

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

NO-DRAMA DISCIPLINE

THE WHOLE-BRAIN WAY TO
CALM THE CHAOS AND NURTURE YOUR
CHILD'S DEVELOPING MIND



FROM THE AUTHORS OF
THE WHOLE-BRAIN CHILD

DANIEL J. SIEGEL, M.D.

AND

TINA PAYNE BRYSON, PH.D.

Praise for
No-Drama Discipline

“With lucid, engaging prose accompanied by cartoon illustrations, [Daniel J.] Siegel and [Tina Payne] Bryson help parents teach and communicate more effectively.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“A lot of fascinating insights . . . an eye-opener worth reading.”

—*Parents*

“Insightful . . . The ideas presented in this latest book can actually be applied to all of our relationships, as it will help us in many circumstances to be able to calm down, have empathy for another person, and then communicate in a constructive way about our concerns and proposed solutions. What works to help children learn and behave better might also help our world’s leaders and large groups of people get along better, as many of us adults failed to develop these mindsight skills as we were growing up and we tend to sabotage our relationships with others as a result. Whether you are a parent, a teacher, or just a person who wishes to learn to get along better with others, you may find some valuable insights in *No-Drama Discipline*.”

—*Examiner.com*

“Wow! This book grabbed me from the very first page and did not let go. Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson explain extremely well why punishment is a dead-end strategy. Then they describe what to do instead. By making the latest breakthroughs in brain science accessible to any parent, they show why empathy and connection are the royal road to cooperation, discipline, and family harmony.”

—LAWRENCE J. COHEN, PH.D., author of
The Opposite of Worry

“Using simple and clear explanations, practical advice, and cartoons that make the how-to guidance come alive, this book is a rich resource for families trying to navigate meltdowns and misunderstandings. It explains how neurobiology drives children’s infuriating and puzzling behavior and will help parents make their way through the trenches of a typical day with grace, mutual respect, and a good helping of delight.”

—WENDY MOGEL, PH.D., author of
The Blessing of a Skinned Knee

“What a relief! Siegel and Bryson take the difficulty out of discipline for parents or anyone who has to help kids behave. *No-Drama Discipline* offers a research-based, commonsense approach that any grown-up will be happy to use, and any kid will benefit from.”

—DANIEL GOLEMAN, author of
Emotional Intelligence

“Frustrated parents often ask me why the disciplinary techniques they are using with their children aren’t working, or are even making things worse. I have not always known what to say, because I was not always sure I un-

BY DANIEL J. SIEGEL, M.D., AND TINA PAYNE BRYSON, PH.D.

The Whole-Brain Child

No-Drama Discipline

No-Drama Discipline

THE WHOLE-BRAIN WAY
TO CALM THE CHAOS
AND NURTURE YOUR
CHILD'S DEVELOPING
MIND

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.

Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.



Bantam Books *New York*

All identifying details, including names, have been changed except for those pertaining to the authors' family members. This book is not intended as a substitute for advice from a trained professional.

2016 Bantam Books Trade Paperback Edition

Copyright © 2014 by Mind Your Brain, Inc., and Tina Payne Bryson, Inc.
Excerpt from *The Whole-Brain Child* by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D., copyright © 2011 by Mind Your Brain, Inc., and Tina Payne Bryson, Inc.

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by Bantam Books, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, New York.

BANTAM BOOKS and the HOUSE colophon are registered trademarks of Penguin Random House LLC.

Originally published in hardcover in the United States by Bantam Books, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, in 2014.

"Twenty Discipline Mistakes Even Great Parents Make" by Tina Payne Bryson, was originally published on www.mom.me, and is reprinted with permission.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Siegel, Daniel J.

No-drama discipline : the whole-brain way to calm the chaos and nurture your child's developing mind / Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.

pages cm

ISBN 978-0-345-54806-1 (trade paperback)—ISBN 978-0-345-54805-4 (ebook)

1. Parenting. 2. Child development. 3. Child rearing. I. Bryson, Tina Payne. II. Title.

HQ755.8.S5327 2014

649'.1—dc23

2014008270

Illustrations by Tuesday Mourning

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

randomhousebooks.com

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Title-page illustration: © iStock.com/Leontura

To the youth of the world, our vital teachers (DJS)

For my parents: my first teachers and my first loves (TPB)

CONTENTS

Before You Read This Book: A Question xi

Introduction: Relational, Low-Drama Discipline xiii

Chapter 1	ReTHINKING Discipline	3
Chapter 2	Your Brain on Discipline	33
Chapter 3	From Tantrum to Tranquility: Connection Is the Key	66
Chapter 4	No-Drama Connection in Action	100
Chapter 5	1-2-3 Discipline: Redirecting for Today, and for Tomorrow	136
Chapter 6	Addressing Behavior: As Simple as R-E-D-I-R-E-C-T	165

Conclusion	On Magic Wands, Being Human, Reconnection, and Change: Four Messages of Hope	213
-------------------	---	------------

<i>Further Resources</i>	225
Connect and Redirect Refrigerator Sheet	226
When a Parenting Expert Loses It	228
A Note to Our Child’s Caregivers	235
Twenty Discipline Mistakes Even Great Parents Make	238
An Excerpt from <i>The Whole-Brain Child</i>	245
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	253

BEFORE YOU READ THIS BOOK

A Question

A

cereal bowl gets thrown across the kitchen, splattering milk and Cheerios all over the wall.

The dog runs in from the backyard and has inexplicably been painted blue.

One of your kids threatens a younger sibling.

You get a call from the principal's office for the third time this month.

What do you do?

Before you answer, we want to ask you to completely forget about everything you know about discipline. Forget what you think the word means, and forget what you've heard about how parents should respond when kids do something they're not supposed to.

Instead, ask yourself a question: Are you open to at least thinking about a different approach to discipline? One that helps you achieve your immediate goals of getting your kids to do the right thing in the moment, as well as your longer-range goals of helping them become good people who are happy, successful, kind, responsible, and even self-disciplined?

If so, this book is for you.

INTRODUCTION

Relational, Low-Drama Discipline: Encouraging Cooperation While Building a Child's Brain

Y

ou are not alone.

If you feel at a loss when it comes to getting your kids to argue less or speak more respectfully . . . if you can't figure out how to keep your toddler from climbing up to the top bunk, or get him to put on clothes before answering the front door . . . if you feel frustrated having to utter the same phrase over and over again ("Hurry! You're going to be late for school!") or to engage in *another* battle over bedtime or homework or screen time . . . if you've experienced any of these frustrations, you are not alone.

In fact, you're not even unusual. You know what you are? A parent. A human being, and a parent.

It's hard to figure out how to discipline our kids. It just is. All too often it goes like this: They do something they shouldn't do. We get mad. They get upset. Tears flow. (Sometimes the tears belong to the kids.)

It's exhausting. It's infuriating. All the drama, the yelling, the hurt feelings, the guilt, the heartache, the disconnection.

Do you ever find yourself asking, after an especially agonizing interaction with your kids, "Can't I do better than this? Can't I handle

myself better, and be a more effective parent? Can't I discipline in ways that calm the situation rather than create more chaos?" You want the bad behavior to stop, but you want to respond in a way that values and enhances your relationship with your children. You want to build your relationship, not damage it. You want to create less drama, not more.

You can.

In fact, that's the central message of this book: *You really can discipline in a way that's full of respect and nurturing, but that also maintains clear and consistent boundaries. In other words, you can do better.* You can discipline in a way that's high on relationship, high on respect, and low on drama and conflict—and in the process, you can foster development that builds good relationship skills and improves your children's ability to make good decisions, think about others, and act in ways that prepare them for lifelong success and happiness.

We've talked to thousands and thousands of parents all over the world, teaching them basics about the brain and how it affects their relationship with their kids, and we've seen how hungry parents are to learn to address children's behavior in ways that are more respectful *and* more effective. Parents are tired of yelling so much, tired of seeing their kids get so upset, tired of their children continuing to misbehave. These parents know the kind of discipline they *don't* want to use, but they don't know *what to do* instead. They want to discipline in a kind and loving way, but they feel exhausted and overwhelmed when it comes to actually getting their kids to do what they're supposed to do. They want discipline that works and that they feel good about.

In this book, we'll introduce you to what we call a No-Drama, Whole-Brain approach to discipline, offering principles and strategies that will remove most of the drama and high emotions that so typically characterize discipline. As a result, your life as a parent will be easier and your parenting will become more effective. More important, you'll create connections in your children's brains that build emotional and social skills that will serve them now and throughout their entire life—all while strengthening your relationship with them.

What we hope you'll discover is that the moments when discipline is called for are actually some of the most important moments of parenting, times when we have the opportunity to shape our children most powerfully. When these challenges arise—and they will—you'll be able to look at them not merely as dreaded discipline situations full of anger and frustration and drama, but as opportunities to connect with your children and redirect them toward behavior that better serves them and your whole family.

If you are an educator, therapist, or coach who is also responsible for the growth and well-being of children, you will find that these techniques work just as well for your students, patients and clients, or teams. Recent discoveries about the brain give us deep insights into the children we care for, what they need, and how to discipline them in ways that foster optimal development. We've written this book for anyone who cares for a child and is interested in loving, scientifically informed, effective strategies to help children grow well. We'll use the word "parent" throughout the book, but if you're a grandparent, a teacher, or some other significant person in the life of a child, this book is also for you. Our lives are more meaningful with collaboration, and this joining together can begin with the many adults who cooperate in the nurturing of a child in the earliest days of life onward. We hope all children have many caregivers in their lives who are intentional about how they interact with them and, when necessary, discipline them in ways that build skills and enhance their relationship.

Reclaiming the Word "Discipline"

Let's begin with the actual goal of discipline. When your child misbehaves, what do you want to accomplish? Are consequences your ultimate goal? In other words, is the objective to punish?

Of course not. When we're angry, we may *feel* like we want to punish our child. Irritation, impatience, frustration, or just being unsure can make us feel that. It's totally understandable—even common. But once we've calmed down and cleaned the raw egg out

of everyone's hair, we know that giving consequences is not our ultimate goal.

So what *do* we want? What *is* the goal of discipline?

Well, let's start with a formal definition. The word "discipline" comes directly from the Latin word *disciplina*, which was used as far back as the eleventh century to mean teaching, learning, and giving instruction. So, from its inception in the English language, "discipline" has meant "to teach."

These days, most people associate only punishment or consequences with the practice of discipline. It's like the mother with the eighteen-month-old son who asked Dan: "I'm doing a lot of teaching with Sam, but when do I start disciplining him?" The mother saw that she needed to address her son's behaviors, and she assumed that punishment is what discipline is meant to be.

As you read the rest of this book, we want you to keep in mind what Dan explained: that whenever we discipline our kids, our overall goal is not to punish or to give a consequence, but to teach. The root of "discipline" is the word *disciple*, which means "student," "pupil," and "learner." A disciple, the one receiving discipline, is not a prisoner or recipient of punishment, but one who is learning through instruction. Punishment might shut down a behavior in the short term, but teaching offers skills that last a lifetime.

We thought a lot about whether we even wanted to use the word "discipline" in our title. We weren't sure what to call this practice of setting limits while still being emotionally attuned to our children, this approach that centers on teaching and working with our kids to help them build the skills to make good choices. We decided that we want to reclaim the word "discipline," along with its original meaning. We want to completely reframe the whole discussion and differentiate *discipline* from *punishment*.

Essentially, we want caregivers to begin to think of discipline as one of the most loving and nurturing things we can do for kids. Our children need to learn skills like inhibiting impulses, managing big angry feelings, and considering the impact of their behavior on others. Learning these essentials of life and relationships is what they need,

and if you can provide it for them, you'll be offering a significant gift not only to your children, but to your whole family and even the rest of the world. Seriously. This is not mere hyperbole. No-Drama Discipline, as we'll describe it in the coming pages, will help your kids become the people they are meant to be, improving their ability to control themselves, respect others, participate in deep relationships, and live moral and ethical lives. Just think, then, about the generational impact that will have as they grow up with these gifts and abilities, and raise children of their own, who can then pass on these same gifts to future generations!

It begins with rethinking what discipline really means, reclaiming it as a term that's not about punishment or control, but about teaching and skill building—and doing so from a place of love, respect, and emotional connection.

The Dual Goals of No-Drama Discipline

Effective discipline aims for two primary goals. The first is obviously to get our kids to cooperate and do the right thing. In the heat of the moment, when our child is throwing a toy in a restaurant or being rude or refusing to do homework, we simply want her to act like she's supposed to. We want her to stop throwing the toy. We want her to communicate respectfully. We want her to get her homework done.

With a small child, achieving the first goal, cooperation, might involve getting him to hold your hand as he crosses the street, or helping him put down the bottle of olive oil he's swinging like a baseball bat in aisle 4 at the grocery store. For an older child it might mean problem-solving with him to do his chores in a more timely fashion, or discussing how his sister might feel about the phrase "fat-butted lonely girl."

You'll hear us say it repeatedly throughout the book: every child is different, and no parenting approach or strategy will work every time. But the most obvious goal in all of these situations is to elicit cooperation and to help a child behave in ways that are acceptable (like using kind words, or putting dirty clothes in the hamper) and avoid behav-

iors that aren't (like hitting, or touching the gum someone left under the table at the library). This is the short-term goal of discipline.

For many people, that's the only goal: gaining immediate cooperation. They want their kids to stop doing something they shouldn't be doing or begin doing something they should be doing. That's why we so often hear parents use phrases like "Stop it *now*!" and the timeless "Because I said so!"

But really, we want more than mere cooperation, don't we? Of course we want to prevent the breakfast spoon from becoming a weapon. Of course we want to promote kind and respectful actions, and reduce the insults and belligerence.

But there's a second goal that's just as important, and whereas getting cooperation is the short-term objective, this second goal is more long-term. It focuses on instructing our children in ways that develop skills and the capacity to resiliently handle challenging situations, frustrations, and emotional storms that might make them lose control. These are the internal skills that can be generalized beyond the immediate behavior in the moment and then used not only now, but later in a variety of situations. This internal, second major goal of discipline is about helping them develop self-control and a moral compass, so that even when authority figures aren't around, they are thoughtful and conscientious. It's about helping them grow up and become kind and responsible people who can enjoy successful relationships and meaningful lives.

We call this a Whole-Brain approach to discipline because, as we'll explain, when we use the whole of our own brain as parents, we can focus on both the immediate external teachings and the long-term internal lessons. And when our children receive this form of intentional teaching, they, too, come to use their whole brains.

Over the generations, countless theories have cropped up about how to help our children "grow up right." There was the "spare the rod and spoil the child" school, and its opposite, the "free to be you and me" school. But in the last twenty years or so, during what's been called "the decade of the brain" and the years that have followed, scientists have discovered an immense amount of information about

the way the brain works, and it has plenty to tell us about loving, respectful, consistent, effective discipline.

We now know that the way to help a child develop optimally is to help create connections in her brain—her whole brain—that develop skills that lead to better relationships, better mental health, and more meaningful lives. You could call it brain sculpting, or brain nourishing, or brain building. Whatever phrase you prefer, the point is crucial, and thrilling: as a result of the words we use and the actions we take, children's brains will actually change, and be built, as they undergo new experiences.

Effective discipline means that we're not only stopping a bad behavior or promoting a good one, but also teaching skills and nurturing the connections in our children's brains that will help them make better decisions and handle themselves well in the future. Automatically. Because that's how their brains will have been wired. We're helping them understand what it means to manage their emotions, to control their own impulses, to consider others' feelings, to think about consequences, to make thoughtful decisions, and much more. We're helping them develop their brains and become people who are better friends, better siblings, better sons and daughters, and better human beings. Then, one day, better parents themselves.

As a huge bonus, the more we help build our kids' brains, the less we have to struggle to achieve the short-term goal of gaining cooperation. Encouraging cooperation *and* building the brain: these are the dual goals—the external and the internal—that guide a loving, effective, Whole-Brain approach to discipline. It's parenting with the brain in mind!

Accomplishing Our Goals: Saying No to the Behavior, but Yes to the Child

How do parents typically accomplish their discipline goals? Most commonly, through threats and punishment. Kids misbehave, and the immediate parental reaction is to offer consequences with both guns blazing.

