

---

# *Gentle Discipline* in classroom management

## Webinar handout

by Zahra Zuhair

### Introduction

*Gentle Discipline* begins with understanding the functioning of the young brain and working to train the brain to manage emotions. This begins with understanding the cause of the behaviour and addressing it, rather than direct criticism at the child. Adopting this approach in the heat of the moment can be very challenging for teachers. A simple acronym to help remember the steps you can take in a difficult behaviour situation is **LURNA**. i.e.

to **Listen** to what the child is saying, or to pay attention to the actions of the child,  
to **Understand** the difficulty the child is facing,  
to **Regulate** your own emotions, and then help students regulate their own emotions,  
to **Negotiate** a solution, and  
to **Act** towards that solution

### What are the 3 Cs to remember when thinking about the child's brain?

The brain is **complex**. It comprises the downstairs (reptilian) brain and the upstairs brain, which is responsible for logical thinking and emotional awareness. Seigel and Bryson (2016) put forward that children respond from their downstairs brain, rather than their upstairs brain. The brain is also continuously **changing**. This gives us the opportunity to make experiences intentional and consistently wire the brains of our students to respond to their negative emotions in a healthy way. Finally, the brain is **changeable**. As the adults in the situation, the responsibility is on us to respond from our upstairs brain, modelling emotional awareness and rational thinking. In doing so, we are able to train the brain of our students to do the same and thus exercise their upstairs brain, developing their logical thinking and ability to regulate emotions.

---

## Lessons against Punishment

1. Children learn by long-term example. Gentle discipline provides a long-term solution. An aggressive threat of punishment on the other hand, provides short-term results and nothing in the way of character development.
2. Punishments that exclude children like the *naughty corner* should be avoided as these affect a child's self-worth and teaches them that a lack of compliance results in exclusion, thereby preventing them from truly expressing themselves. Take the opportunity instead to teach children how to express themselves in a healthy manner.

## Six Actions for mindful discipline

Identify the trigger (**Listen**)

Express validation and understanding (**Understand**)

Help the student regulate their emotions (**Regulate**)

Use natural consequences as punishments

Make note of skill development required

Negotiate a solution. (**Negotiate and Act**)

## Reference:

Siegel, D and Bryson, T. (2016). *No Drama Discipline*. Bantam Books.

-----  
A recording of Zahra's webinar can be watched here: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/planning-activities-and-lessons-mini-event>