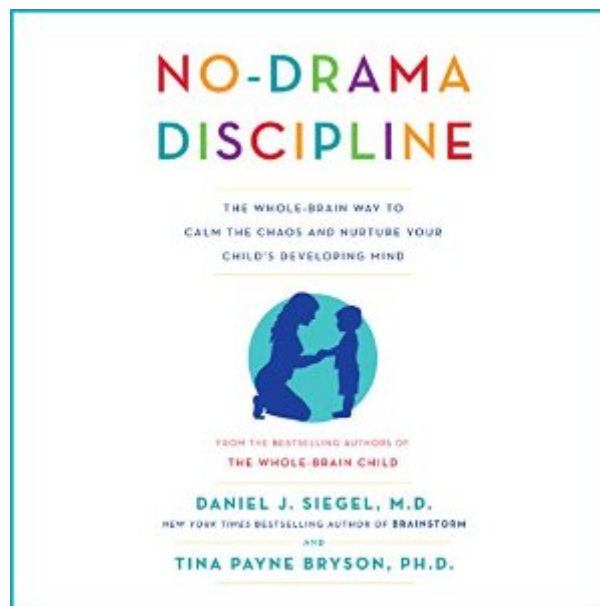


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# No-Drama Discipline: The Whole-Brain Way To Calm The Chaos And Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind



## Synopsis

The pioneering experts behind the bestselling *The Whole-Brain Child* - Tina Payne Bryson and Daniel J. Siegel, the New York Times bestselling author of *Brainstorm* - now explore the ultimate child-raising challenge: discipline. Highlighting the fascinating link between a child's neurological development and the way a parent reacts to misbehavior, *No-Drama Discipline* provides an effective, compassionate road map for dealing with tantrums, tensions, and tears - without causing a scene. Defining the true meaning of the "d" word (to instruct, not to shout or reprimand), the authors explain how to reach your child, redirect emotions, and turn a meltdown into an opportunity for growth. By doing so, the cycle of negative behavior (and punishment) is essentially brought to a halt, as problem solving becomes a win/win situation. Inside this sanity-saving guide you'll discover strategies that help parents identify their own discipline philosophy - and master the best methods to communicate the lessons they are trying to impart facts on child brain development - and what kind of discipline is most appropriate and constructive at all ages and stages the way to calmly and lovingly connect with a child - no matter how extreme the behavior - while still setting clear and consistent limits tips for navigating your children through a tantrum to achieve insight, empathy, and repair twenty discipline mistakes even the best parents make - and how to stay focused on the principles of whole-brain parenting and discipline techniques. Complete with candid stories and playful illustrations that bring the authors' suggestions to life, *No-Drama Discipline* shows you how to work with your child's developing mind, peacefully resolve conflicts, and inspire happiness and strengthen resilience in everyone in the family.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours and 18 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Random House Audio

Audible.com Release Date: September 23, 2014

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00NQAW77K

Best Sellers Rank: #8 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Child Psychology #12

in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Child Psychology #12

## Customer Reviews

I ordered this book out of desperation. My grandchildren were acting out in ways that were unsafe (ages 3 and 5 at the time) running near traffic, throwing tantrums. Without reading the entire book, I learned enough to completely turn the situation around. Recent example: I pick up my granddaughter from school and she is in her weird mood again, runs down the street and crosses it without me! Once we are in the car, I say, OK, what happened at school today? Nothing, she says. No, you don't usually act like this. What happened? See this scratch, she asks. I tripped over some blocks and three of my friends laughed at me. Behavior changes to normal. The next day I pick up my grandson. I don't rush him out to the car anymore. Instead we have a check in period sitting in the back of the car before we go anywhere. In other words we process their emotional well being before pressing on into this busy world. Huge change!

This book has a lot of great stuff in it and equally, some stuff that left me scratching my head....Let me explain.We'll start with the great stuff first. They talk about connecting with your child a lot. The idea of getting off parenting "auto-pilot" so you are not reacting anymore, but rather, intentionally engaging in the situation in order to use these moments to teach our children what they need to learn to promote better behavior next time. All of these are great assertions and really, for me, the point was simply, don't react, or punish in anger, rather, assess the situation and figure out what lesson my child should learn from our post-tantrum encounter and do what I can to teach that lesson, instead of just teaching them tantrums=time out. I should be teaching them HOW to communicate with me BEFORE the tantrum. Now, that being said, none of this will happen overnight, but if you allow your emotions to be removed from the anger/drama cycle and react as a teacher, rather than a victim of their poor behavior, over time the drama (especially on the parents' end will be gone).Now for the stuff I wasn't so comfortable with....There is a graphic in the book that supports their main point of "The No Drama Cycle"

"Communicate Comfort">"Validate">"Listen">"Reflect">"Communicate Comfort">>>continues in a circleI had a hard time with this because I felt like this was all about stopping and gauging your child's emotional reaction to why they are making that poor choice or melting down. On the surface, that doesn't always sound like a bad idea, however, my 5 year old figured out that if she starts to melt down, she gets undivided attention. That obviously leads to people saying, well if she's acting out she must need more attention....But, as many other parents will attest, she can't have undivided attention all

the time. We spend much time one-on-one with her, but when I am giving her sister the same one-on-one time, is when the 5 year old would meltdown in hopes that I would abandon her sister's one-on-one time to go through the steps of the cycle with her. Now, most people would just say, ok, so ignore the 5 year old's melt down and discuss it later. BUT it specifically says in this book that if you ignore your child while they're melting down like that you're sending the message, "You're on your own if you get angry and upset. I love you, and I'll be here for you once you're done throwing your fit; but as long as you keep acting this way, I'm going to ignore you. So hurry up and finish being upset." They say that if you stop and essentially coddle your child, you're not giving in, you're actually communicating, "I'm here for you even when you're falling apart and at your absolute worst. I can take it. I've got your back no matter what." I don't see it, but maybe it will work for someone else's family. I do appreciate how they kept re-iterating that no child is the same, so no method is fail-proof and you have to figure out what works with your kid. Overall, I felt like this was nothing really new and not really for my family.

With the advent of advanced neuro-imaging techniques, the field of brain science has made rapid gains. We now know so much about how the brain functions - which brain regions control which processes and functions, how sensory inputs are processed, how memories are created, stored and accessed, the roles of different neurotransmitters and hormones in creating thoughts and emotions, and much more. Perhaps this information can be used to understand how different parenting styles affect brain development and, hence, the intellectual, social, emotional and moral development of children. Perhaps this brain-based information can even help develop a set of general guidelines or principles for best practices for child-rearing. Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson have spent much of their careers doing just that. They have developed a simplified framework for understanding how experiences shape brain development and, hence, child development. In short, the brain is made up of two dual, opposing systems. First there is the "left brain" and the "right brain". This book does not talk much about this duality (which I believe is more developed in their book *THE WHOLE BRAIN CHILD*). Very simplistically, the left brain is the logical, linguistic side, while the right brain is the holistic, emotional side (it's actually a lot more complicated than that and both sides are integrated through a massive cord of fibers called the corpus callosum). More germane to this book is the "upstairs brain" and the "downstairs brain". The upstairs brain consists of the cerebral cortex, especially the pre-frontal cortex, which handles executive functions like judgment and impulse control. The downstairs brain consists of the brain stem - our "mammalian" brain which handles emotions and our "reptilian" brain which handles immediate, flight, flight or freeze survival reactions.

The key to optimal functioning is to integrate the functioning of these two dual systems and not allow one region to "hijack" another. But science is beginning to show that many traditional, typical parenting strategies - including many recommended for generations in parenting books - activate the brain's stress/threat response system, which engages the downstairs brain in a way that essentially takes the upstairs brain "offline". The brain perceives things like yelling, spanking, punishments and even the isolation of a time-out to be threatening to the organism, which triggers the part of the brain meant to react to such threats. This reaction is great if you are a zebra who's just spotted a lion. Not so great, however, if you are a parent who is trying to discipline a child. Often when children misbehave, it is because they are already dealing with overwhelming feelings and reactions, so their downstairs brain is already hyper-engaged. When we "discipline" in an angry, controlling or punitive way, we only further overwhelm the downstairs brain, which produces the exact opposite reaction we want. Furthermore, the authors argue that the way we discipline shapes the child's developing brain over time - harsh discipline over time wires the brain in an unhealthy way that leads kids to be more reactive and impulsive. The authors ask us to take a step back and look at what we are trying to accomplish through - and what do we mean by - "discipline"? Is it about punishment and retribution for wrong-doing? Or is it, rather, about teaching and helping our children grow up to be the responsible, empathic, moral people we want them to be? If (as the authors assume), our goal is the latter, many of the parenting methods we should use are antithetical to the ideas of punishment and retribution. The authors contend that much of children's "misbehavior" is really their coping response to "big feelings" and other sensory overload that they simply can't handle. Furthermore, their ability to handle such feelings and sensory experiences vary wildly depending on a number of factors, such as hunger, fatigue and other issues going on in their lives. So a child who is normally fairly calm and collected but who has a meltdown at the checkout lane may not be simply being manipulative to get a candy bar (as parents often assume), but may very likely simply be overwhelmed from a long day of shopping and simply cannot keep herself together. If we want to make disciplinary situations into potentially teachable moments rather than pitched battles to be won, we must engage the child's upstairs brain. To do that, we must soothe his downstairs brain so his upstairs brain can come back online. And to do that we must soothe our own downstairs brain so our own upstairs brain can come back online. Then we are ready to "connect and redirect" - emotionally engage with our child by showing that we understand his big feelings and then redirect the behavior in positive ways. This process cannot be forced - trying to make a child calm down is instead likely to get her more upset. Parents often argue that they don't have time to go through this process, but the authors respond that over time, as the child's brain becomes less in

thrall to the downstairs brain and more able to engage the executive functions of the upstairs brain, this method tends to be much more effective. The book is very well organized, following a coherent outline which includes both the simplified theory and practice of each step in this process. The book is written in laymen's terms, which might be a bit too simplified if you have much prior knowledge of psychology or neuroanatomy/physiology. A fair amount of nuance is lost in this simplification, but it is adequate for the points of parenting that the authors are trying to convey. This book combines a lot of ideas you may have encountered from other theorists and authors (although the authors of this book may have come to their ideas independently). If you are familiar with Robert Sapolsky's *WHY ZEBRAS DON'T GET ULCERS*, you will recognize a lot of the brain research he reported regarding how the body's stress response system becomes activated by threats. If you are familiar with Peter Levine's work, you will recognize some of his ideas about how our experiences and emotions are felt in the body and how that can be used (by both kids and adults) to gain a sort of meta-understanding of the physical and mental processes of stress and relaxation (what the authors of this book call "mindsight" - understanding the mind behind the behavior), which can be used to help take control of the process and release physical energy associated with stress. And if you are familiar with Alfie Kohn's work, you will recognize his "working with" rather than "doing to" ideas of child-rearing - in fact, this book is almost a "how-to" guide for implementing some of Kohn's more theoretical ideas. In simplifying their work and offering a framework for parenting, the authors run the risk at times of turning parenting into a corporate motivational seminar. Some of their specific techniques come across a bit too cheery and manipulative. As one example, rather than telling your children no, they suggest saying "yes with a condition". Your daughter asks, "Mom, can Sally come over?" Rather than saying "Not today, sweetheart", you say, "Sure, how about next weekend?" I dunno, but that sounds rather disingenuous to me. You know perfectly well - and your daughter knows you know - that she meant "now" or at least "today". Saying yes to a question she didn't ask is a rather dishonest way of saying no to the question she did ask. In my opinion, an honest no is better - you can always follow it up with the alternative option ("Not today, sweetheart. How about next weekend?") The authors do, however, repeatedly stress that their advice needs to be filtered through the lens of your individual parenting style. The authors further stress that their discipline system is not meant to be an indulgent, permissive free-for-all. Children still need consistent rules, boundaries and structure (as long as they are flexible enough to "meet the needs of this particular child at this particular time"). Parents should still hold high expectations and not do things for their children so that children learn to handle disappointment and failure as well as develop self-discipline and perseverance. Coincidentally, just before this book I read Alfie Kohn's *THE MYTH OF THE*

SPOILED CHILD, which argues that things like self-discipline and perseverance may be overrated, and maybe it's not such a bad thing for parents to do things for their children in order to support them. Overall, Kohn's work is very simpatico with Siegel and Bryson's work. I would love to see a dialogue among the three on some of these finer points. I recommend this book for any parent of any theoretical perspective and political stripe. This book offers valuable insight and specific guidance for parents who are already trying to raise their kids in a more respectful and progressive, less controlling and punitive way. But even for parents of a more traditional, authoritarian mindset, this book offers a thought-provoking, yet common sense, challenge, based on extensive empirical research, to some of the assumptions and beliefs behind behavioral parenting.

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