

## **Conscious Discipline (#1) from Ms. Amber**

It is my goal this school year to share some information with MCA family and friends about Conscious Discipline. This model has been very impactful to me as an educator and personally as well. If you haven't yet, please read the brief overview on the school webpage here: <https://www.mcacad.org/about-us/>.

Each month in the school newsletter, I'm going to try and share some information about Conscious Discipline (CD). Some months it will be to show you what we are doing at school and some months it will be to give some input that could be helpful to implement at home. This month I want to highlight the School Family concept that we work very hard to implement. From the CD website, "The School Family is built on a healthy family model – the goal of which is the optimal development of all members. The School Family builds connections between families and schools, teachers and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students to ensure the optimal development of all."

Safety is our top priority, and it is our goal that through relationships formed and bonds made, children feel as safe at school as they do at home. They have connections to staff and fellow students, they feel accepted and loved, and they feel like they are a vital part of the school wellbeing.

To encourage this safe feeling, we try to connect home and school as much as possible. We invite parents to come to the school when they are able. We keep in touch with parents throughout the day. We encourage the children and staff to talk about their family at home and make connections with each other.

One thing I've tried to do for the past few years is make a family bulletin board at school. To do this successfully, I need each family to send me a (fairly) current family picture. It can be of those who live in the home with the MCA student, but if other family is in it as well, that's okay too. It does not have to be a professional photo. A "selfie" is just fine! Current MCA parents, can you please email me a family photo for your child? I will print them out and put them up in the hallway for students to see and talk about with their friends. I know your child's teacher may have already asked for a family photo and it can be the same one. The board I'm working on will have all students and staff so that children can make connections with everyone in the building, and we can continue to foster an environment of school family where we are "all in it together"!

If you have any questions about the school family concept or CD in general, please feel free to reach out anytime. I'm happy to talk about it as I'm very passionate about using it! If there is something specific you'd like to hear about next month please let me know!

## Conscious Discipline (#2) from Ms. Amber

Thank you to those who sent in a family picture for the bulletin board in the hallway at school! There is one student who, every single day, without fail, names each person in her family picture as she leaves for the day. It's so sweet! If you haven't sent a picture to me yet, you still can. Just email it to me. Thanks! (Find a larger picture of the bulletin board on Facebook!)

CD focuses on brain states and how important it is for adults to be regulated in order to help kids regulate. One (the main) way we do this is through "star breathing". Some teachers say, "Do you want to be a S.T.A.R.?" Some say, "Do you want to star breathe with me?" Either way, they are both referring to the same concept.



Information from the CD website ([www.consciousdiscipline.com](http://www.consciousdiscipline.com)):

*"S.T.A.R. stands for Smile, Take a deep breath And Relax. Taking three deep belly breaths helps to shut off the fight, flight, or freeze response in the body. Taking deep belly breaths with a child sounds like this, "You're safe. Breathe with me. You can handle this. Take a deep breath in through your nose."*

*(Count slowly, 1-2-3-4.) "Now let the air out through your mouth." (Count slowly, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8.) Counting helps you meet the goal of making the exhale twice as long as the inhale."*



We try not to focus too much on making sure to say it exactly the right way every single time. That will make it seem daunting and cause you to avoid doing it. We just do the best we can!

Star breathing is helpful for adults and children both. An unregulated adult cannot help to regulate a child.

If you are interested in incorporating this at home, I think a great place to start is to do this first thing in the morning. Depending on your child's temperament in the morning, it could be as you're waking them up, at breakfast, in the car, as you arrive to school, etc. There are several possibilities! Something as simple as, "Do you want to take 3 star breaths with me?"

If you know your child is prone to get upset easily, you can remind them how they can do the same thing throughout the day to calm down, as needed.

Sometimes a child will not be willing to star breathe with you. In those cases we try to rely on mirror neurons. The parent or adult can practice the technique while sitting with or holding an upset child and as the adult calms, hopefully it will help calm the child as well until they are willing to actively participate in the practice.

I hope this can be helpful in your home. If you have any questions at all, please reach out anytime!

## Conscious Discipline (#3) from Ms. Amber

### Two Positive Choices

This strategy has been extremely helpful during my career as an educator. Many children are simply trying to be in control when acting defiantly (can anyone else relate?! Ha ha). I got the following information from various CD resources and put it together for you here. Some other examples that might be helpful for home:

You want your child to clean up their toys. Say "Do you want to clean up the blocks or the stuffed animals?"

You want your child to stay with you on a walk around the neighborhood. Say "Do you want to walk next to me by yourself or do you want me to hold your hand?"

I'm happy to answer any other questions you might have about this. Please reach out anytime!

Amber

Two positive choices reinforce the child's Power of Free Will while providing parameters for behavior. The following steps will help you deliver two positive choices.

The image contains three blue boxes, each with a white border and a white background for the text. Each box has a blue header with white text. The first box is titled 'Two Positive Choices Step 1:' and contains the text: 'Breathe deeply and make a conscious decision to focus on what you want the child to do. Focus on the behavior you want to see, rather than the undesired behavior.' The second box is titled 'Two Positive Choices Step 2:' and contains the text: 'Tell the child, "You have a choice!" in an upbeat tone. Our positive attitude will lighten the situation, especially if the child is resistant.' The third box is titled 'Two Positive Choices Step 3:' and contains the text: 'Clearly state two choices that will achieve the goal. Say, "You may \_\_\_ or you may \_\_\_." For older children, you could say, "Feel free to \_\_\_ or \_\_\_."'. Each box has a small icon of a speech bubble with a checkmark and the text 'Conscious Discipline' at the bottom.

Providing two positive choices assists children with follow-through, focus and self-esteem. To deliver choices, think about what you want the child TO DO and offer two positive choices.

If your child is running around the house, positive choices would be:

"You may run around outside or color at the table."

OR

"You may run around outside or ride your bike outside."

Remember! "You can run around outside or go to your room!" is not a choice. It is manipulation. Stick to two positive options to make it a real choice.

Additional information and video examples: <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/book-portal/chapter-7-choices/#3activitytocreatetwopositivechoices>

Two positive choices are NOT helpful for a child in the overwhelmed state of survival. We know this from our own lives. When we are stressed out and overwhelmed, the choice between coffee and tea can push us over the edge, barking, "I don't care. Just give me something." Children, as well as adults, in a survival state required assertive commands to be successful. (Short version from Amber: This strategy is not meant to be used when a child is in "meltdown mode".)

## Conscious Discipline (#4) from Ms. Amber

Q.T.I.P. – **Q**uit **T**aking **I**t **P**ersonally

### **Q.T.I.P.**

Q.T.I.P. is a simple reminder to **Quit Taking It Personally**. Our CD-Rom would have us believe that other people's actions are a statement about our self-worth. When we Q.T.I.P., we free ourselves to shift our attention, calm down and see the situation differently.

 ConsciousDiscipline®

Q-Tip is an acronym used by Conscious Discipline to help remember to Quit Taking It Personally when our children misbehave. Choose to see your children's misbehavior as happening in front of you instead of happening to you.

It can be so tempting to feel offended by a child's behavior, but this reminder helps us to regulate ourselves. When we, as adults, are regulated, it's much easier to help a child who is upset.

I'm attaching something I put together for the teaching staff a few years back that is a helpful reminder to all of us. I hope this helps you in your parenting journey! 😊

I also found this link with several articles that I think could be helpful.

<https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/discipline-tips/>

As they say in Conscious Discipline, "I wish you well"!

## Conscious Discipline-I Love You Rituals from Ms. Amber

From the CD website:

*“Dr. Bailey designed I Love You Rituals as a playful means to promote optimal brain development, increase attention span, reduce hyperactivity, build self-esteem, amplify cooperation and facilitate language development. These transformative rituals can be enjoyed in an adult-child setting or between children, and are appropriate from 15 months through elementary school.*

*I Love You Rituals are structured connecting activities that include eye contact, touch, presence and playfulness. Families benefit from I Love You Rituals at bedtime, morning routine, before or after meals, when saying goodbye, while on the diapering table, and more.”*

I love you rituals have, unfortunately, had to be altered pretty drastically for school due to Covid. They are much harder to do in school, but they are still great to do at home! Connection, genuine connection, is one of the most important (maybe the most important) things to me as an educator and someone who works with children. These rituals are a great way to connect with children that isn't pressure-filled or long or complicated. I urge you to find one time in your day (bedtime routine?) where you could implement an I Love You Ritual with your child(ren). I'm going to give one example here and if you would like more, please reach out to me or look online. There is a book available for purchase with many options for I Love You Rituals. If you try this at home and feel inclined to share, I'd love to hear how it goes. Maybe you can send me a video! 😊

Here is a brief video from Conscious Discipline showing some examples of the I Love You Rituals and talking about why they are important

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3PtrlnUm4U>

See below: Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star



### Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
What a wonderful child you are!  
With bright eyes and nice  
round cheeks,  
Talented person from head to feet.  
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
What a wonderful child you are!

**It is important that you be at the same height as the child for this activity. You may choose to stand, kneel, or sit with the child to attain this position.**

*“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,”*

Hold your child’s hands and raise them slightly above your heads. Wiggle your fingers together to represent the “twinkle” of stars.

*“What a wonderful child you are!”*

Bring your arms down and rest your hands on your child’s shoulders with the child’s hands on your shoulders.

*“With bright eyes and nice round cheeks”*

Take your hands off the child’s shoulders and touch the child’s face with your index fingers. First, touch the child next to his eyes. Then draw your fingers down, around the child’s cheeks.

*“Talented person from head to feet.”*

Take the child’s hands in yours and swing them up high (above the child’s head) and sweep them down low (to the child’s feet).

*“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,”*

Raise the child’s hands and touch fingertips as in the beginning. Wiggle your fingertips to represent the shining stars.

*“What a wonderful child you are!”*

End the interaction with a hug.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star I Love You Ritual Example by Mrs. Taryn and her son, Henry:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TmmxWA6lk3wA8hV9-3RTwWIB9MJmOMhW/view?usp=sharing>

## Conscious Discipline - Safe Place

One of the very first Conscious Discipline (CD) concepts we implemented at MCA was the safe place. The premise involves designating a place in the classroom where students can go to calm down (regulate) when upset. To minimize time-outs at school, we choose to challenge ourselves, as educators, to notice when children are on the verge of “upset” and helping them to calm down before a misbehavior occurs. Traditionally, children would get upset, hit another child, be put in time out for \_\_\_ number of minutes, be made to apologize to the other student, and then move on. Our implementation of CD is not perfect, because we are human, so time-outs do sometimes occur, despite our best efforts to help avoid them. However, we attempt to pay attention to cues that indicate upset is occurring and intervene before a misbehavior occurs.

Please see the pictures for examples of the safe places set up at MCA.

If you'd like to work on setting up a safe place at your home, please follow the link below to see several resources and ideas for doing so. The ideal location is somewhere that can be quiet and somewhat secluded.

Link to tips and resources to implement a safe place at home:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YEoS9NV4vnG8vKxKEkx7XqUDKLeYCN2Un\\_Tko5dKWWw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YEoS9NV4vnG8vKxKEkx7XqUDKLeYCN2Un_Tko5dKWWw/edit?usp=sharing)

