

Welcome to Session 4

# The Skill of Composure and the Power of Perception

## SESSION OVERVIEW:

- Practice using strategies for taking back our power.
- Discover ways to change destructive trigger thoughts into healthy self-talk and active calming.
- Explore ways to download calm and answer the question “Am I safe?” using the Skill of Composure.
- Examine the Safe Place as a self-regulation learning center so children and adults can practice the Skill of Composure.



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If you are in a group setting, choose a partner for Session 4:

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## Session 4: Pre-Learning Survey

Let's begin with a little survey to help you measure your perceptual shift as you learn helpful, new information.

### 1. No one can make me angry without my permission.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

### 2. When I take a deep breath, my inhale and my exhale should take the same amount of time.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

### 3. The "I'm going to..." language will help me keep my power.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

### 4. The phrase, "See how you made her feel," teaches children empathy for others.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

### 5. Behaviors that trigger my anger say more about me than the other person.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

## In This Session We Will Explore...

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**Skill of Composure:** Being the person you want others to become

**Power of Perception:** No one can make you angry without your permission

**Adult Goal:** To be the person we want others to become and remain calm enough to teach children by example

**Child Goal:** To develop the ability to actively calm and regulate emotions

### Combined tools for creating safety

**N** = Noticing

**A** = Assertiveness (for adults)

**R** = Routines with pictures

**C** = Composure

**S** = Safe Place and Safekeeper

## The Skill of Composure

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Composure is the willingness to change our internal state from upset to calm and bring our mind to where our body is at the moment. It is being the person we want children to become. We cannot teach skills we do not possess; the “do as I say, not as I do” philosophy is not effective! Effective teaching and parenting requires us to model the behaviors we want children to develop.

In order to build the higher centers of the brain we must first focus on safety.

The Skill of Composure is critical to creating safety.

### S.T.A.R.

**S** = Smile

**T** = Take a deep breath

**A** = And

**R** = Relax





# The Power of Perception

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Stress manifests itself in shallow breathing. We developed an evolutionary response to breathe shallowly when experiencing a Survival State. This served us well when the threat was a wild animal we needed to hear and physically protect ourselves from; however, this “fight or flight” mode shuts off our thinking brain. All we can do is defend or attack, which is not well-suited for resolving most modern-day threats.

Belly breathing, also known as diaphragmatic breathing or S.T.A.R. breathing, is one of our most important tools in regard to disciplining our children and ourselves.

Take a deep belly breath. Breathe in through your nose as your belly pushes out and then exhale as your belly goes back in again.

1. We must take \_\_\_\_\_ deep breaths to shut off the fight or flight system.

“No one can make me angry without my permission.” Reflect on this and think of a scenario in which this belief could be helpful to you. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Take back your power: Whomever you have placed in charge of your feelings \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are some side effects of giving away your power?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. When we give our power away, we feel powerless. When we feel powerless, we will \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ . We create danger any time we try to make someone else feel responsible for our upset.

5. Shift your “make me” language to \_\_\_\_\_ language.

**Rewrite the following statements with empowering language:**

“How can we make Katie feel better?”
“What could you do to make it better?”
“Look how you made her feel.”
“Look at what you’ve done. Are you happy now?”

Who or what is pushing your buttons? \_\_\_\_\_

You are always responsible for yourself. People don’t make you angry, but they can trigger your anger.

Review the behaviors below. Check the ones that push your buttons.

- Whining       Screaming/yelling       Pouting       Overreacting
- Lying       Tattling       Laziness       Being sneaky
- Selfishness       Disrespect       Interrupting
- Destructiveness       Being critical

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Our triggers blind us to children’s real problems.

6. Where do these buttons come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Think back to your childhood to identify how your buttons started. Note your insights below.

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## Keeping it Safe in the Face of Stress, Triggers and Conflicts

As adults, we are Safekeepers for the children in our care. Our job is to “Keep it safe!” Active Calming is our most basic tool for keeping it safe.

### 7. Active Calming Steps

**Mirror neurons ensure that the moment someone sees an emotion on your face, they will at once sense that same feeling within themselves.**

-Daniel Stern

8. Mirror neurons help us to \_\_\_\_\_ to children when we make eye contact and breathe deeply.

**If you are in a group setting, role-play the following scenarios with your partner. Decide who will be the child and who will be the adult.**

Adult: Reaches for the child.

Child: Pulls away.

Adult: Say and demonstrate, “Your   (arms, eyes, face)   went like this.”

Child: Looks at the adult.

Adult: Breathe and wish well to download calm.

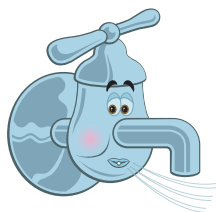
How was that for you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What we do to children, they will do to others.**

Teach children how to disengage the stress response with these activities:



**S.T.A.R.**



**Drain**



**Balloon**



**Pretzel**

## Structure: Safe Place

9. The first Safe Place is on the adult's \_\_\_\_\_ . Then the adult's \_\_\_\_\_ .

10. Eventually children will use an external \_\_\_\_\_ , ultimately resulting in an internal Safe Place, known as \_\_\_\_\_ .

**11. The most important part of implementing the Safe Place is that there is a \_\_\_\_\_ present.**

12. The Safe Place is a \_\_\_\_\_ learning center.

13. In the Safe Place, we guide children through the Five Steps to Self-Regulation. List the steps and explain what occurs in each one:

Step 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2: \_\_\_\_\_

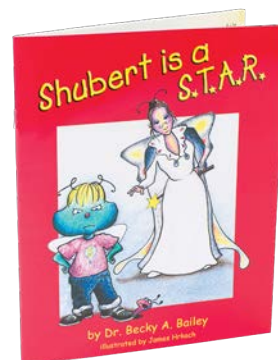
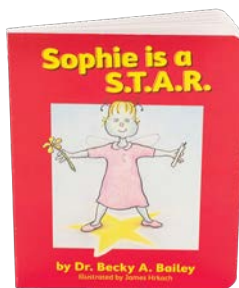
Step 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Step 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Step 5: \_\_\_\_\_

We are going to...

- Take back our power. "I'm going to..."
- Actively calm ourselves so that we can help the child do the same.
- Provide an opportunity to practice self-regulation.



### I am willing

To recognize when I am upset and actively calm myself first so I am more likely to respond rather than react to others.

SIGN: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



## Focus Point: The Five Steps of Self-Regulation

Choose comfortable seating like a beanbag chair, recliner or floor pillows. Locate your Safe Place in an area that feels cozy. Classroom Safe Places require a clear view of classroom activities. The Safe Place is not a substitute for or related to time out in any way. It is a learning center where children are guided through the Five Steps to Self-Regulation.

### **I Am**

**Step 1: I Am Upset.** When a child is triggered, that is a signal for him to go to the Safe Place. The child can go on his own, with the help of the teacher or with a suggestion from a friend.

### **I Calm**

**Step 2: I Calm.** The child picks one of the four core calming strategies: S.T.A.R., Drain, Balloon or Pretzel to help himself calm down. The teacher must post visual images of these strategies in the Safe Place and teach/practice them during every Brain Smart Start.

### **I Feel**

**Step 3: I Feel.** The child identifies his current feeling state by pointing to a poster downloaded from [ConsciousDiscipline.com/resources](http://ConsciousDiscipline.com/resources), selecting a Feeling Buddy from the *Feeling Buddy Self-Regulation Toolkit*, or selecting a feeling image from the *I Choose Self-Control Board*.

### **I Choose**

**Step 4: I Choose.** The child chooses an activity from a predetermined set of choices contained in the Safe Place Case. Before opening your Safe Place for use, gather students' input about what would help them calm down and turn their thinking brains back on. Fill your Safe Place Case with the corresponding supplies. These supplies may include calming tools like lotion and squeezeballs, drawing/writing supplies, and inspirational books.

### **I Solve**

**Step 5: I Solve.** Children may accomplish this step independently, but it will often require the teacher's assistance. Older children write down the problem and future solutions to discuss with the teacher. Young children will need specific, individual coaching. In general, the solutions will fall into one of the following:

- Helping the child learn to ask for help.
- Helping the child learn how to resolve conflicts with friends. (Conscious Discipline book, chapters 5, 10)
- Helping the child create visuals of routines or a visual social story for success. (Conscious Discipline book, chapter 5)
- Helping the child learn additional strategies to manage situations outside of school that are impeding his learning (death in family, violence, divorce, etc.). (Conscious Discipline book, chapter 8)

**Learn more about the Five Steps to Self-Regulation and how to implement a Safe Place in the *Feeling Buddies Self-Regulation Toolkit* and *Managing Emotional Mayhem*.**



## Focus Points for Parents

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Ten tips for creating a successful Safe Place at home:

1. Practice being a S.T.A.R. every day, not just when your child is upset. Make this practice part of your usual routine for buckling into the car, tucking in bed at night, before meals, at school drop off/pick up, etc.
2. Select a place in the home to set up your Safe Place, and put down some pillows or a beanbag chair to make it cozy. With children six years and younger, you must be able to join them in the Safe Place to calm together.
3. Post the breathing icons on the wall of the Safe Place, and then place age-appropriate calming items such as a special blanket, writing supplies, a stuffed animal, pictures of family members, fidget tools, etc., in a “Safe Place Case” that stays in your Safe Place.
4. Enlist children’s help with planning and filling your Safe Place. Helping to create the Safe Place increases their sense of ownership and their willingness to use it. “What could we put in the Safe Place Case that would help you calm down?”
5. Talk out loud and model being a S.T.A.R. when you start feeling upset. “Wow! That really didn’t go how I thought it would. I feel so disappointed. I’m going to take a few S.T.A.R. breaths to calm myself down.” Model using the Safe Place when you are upset.
6. Discuss when to use the Safe Place. “You can use the Safe Place when you are feeling sad, angry, scared, anxious or just need a moment to relax.”
7. The Safe Place is not an isolation tool. Never force children to go to the Safe Place. Encourage or accompany them to the Safe Place during times of stress and big emotions.
8. The Safe Place is not a time out. Never use it as a punishment or a place for children to go “think about what they’ve done wrong.” The purpose of the Safe Place is for children to learn the very important skills of active calming and self-regulation.
9. When there is more than one child in the home, consider setting up individual Safe Places for each child.
10. Celebrate and notice children when they use the Safe Place. “You did it! You went to the Safe Place and calmed yourself. Now we can figure out how to solve that problem.”

## Focus Points for Educators

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Ten tips for creating a successful Safe Place in the classroom:

1. Make S.T.A.R. breathing a way of life: Build S.T.A.R. breathing into every transition throughout your day. Add “S.T.A.R. Person” to your student job list. Send home a note about S.T.A.R. breathing to familiarize families with the concept.
2. Select a place in the classroom to set up your Safe Place. The location should be cozy, but also within view of the instruction area. It is also helpful for your Friends and Family Board to be in or near the Safe Place.
3. Use a comfortable chair, nap mat or pillows to make the Safe Place inviting. With children six years and younger, you must be able to join them in the Safe Place to calm together.
4. Post the breathing icons on the wall of the Safe Place, and then place calming items such as writing supplies, stuffed animals, fidget tools, etc., in a “Safe Place Case” or basket that stays in your Safe Place.
5. Enlist children’s help with planning and filling your Safe Place. Helping to create the Safe Place increases their sense of ownership and their willingness to use it. In a class meeting or circle time, brainstorm questions like,



“What could we put in the Safe Place Case that would help you calm down?”

6. Talk out loud and model being a S.T.A.R. when you start feeling upset. “Wow! That really didn’t go how I thought it would. I feel so disappointed. I’m going to take a few S.T.A.R. breaths to calm myself down.” Model using the Safe Place when you are upset.
7. Teach children when to use the Safe Place. In a class meeting or circle time, brainstorm questions like, “What are some times you think it might be helpful to use the Safe Place?”
8. The Safe Place is not an isolation tool. Never force children to go to the Safe Place. Encourage or accompany them to the Safe Place during times of stress and big emotions.
9. The Safe Place is not a time out. Never use it as a punishment or a place for children to go “think about what they’ve done wrong.” The purpose of the Safe Place is for children to learn the very important skills of active calming and self-regulation.
10. Celebrate and notice children when they use the Safe Place. “You did it! You went to the Safe Place and calmed yourself. Now we can figure out how to solve that problem.”

**The *Feeling Buddies Self-Regulation Toolkit* (Classroom or Home Editions) provide essential tools and significant support for planning, introducing and implementing a Safe Place.**

## Review: Skill of Composure

**Power:**

**Perception:** No one can make you angry without your permission.

**Becoming  
Brain Smart:**

Composure gives you access to the higher centers of your brain.

**Skill:**

**S.T.A.R.:** “I’m safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this.”

**Noticing and download:** “Your face is going like this (demonstrate).”

**School Family:**

Brain Smart Start Routine, Safekeeper Ritual, Safe Place Self-Regulation Center, Friends and Family Board.

## Reflection: Power of Perception

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Remember perception is a choice not a fact. Ask yourself frequently, “Do I want to own my upset and maintain self-control, or do I want to give my power away and blame others for taking it?” The choice is yours and it never goes away. When you live a more composed life, you live your highest values and model what you want children to do.

- Notice what false messages are on your CD-Rom when you feel triggered.** Use active calming to regulate them. As you vigilantly and repeatedly calm yourself, you will be able to better tolerate the emotional sensations and change your knee-jerk reactions.
- Listen to how often you blame others.** Notice how often you render yourself powerless by saying, “Don’t make me.” Replace these statements with “I’m going to.” Instead of “Don’t make me have to speak to you again,” say, “I’m going to move you to another chair if you choose to continue talking.”
- Affirm to yourself, “When I put another person in charge of my feelings, I put them in charge of me.”** Take back your power. Ask yourself frequently, “Where is my power?”
- Watch the Power of Perception video** on the portal to deepen your reflection.

## Review: Brain Smart Teaching Moments

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Children who are triggered become agitated before they lose control of themselves. This agitation is demonstrated by increases in certain behaviors and decreases in others. Their non-verbal indicators signal it is time for the child or class to do some or all of the components of a Brain Smart Start. You may disengage the stress by being a S.T.A.R., conduct a uniting brain break or do a connecting activity, ultimately recommitting to learning. You may also direct the child to the Safe Place. Look for these signs:

- Darting eyes: Children will look here and there with intensity, but with little focus.
- Non-conversational language: They respond with short answers. “Fine.” “Nothing.”
- Busy hands and feet: Students may drum their fingers, rub their thighs, open and close books, tug at clothes, kick the floor, swing their legs or tap their feet.
- Moving in and out of groups: Children may join a group, then pull away repeatedly.
- Off and on task: Children will start a task, do something else and then return to the task. You will usually see very little sustained attention.
- Staring into space: Watch for all forms of daydreaming.
- Subdued language: This is similar to the nonconversational language above, plus it is soft and weak. You may have to get close to hear what the child says.
- Contained hands: Children will take action to “contain” their hands. They put them in pockets, sit on them or put them in their armpits, appearing to sulk.
- Withdrawal from activities: They pull away from groups, lag behind when walking and choose to withdraw instead of engaging in activities or with people.

\*The above behaviors were conceptualized by Colvin (1993) and developed by Walker, Colvin and Ramsey (1995).



# Reflection: Traditional Discipline and Conscious Discipline

If possible, partner up with someone and say these two statements out loud. One statement is a common declaration that gives away our power, the other is an empowering way to discipline. After each statement share, “The difference between Common and Conscious for me was...”

Traditional Discipline	Conscious Discipline
Don't make me pull this car over.	I'm going to pull the car over while you fasten your seat belt so everyone will be safe.
See how you made her feel? She is crying. Give her back the toy.	See Sarah's face. It's saying, "I don't like it when you grab my toy. Please give it back."
You're making my life miserable!	I'm feeling very frustrated. I'm going to take a deep breath to calm down and then I will speak with you.
Something I often say _____ _____	Ideas for changing _____ _____

## 3-2-1 Reflections

**3** Things you learned...

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**2** Ways that you were personally impacted...

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**1** Question you still have...

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## Implementation Plan: Make a Commitment

### Commitment for Educators

What are you willing to begin implementing right away? Pick one commitment from below or fill in your own. Take out your **Reminder Mini-Poster** for this session and write your commitment in the space provided. If you are in a group setting, verbalize this plan to your Commitment Buddy.

- Start your “Be a S.T.A.R.” Program.**
- Practice active calming** (S.T.A.R., “I’m safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this,” wishing well).
- Teach every child how and when to S.T.A.R., Drain, Balloon, Pretzel and Wish Well.**
- When a child becomes upset, ask the entire class to help** by being a S.T.A.R. and wishing well.
- Practice noticing** in order to actively download calm into children.
- Use O.O.P.S. and Q.T.I.P.** with yourself, colleagues and children.
- Start each day with a Brain Smart Start** and utilize Brain Smart activities throughout the day, especially during transition times.
- Discuss with children what safety looks like, sounds like and feels like.**
- Teach children about the classroom job descriptions**, “My job is to keep the classroom safe. Your job is to help keep it safe,” and create a daily Safekeeper ritual.
- Create a Friends and Family Board/Book.**
- Create a Safe Place** in your classroom and teach children how to successfully use it.
- Visit Shubert’s School and the book study portal online.**
- Seek help from the Conscious Discipline community** by asking questions and sharing concerns on the Conscious Discipline Facebook page, and by visiting Pinterest to see images of what others have found successful.



## Commitment for Parents

What are you willing to begin implementing right away? Pick one commitment from below or fill in your own. Take out your **Reminder Mini-Poster** for this session and write your commitment in the space provided. If you are in a group setting, verbalize this plan to your Commitment Buddy.

- Start your “Be a S.T.A.R.” Program.**
- Practice active calming** (S.T.A.R., “I’m safe. Keep breathing. I can handle this,” wishing well).
- Teach your child how and when to S.T.A.R., Drain, Balloon, Pretzel and Wish Well.**
- When your child becomes upset, take a deep S.T.A.R. breath.**
- Practice noticing** in order to actively download calm to your child.
- Use O.O.P.S. and Q.T.I.P.** with yourself and family members.
- Start each day with a Brain Smart Start** and practice brain breaks as needed.
- Have a discussion with your child about what safety looks like, sounds like and feels like.**
- Talk to your child about your connected family job descriptions**, “My job is to keep our family safe. Your job is to help keep it safe,” and create a daily Safekeeper ritual.
- Create a Friends and Family Book** or look through existing family albums together.
- Create a Safe Place in your home and teach your child how to use it.**
- Visit Shubert’s Home and the book study portal online.**
- Seek help from the Conscious Discipline community** on the Conscious Discipline Facebook page and by visiting Pinterest to see images of what others have created in their home environments.
- Other** \_\_\_\_\_

# Session 4: Post-Learning Survey

Let's revisit our little survey. Answer the questions below. Then take a moment to re-read your Pre-Learning Survey from the beginning of the session and reflect on the transformational changes you've already internalized.

**1. No one can make me angry without my permission.**

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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**2. When I take a deep breath, my inhale and my exhale should take the same amount of time.**

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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**3. The "I'm going to..." language will help me keep my power.**

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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**4. The phrase, "See how you made her feel," teaches children empathy for others.**

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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**5. Behaviors that trigger my anger say more about me than the other person.**

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Undecided	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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(odd numbered items with a "1" and even numbered items with "5" show the highest level of understanding)

## Reflect

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# Extend Your Learning

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## Brain Breaks

- “Calm Your Brain” from *Brain Boogie Boosters*
- “Stop in the Name of Love” from *Kindness Counts*
- “Move” from *Listen to Your Feelings*

## Essential Reading

- *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms*, Chapter 4, Composure (pages 86-119)
- *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline*, Chapter 2, The Seven Powers for Self-Control (pages 25-50) and Chapter 3, The Seven Basic Skills of Discipline (pages 51-71)
- *Managing Emotional Mayhem*, Chapter 4, The Adult Journey: Five Steps for Self-Regulation (pages 85-113); Chapter 5, The Child’s Journey: Coaching Children in the Five-Step Process (pages 115-163)
- *Creating the School Family*,
  - Chapter 4, Friends and Family Board (pages 59-75)
  - Chapter 5, The Safekeeper (pages 77-97)
  - Chapter 8, Beginning the Day the Brain Smart Way (pages 145-163)
  - Chapter 9, Safe Place (pages 165-168)

## Rubrics

- Skill of Composure 1.0
- Safe Place 1.1
- Friends and Family Board 1.2
- Brain Smart Start 1.3
- Safekeeper Ritual 1.4
- Greeting/Goodbye Ritual 1.5

## Products that Support the Skill of Composure

- *Shubert* is a S.T.A.R.
- *Sophie* is a S.T.A.R.
- *Feeling Buddies*® self-regulation toolkit
- *Shubert* puppet
- *Sophie* puppet
- *Safe Place* mat
- *Brain Smart* choice cubes



- *Seven Skills* poster set, composure poster
- *Songs for I Love You Rituals*, Vol. 1 and 2 music CDs
- *Listen to Your Feelings* music CD
- *I Love You Rituals* book
- *I Love You Rituals* poster set
- *I Love You Rituals* on a string
- *I Choose Self-Control* board
- *Bailey Bear*

## Additional Resources

- *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms* book
- *Creating the School Family* book
- *Managing Emotional Mayhem* book
- *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline* book
- *Kindness Counts* music CD
- *It Starts in the Heart* music CD
- *Brain Boogie Boosters* music CD
- *Conscious Discipline Premium Digital Toolkit*, including:
  - Make-N-Takes
  - CD Games
  - We Care Cards
  - Audio Series
  - SEL Elevate Video Sessions

## Online Resources

Log in to your e-Learning Portal at [ConsciousDiscipline.com](https://www.consciousdiscipline.com) to access additional resources and video FAQs for Session 4.

- [Facebook.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://www.facebook.com/ConsciousDiscipline)
- [Pinterest.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://www.pinterest.com/ConsciousDiscipline)
- [Twitter.com/ConsciousDiscipline](https://twitter.com/ConsciousDiscipline) or [@ConsciousDiscipline](https://twitter.com/ConsciousDiscipline)
- [YouTube.com/user/LovingGuidance](https://www.youtube.com/user/LovingGuidance)



## **ANSWER KEY: SESSION 4**

1. Three
2. ... you have placed in charge of you
3. Resentment, feeling unvalued, power struggles, challenging relationships
4. Blame / attack
5. "I'm going to"
6. Wounds from our childhood
7. Breathe (S.T.A.R.) / Affirm to yourself, "I'm safe  
Keep breathing, I can handle this."/Wish well
8. Download calm
9. Chest / lap
10. Safe Place structure / inner peace
11. Safe adult
12. Self-regulation
13. I am upset / I calm / I feel / I choose / I solve



