Leadership and Care

Opening from here are 30+ pages addressed to the subject of what is generally referred to as behavior management, positive discipline, or guidance, issues that everyone faces in the helping professions — parents, professionals, friends or volunteers. It is often a struggle to find an optimal way of being, because difficult problems emerge in unique circumstances with unique individuals. Recognizing the many who have contributed their insights on this subject, I offer another take on this old problem. I call it now Leadership and Care.

Below is an overview of how I have organized this site. You can always return here by clicking the Leadership and Care link of the main navigation panel. Each of these links leads to answers to these questions.

The 8 Components of Leadership and Care

[Considering Our Values](http://tomdrummond.com/ideal) — What do we think we are doing when we face the personal trauma of children pushing the limits and beyond? Can we start with a well-considered, shared ideal or optimal goal?

[Clarifying Responsibilities](http://tomdrummond.com/clarifying)  — How do we message to others and ourselves where responsibility lies. Which party has to deal with what comes up? Me or you?

[Opening Dialogue](http://tomdrummond.com/opening-dialogue) — How do we set up communication so we have a shared background for how we behave?

[Acting Assertively](http://tomdrummond.com/acting-assertively) — When we have a problem and we know it is our responsibility, what do we do in what order?

[Offering Information](http://tomdrummond.com/offering-information) — When we have a problem and we know it is mostly the responsibility of the other, how do we communicate that responsibility in an open, clear, and trusting way?

[Listening](http://tomdrummond.com/listening) — When emotions are high, people don't think very well no matter what age they are. How do we listen deeply and convey our trust?

[Negotiation](http://tomdrummond.com/negotiation) — How do we offer spaces for children to practice dealing constructively with each other?

[Management Protocol](http://tomdrummond.com/protocol) — When all the above fails to lead to an evolving alteration, how do we draw a line, take a stand, and employ a collaborative, systematic methodology to discover what will work?

My Perspective

I offer these pages as an opportunity for people to become truly effective leaders and caregivers. I want what I share to actually change lives. I fully realize that people who face challenging behavior bring their own expectations and habits, often rationalize to preserve their own comfort, and are usually reluctant to view themselves as the one who could be at fault. I know that was true for me, too. It took me time to recognize the reciprocal relationship I had with troublesome children in order to discover a path for myself. I found we  both were habitual and mistaken in some way. Over the many years that followed as an instructor in a course called "Behavior Management" I had the opportunity to construct experiences for others. I want to enable anyone who wishes to do the work can become confident, relaxed, and open to learning at every encounter.

Leadership and Care addresses the problem of being confronted by children who push back hard, go wild under our noses, and challenge our sense of self-confidence. We can have the best intentions and love; we can think positive things for children and families; we can think of the child as strong and thoughtful; we can think of ourselves as bringing our best intentions forward. Yet, when something disruptive cuts in unexpectedly, we can lose our footing, feel personally attacked, and become obsessed and angry. When things fall into darkness I want to be able to say to myself that I am optimizing my approach in a considered way without those old, knee-jerk habits in the way.

At first I did not see the problem as one of power and privilege. After all, it was my job to be the "teacher" and solve the problems. I soon found that my best intentions were undermined in one way or another by the unequal relationship — adults have privilege over children, educators have privilege over students, and guards have privilege over inmates. Our role comes with expectations to be privileged; it comes with expectations to confront and manage. It is easy to assume we have positive intent and expect other's compliance. Similarly, the children, students, and inmates are likely to assume a warlike stance whenever constraints are applied. It is easy to conclude the children are the ones who are difficult, when in actuality they are being coerced in some way. Because they lack power and privilege, the relationship lacks reciprocity. The children and students have little or no voice in the decisions about what happens.

I want to share with you ways I have learned to become a leader who cares for each child by caring for the community and who offers the possibility of reciprocal learning with a new beginning at hand in every moment. It took me a long time to figure it out.

When I entered a classroom of very difficult children 40 years ago. I copied what others did. I assumed I was to use the language they used: *That's not okay. — You need to use your words. — Shush! — Don't. — No!*

Come out from under the table, okay?

No.

Look at me.

No.

What is wrong?

(silence)

It's not okay to be under the table. You have to go to the bus now.

(silence)

Come out right now or I will pull you out.

(throws shoe)

When I copied what others did, I found the children pushing back and naturally blamed them as being disturbed or damaged. Regardless of how badly they behaved, I still had to get them to change to more appropriate expressions, to be involved constructively, to happily make transitions, and to somehow find a way for myself to be better prepared the next day. Despite these daily challenges, I discovered changes in my self: I found amazement; I found joy; I found strength in these children; I found my own transformation in figuring out how to be with difficult young children at such a transformative time in their lives.

What do I do when these hurtful confrontations battle my intention to do good?

When something obviously is not working, where can I find an alternative strategy for this child?

How can I conceive of all strategies for all children as a cohesive whole?

How do I help others understand and change their actions, too?

My Good Fortune

I was educated by these troublesome children in a community with others. When I tried to be beneficent, when I tried to be open to discovery, I gradually learned that it was less about what I did as an authority and more about offering leadership and care to a community. Fortunately, I had the privilege of being on a team of adults for 17 years who had the time to work together to create a space for a constant stream children who were referred to us, because the people who cared for them or raised them found themselves at wit's end. Our team all knew the same children, all watched the same videotape, and all looked at the same data. Although we lived in daily anxiety and trepidation. we also lived in confidence that documentation, uncertainty, and dialogue was fun and filled with laughter at ourselves and at the children.

Just as the children were my teachers my college students were, too. For 23 years I taught a class at North Seattle Community College called Behavior Management. I taught it in as constructivist a manner as I could. Over 700 participants in that class investigated the ideas I share below. Each tried these ways in their own communities and in their own families and had to bring evidence of their experiences back to contribute to our mutual understanding. Gradually I began to see how others in varied contexts and cultures discover how to change themselves toward an ethic of being with children, to shed their feelings of being trapped and hopeless, and to evolve a new way of being that was founded in their own integrity and authenticity.

The Opportunity for You

Opening here are pages of information, stories, exercises, and documents that go beyond the content of the books I have read. (I had six linear feet of behavior books on my bookshelf at the college!) It goes beyond those books because I can offer experiences using the Internet that cannot be given in any book.

I offer constructivist experiences here — people like you can test stuff out, draw your own conclusions, and construct your own way to act that is in accord with your situation, culture, and values.

I offer a precise language so collaboration with others is more possible.

I offer specific, testable, actions for you to try.

I offer my trust that these experiences actually work and my trust that you are capable of using these understandings to transform your life.

Leadership and Care is about changing one's own behavior, not the child's. What follows is a journey of experimentation through application; the application has results which becomes research; the research informs the gradual process of personal change. New ways of being take time, at least 6 months to a year. I believe this work is best undertaken with others. Like membership in a morning jogging group or book club, change works best when at least three people do this work together.

We cannot change children; we can only change ourselves.

I have learned that I am the one with the overarching responsibility for change. I don't manage or alter others; I intentionally manage myself and alter the space of the community. That is why I call this work  Leadership and Care. Those words define my place to stand.

*Leadership —* The way leaders behave with children can optimize the child's opportunities to grow out of habits that are constraining of experiences — ours and theirs — in concert with others in a community of peers. Leadership acts in service to a community.

*Ethic of Care —*The caring leader stands firmly assertive for the cared-for to offer, in a timely way, something of substance, or the caring leader acts supportively in the background for the cared-for in a responsive offering of resources and further opportunities. An ethic of care opens when we understand the interdependence of[the one-giving and the cared-for](http://www.infed.org/thinkers/noddings.htm) as Nel Noddings so persuasively described.

Invitation to Act

This work is not about management, disciplinary devices, or control. It is not conveying to anyone a 'right' way to behave. It is not me telling you what to do. This work is an invitation, like an invitation to a party. I invite you to imagine the possibility of never again worrying about contrary or disruptive behavior and living your life in a place of calm, clarity, and assuredness.

I think the work that opens from this page is worth at least 3 college credits. There is much to learn. Just as anyone can look at a sheet of music and see black dots without hearing the music, anyone can click through without changing their habits. I invite you to take it on, explore these ideas in your daily life, try them out again and again, and be transformed.

My hope is that generations to come can make Leadership and Care their own and pass calm, clarity, and assuredness forward as inherited culture.