I Am Angry (1)

I have abandoned myself.

"You seem angry. You wanted \_\_\_\_\_."

## D.N.A. Process = Describe, Name, Acknowledge



### D.N.A. Process keeps both child and adult present (conscious)

**D = D**escribing- Keeps the adult present

- Helps child become aware of body and facial expressions
- Body and facial awareness are critical components of empathy
- Facial and vocal signals serve to nonverbally communicate our inner states to others
- Encourages eye contact for downloading

### D.N.A. allows us to name our feelings

**N = N**aming- gives those nonverbal expressions and sensations a name; always an educated guess.

"You seem \_\_\_\_\_." OR "You sound \_\_\_\_\_."

"Your body is telling me you might be feeling \_\_\_\_\_."

### Divides into Two

D.N.A. Integrates the Brain for Problem-Solving

**A = A**cknowledge- Provides conscious awareness of our true goals and aspirations, setting up problem solving or an action plan.

"You wanted \_\_\_\_\_." OR "You were hoping \_\_\_\_\_."



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**Whomever you believe to be in charge of your feelings has the power and the responsibility.**

**He/she is told “It’s time to clean up.”**

“Your face is like this.”

“You seem frustrated.”

“You wanted to keep playing.”

“You may \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_. What do you choose?”



**Waiting in line for a long time:**

Child begins to wiggle and kick pole.

Adult: “Your feet are going like this. Your face is going like this. Your body is telling me it is hard to wait.”

Child says, “I hate you!”

Adult: “You seem frustrated.”

Child starts fidgeting with the rope between the poles.

Adult: “Your arms are going like this. Your body is telling me you need help in thinking of something fun and safe to do.”

**Homework left at home:**

Student says, “Come on, give me a break. I did the work. I can bring it in tomorrow. This is stupid.”

Teacher: “You seem frustrated and rightly so. It is hard to complete an assignment and then forget to bring it in.”

Student says, “One time would not kill you.”

Teacher: “You were hoping I would change the rules about turning in work. You have time to bring your grade up. You can handle this.”

Student says/does \_\_\_\_\_.

Children come to us upset with a story of what happened based on their ability to perceive events without the filter of a prefrontal lobe.

“Nobody likes me. I don’t have any friends and you don’t care.”

“I had it first. He is being a jerk and a liar. You ALWAYS believe him!”

“The teacher hates me. I asked for help over and over. She ignored me and called me stupid!”

Giving information, lecturing or reasoning with the right brain yields:

- Emotional State ALWAYS wants understanding – not information.
- Rupture in the relationship and a disconnect in the brain which impacts all learning.



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**Breathe = Pause**



**You seem sad.  
You wanted mommy to stay.**

**Notice the TIME it takes...**

**Active  
Calming**

You seem \_\_\_\_.

You wanted \_\_\_\_.  
You were hoping \_\_\_\_.  
When you want say/do thing.

**Notice the TIME it takes...**

**Talking**

You wanted \_\_\_\_.

You were hoping \_\_\_\_.

I can't help you if you  
won't talk to me.

What happened?

Why did you do *that*?

What's wrong?

**Breathe with me**





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## I am Triggered

I am in DANGER NOW!

## I Calm

Breathe + Notice Non-Verbal Cues

## I Feel

Negative Emotions

Positive Emotions

"You seem \_\_\_\_\_."

## I Choose

Negative Intent, Not Good Enough

Positive Intent, Good Enough

"You wanted \_\_\_\_\_."

## I Solve

"When you want \_\_\_\_\_ say/do \_\_\_\_\_."

"You may \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_."

"What is best for you?"

### The baby woke up crying.

S.T.A.R. – regulate your state.

"Your face is going like this."

BREATHE

"You seem scared."

"You wanted mommy to pick you up."

### Friends left him out of soccer game.

S.T.A.R. – regulate your state.

"Your face is going like this."

BREATHE

"You seem disappointed."

"You were hoping to play soccer with your friends."



Remember to **S.T.A.R.:**

**S**mile,

**T**ake a deep breath

**A**nd **R**elax!

Three deep belly breaths calm your brain and body.

## Effect of Opioids Mimic = Rewarding Warmth of Relationships

## Anxiety of Withdrawal = Feelings of Rejection

### The Dilemma

Trauma happens often in relationships and it is also the relationship that heals us from trauma.

### Team of 2 is all it takes!

The single most common factor for children to develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.



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## Separate World of Good and Bad

Good Kid	Bad Kid
Treat one way <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• With respect, with value</li><li>• Deserves respect</li></ul>	Treat another way <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whatever it takes</li><li>• Doesn't deserve respect</li></ul>
Use one set of values <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nice, kind, calm, respectful</li><li>• Reasonable</li><li>• Move toward child to solve problems</li></ul>	Use another set of values <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Judgmental, critical</li><li>• Attacking, condemning</li><li>• Move away, separate from group</li></ul>

## Stressful Way to Perceive Behavior



## Healthy Way to Perceive Behavior

