

**Yeah, But What About *This* Kid?**

*Tier 3 Behavior Interventions That Work*

By Grace Dearborn & Scott Sturgeon

Published by Conscious Teaching, LLC

21 Crest Road

Fairfax, CA 94930

Phone: 415.456.9190

Email: support@consciousteaching.com

Website: www.consciousteaching.com

Copyright © 2019 by Grace Dearborn & Scott Sturgeon

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the authors, except for inclusion of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews, academic references, and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

I.S.B.N. 978-0-9796355-7-1

Library of Congress card number pending.

Cover Design: Alexis Clark

Cartoons: Ruxandra Șerbănoiu

Book Design: Alexis Clark

Copy Editing: Kristin Donnan, Rockin' Dog Studio

Printed in the United States of America

# Yeah, But What About *This* Kid?

*Tier 3 Behavior  
Interventions That Work*

GRACE DEARBORN

SCOTT STURGEON

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword .....	xii
Acknowledgements .....	xiv
Introduction .....	2
Who We Are .....	3
Why We Wrote This Book .....	6
How We Know Success is Possible .....	9
How to Use This Book .....	10
<b>SECTION I — Foundations</b> .....	<b>15</b>
1. Identifying Tier 3 Kids .....	16
Who Tier 3 Kids Are — And Aren't .....	17
Over-Identification .....	19
Moving Beyond Causes .....	21
When Adults Are Part of the Problem .....	22
Solutions & Possibilities .....	23
2. Beliefs & Behaviors .....	24
Perception Creates Reality .....	25
<i>Covenant of Care</i> .....	26
Kids & Why They Act Out .....	27
Our Unspoken Intention .....	28
The Invisible Subtitle .....	30

Responding to Student Resistance .....	34
Teacher Failure .....	36
Three Questions .....	39
Intervention, Not Revenge .....	40
Yeah Buts & What Ifs .....	41
Summary & Applications .....	46

## SECTION II — Interventions .....

3. Classroom Discipline .....	50
PART 1: THE TEACHER .....	51
Teachers & What Doesn't Work .....	52
<i>The Permissive Teacher</i> .....	52
<i>The Authoritarian Teacher</i> .....	55
Teachers & What Does Work .....	57
PART 2: THE TOOLS .....	58
Consequences — For Better or Worse .....	59
Rigid Versus Flexible Consequence Hierarchies .....	62
To Post, or Not to Post .....	65
Using Incentives & Rewards .....	65
The Gentle Press .....	70
PART 3: THE PROCESS .....	73
The “What” of Effective Discipline .....	73

The “How” of Effective Discipline . . . . .	75
<i>The Words We Use—Offering Choices</i> . . . . .	78
<i>The Voice We Use—Whisper Discipline</i> . . . . .	78
<i>The Body Language We Use—Soft Eyes</i> . . . . .	79
Opposition & Escalation . . . . .	81
Doubling-Down on Consequences . . . . .	83
Sometimes Kids Must Be Sent Out . . . . .	88
Take One Step Forward . . . . .	90
Yeah Buts & What Ifs . . . . .	92
Summary & Applications . . . . .	97
<b>4. Schoolwide Discipline . . . . .</b>	<b>100</b>
Ineffective Office Discipline . . . . .	101
Begin with Data . . . . .	106
Schoolwide Support . . . . .	109
The Puzzle Pieces of Intervention . . . . .	110
<i>Buddy Room</i> . . . . .	110
<i>Trusted Adult</i> . . . . .	111
<i>In-School Intervention (ISI) Room</i> . . . . .	112
<i>The 5 R’s</i> . . . . .	113
<i>Office Referral</i> . . . . .	117
Referral Policies . . . . .	119
One Size Doesn’t Fit All . . . . .	121
Disproportionality . . . . .	123
The Importance of Commonality . . . . .	124
Establishing Commonality . . . . .	126
Slow But Steady . . . . .	126
Yeah Buts & What Ifs . . . . .	129
Summary & Applications . . . . .	136

<b>5. One-On-One Interventions . . . . .</b>	<b>140</b>
Reflect First, Act Second . . . . .	141
Change Is Hard . . . . .	142
Swaddling Interventions . . . . .	144
<i>Swaddle Phase 1: Pre-planning</i> . . . . .	146
<i>Swaddle Phase 2: Share the Plan</i> . . . . .	150
<i>Swaddle Phase 3: Implementation</i> . . . . .	151
<i>Swaddle Phase 4: Reflection, Revision, &amp; Re-Commitment</i> . . . . .	152
Informal Swaddling . . . . .	154
Village Interventions . . . . .	157
Sample Interventions . . . . .	162
Why Interventions Often Fail . . . . .	163
Yeah Buts & What Ifs . . . . .	164
Summary & Applications . . . . .	171

## SECTION III — Leadership . . . . . 175

<b>6. Leading the Change . . . . .</b>	<b>176</b>
Change is Possible . . . . .	177
The Role of the Principal . . . . .	178
Effective Leadership—Dos & Don’ts . . . . .	182
<i>Listen to Teachers</i> . . . . .	184
<i>Let the Data Lead, Briefly</i> . . . . .	185
<i>Give Positive Feedback</i> . . . . .	185
<i>Take Responsibility</i> . . . . .	186
Office Referrals . . . . .	187
<i>“Three With Me” Versus “One and Done”</i> . . . . .	188
<i>The Referral Process</i> . . . . .	189
Don’t Be Part Of The Problem . . . . .	190

The Four-Week Experimentation Cycle . . . . .	193
<i>Week 1: Experiment.</i> . . . . .	195
<i>Week 2: Modify.</i> . . . . .	195
<i>Week 3: Expand</i> . . . . .	196
<i>Week 4: Share.</i> . . . . .	196
<i>Repeat the Cycle.</i> . . . . .	196
Create Accountability . . . . .	196
Review and Reflect . . . . .	198
Patience and Pressure . . . . .	198
Yeah Buts & What Ifs. . . . .	200
Summary & Applications . . . . .	203
7. A Plan for Change . . . . .	206
Suggested Three-Year Plan . . . . .	208
Year 1: Assess, Plan, Expose, Experiment . . . . .	208
Year 2: Schoolwide Implementation . . . . .	211
Year 3: Deepen Schoolwide Implementation. . . . .	213
Appendices . . . . .	217
Appendix A: 5 Rs Resources . . . . .	218
Release—Resources . . . . .	218
Recover—Resource . . . . .	218
Reflect—Resources . . . . .	220
Reset—Resources . . . . .	222
Return—Resources . . . . .	223

Appendix B: Swaddle Intervention Planning Templates & Samples . . . . .	225
Phase 1—Pre-Planning Checklist . . . . .	226
Phase 2—The Plan . . . . .	227
Phase 3—Implementation . . . . .	230
Phase 4—Reflection & Revision . . . . .	231
Sample Plan 1: Elementary School—The Runner . . . . .	233
Sample Plan 2: Elementary School—The Growler. . . . .	237
Sample Plan 3: Secondary School—The Arguer . . . . .	241
Sample Plan 4: Secondary School—The Wanderer . . . . .	244
Appendix C: Recommended Books on Bias & Equity..	247
Appendix D: Sample Reflection Sheets . . . . .	248
Lower Elementary Reflection . . . . .	249
Upper Elementary Reflection . . . . .	250
Secondary Reflection . . . . .	251
Appendix E: Teaching with Trauma in Mind . . . . .	252
1. What Trauma Is and What it Does to Developing Brains . . . . .	252
2. How Trauma Affects Students in School . . . . .	254
3. What Teachers Can Do for Traumatized Youth . . . . .	260
4. How Working with Traumatized Youth Affects Teachers . . . . .	265
About the Authors. . . . .	270

# INTRODUCTION

*“Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge.”*

— PLATO

## Who We Are

### From Grace

I have been in education for over 20 years, having started when I was in my early twenties. In that time I have held many positions, from classroom teacher to mentor teacher, from literacy coach to curriculum advisor. Currently I work as an independent consultant and instructional coach. The reason I started, and the reason I am still here, is because I love kids, especially teenagers. I love the wonder and the nonsense of working with adolescents. Call me crazy.

When I was in the classroom, I worked in some rough schools, primarily in the East Bay of the San Francisco Bay Area. I adored working with at-risk teens and their plethora of behaviors, the good, the bad, and the ugly. And the ugly was really ugly. I’ve had a stapler thrown at me, a chair thrown through my classroom window, and fistfights break out during class. I’ve had every curse word you can think of hurled at me by angry teens. Through all of this, the one thing I always had going for me was that I truly believed that anyone could be reached, connected with, and helped to grow academically and emotionally. It didn’t even occur to me to question whether a 23-year-old, middle-class, white lady was the right person to teach 180 mostly Black and Hispanic teenagers, often from backgrounds of poverty and trauma. My naiveté and inexperience worked in my favor, though. I had no preconceived notions about how my students should behave or what they should be able to do. Because of this, I could



*“I love the wonder and the nonsense of working with adolescents.”*

meet them where they were and make plans to build from there, without resentment, disillusionment, or disappointment weighing me down.

In my early years, I got by mostly on enthusiasm, compassion, and a willingness to listen and learn. When it was clear that almost none of my students could read or write at a point even close to their grade level, I sought out support from others. The most effective tools I got for teaching writing came from a group of 4th- and 5th-grade teachers I met at a statewide conference. As I grew as a teacher, I learned from others how to make my learning environments safe and structured. I learned how to use incentives, relationships, and consequences to create clear expectations and to build trust and respect.

Effective educators are not born. They are grown. And they are ever changing. As we grow as educators, we are continually shaped by our experiences and by our interactions with key people and resources. If we are lucky, these people and resources will expand our understanding and our ability to meet the diverse needs of our students, especially our toughest. Scott Sturgeon, my co-author, was a key person in my growth. We hope this book will serve as a key resource in yours.



### Food for Thought

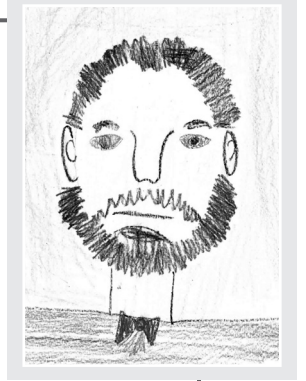
Effective educators are not born. They are grown.

### From Scott

I am a teacher. I have felt like a teacher for a long time, even before I held that title. I still think of myself as a teacher, and it has been over a decade since that was my primary job. I teach every day at work. Sometimes I teach kids, sometimes I teach adults, sometimes I teach my colleagues or my boss. Once you go into education, teaching is what you do.

I have seen some very successful kids, teachers, leaders, PTAs, and schools. Unfortunately, I have also seen educators and their students fail, both consistently and predictably. Predictable failure does not happen because of the demographic designation of a school, teacher, or student. Predictable failure happens when teachers or administrators let their egos, their personal issues, their ignorance, their mind-sets, or their biases get in the way of doing what is in the best interest of their students. And when educators fail, kids fail.

I am part of this book because I have seen adults and kids failing when I knew that it didn't have to be that way. I even might have had a hand in making sure it stopped being that way for some teachers and students. If so, I surely didn't do it alone; no one in education does. We look around for the people wiser and more experienced than we are, grab their best ideas and invite those ideas to live in our schools—where they can grow and change the lives of all who come there each day. My co-author, Grace Dearborn, is someone from whom I took many ideas and who helped people young and old to find success. Together, we changed the lives of some of our most vulnerable children and the people who care for them each day. Our hope is to help you do the same.



### Straight Talk

When educators fail, kids fail.

## Why We Wrote This Book

### From Grace

As I travel around the country consulting at various schools, I continually have the following experience. I present a behavior-intervention workshop on “Conscious Classroom Management” to a group of teachers. Afterward, I’m approached by a teacher who says some version of the following: “I loved your presentation. It was so practical. I can’t wait to try some things out. But, what about this kid?” Then I hear the story of a student with extreme, volatile, or dangerous behaviors with whom nothing has worked. I’ve answered this question many times, in many ways, depending upon the situation. Eventually it occurred to me that the answer to the question—“But, what about this kid?”—is something that is missing in current educational literature, training, and practice. At least, the practical answers, the actual solutions, are missing. I thought to myself, someone ought to write a book. I didn’t think I would be that person. But then I met Scott Sturgeon.

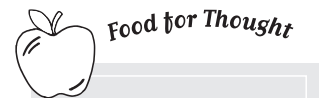
Scott and I met when he hired my company, Conscious Teaching, to come to his school to do a series of classroom-management trainings. We worked with his staff as a whole, and also with a few specific teachers in one-on-one instructional coaching. He had taken over as principal at a school in distress in an urban, Midwestern school district—a low-performing school serving an impoverished area with an unusually large number of high-need kids. Scott was looking to drastically improve not only the academic achievement there, but also the school’s climate and culture. The training I provided was well received, and Scott saw the potential for using it as a cornerstone piece in his plans for transforming the school. I spent several years collaborating with him and his staff. I helped him to help his staff shift their

perceptions of, and interactions with, kids presenting with extreme behaviors in their classrooms. I was deeply impressed by how Scott interacted with and supported his teachers, how he worked with students who were sent to the office, and how he set up schoolwide and individual interventions to meet the extensive socio-emotional needs of his toughest kids. I know a lot about working with extreme student behaviors in a classroom, but I daresay Scott knows more. So I wondered, What if Scott and I put our heads together? Could we write the missing book? Turns out, we could. And we did. This is it.

### From Scott

Sometimes teachers haven’t witnessed the successes that Grace and I have seen and experienced. When you haven’t seen success, hope becomes a rare commodity. I hope this book can make it a little less rare. I would like to think that you are going to find more than hope, though. You are going to find a path upon which a successful classroom or school can be built. Success in education is found all over the country, in every kind of school, with all types of challenges. Such successes share some common threads. This book is our attempt to make these threads visible and replicable.

We are going to leave the neurological and psychological explanations—of why and how kids do what they do—to the experts in those fields. What we will provide are the things that you can see, feel, hear, and try almost



**Food for Thought**

Success in education is found all over the country, in every kind of school, with all types of challenges.

immediately. Don't let that mislead you into thinking that what we are advocating will be easy or quick to master. Like all good instructional techniques, the things we share in this book will take practice, time, patience, and hard work. If you give something a try, let us know how it went. If we can be of help, let us know. After all, we are teachers.

If your school has already invested time, energy, and resources in positive and preventative discipline structures, such as those found in our previous book, *Conscious Classroom Management*, 2nd Edition, then you probably have already seen a shift in campus climate and culture. You have likely seen a reduction in behavioral infractions and noticed improvement in teacher,



#### Food for Thought

Positive structures and innovative teaching can take you only so far.

student, and parent attitudes toward the school. But you also might still be struggling to meet the needs of a small percentage of students who present with extreme behaviors and with whom nothing seems to work. These students are often referred to as “frequent fliers,” because they continue to be sent to the office, or continue to derail learning, almost daily, even after other schoolwide and classroom changes have

found success with their peers. Positive structures and innovative teaching can take you only so far. Then what? We hope this book will answer that question and provide the missing pieces in your discipline and intervention puzzles, so you can help the most challenging kids in your school to find success.

## How We Know Success is Possible

### From Grace

I have been consulting for Conscious Teaching ([consciousteaching.com](http://consciousteaching.com)) in K-12 schools and districts around the country since 2010. I've worked with teachers in 44 of the 50 states, around classroom and schoolwide discipline and around student engagement, motivation, and intervention. I've worked rural to urban and poverty to affluent. I've seen both the amazing and the heart-breaking. And I have seen success happen in every type of school, regardless of location, demographics, or socio-economics. When both teachers and administrators are open, listening to one another, and making changes to better support the kids, magic happens. It happens everywhere in every kind of school. It really does. I've seen it. This book will hopefully provide you and your school with the resources necessary to begin the process of creating your own magic on your school site.



#### Food for Thought

When both teachers and administrators are open, listening to one another, and making changes to better support the kids, magic happens.

### From Scott

When I was assigned as the principal at my second school, I had never worked with extreme poverty and with high referral rates. I had worked with students in self-contained behavior rooms for years and had served in behavioral support positions, but I had never spent time in a school like the one I was then assigned to, with all its wonder and challenges. In my first year



at that school, I was working with approximately 500 students, 93% of whom were living in poverty. Reading scores were in the 50s and math scores were in the 30s. At the end of my first year there, we had 2000 referrals and 180 suspensions. At the end of my fourth year, our reading score was 78, our math score was 73; we had 650 referrals and 54 suspensions. That's nearly a 70% reduction in referrals and suspensions over three years.

I know that the approaches Grace and I share in this book work, because when faced with a daunting charge, my staff and I, with Grace's help, were able to work together to impressive success. We experienced firsthand what types of ideas, effort, and practice were instrumental in finding that success. We also draw upon similar, successful experiences from Grace's work all over the country, and not just with other elementary schools, but also with middle and high schools. We know you can find this kind of success too. And we are here to help.

## How to Use This Book

This is not a book about diagnosing the causes of extreme behavioral problems in kids in schools. Plenty of other books out there thoroughly document the causes, from biological to environmental. Instead, our focus is on solutions. Teachers, administrators, and schools can take practical steps to meet the unique needs of these students. This book explains and gives examples of those practical steps.

The book is separated into three sections; Foundations, Interventions, and Leadership.

<b>Section 1: Foundations</b>	<b>Section 2: Interventions</b>	<b>Section 3: Leadership</b>
<p>This section includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ Chapter 1: Identifying Tier 3 Kids</li> <li>▲ Chapter 2: Beliefs &amp; Behaviors</li> </ul> <p>The chapters in this section lay the foundation for working effectively with tough students. The focus is on the accurate identification of students requiring Tier 3 supports and the development of adult mind-sets and tools necessary to work with those students effectively.</p>	<p>This section includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ Chapter 3: Classroom Discipline &amp; Interventions</li> <li>▲ Chapter 4: Schoolwide Discipline &amp; Interventions</li> <li>▲ Chapter 5: One-on-One Interventions</li> </ul> <p>The chapters in this section outline the practical techniques and structures we can use, both in the classroom and schoolwide, to better meet the needs of our toughest students. The focus is on the what, the how, and the where of effectively interacting with Tier 3 student behaviors.</p>	<p>This section includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ Chapter 6: Leading the Change</li> <li>▲ Chapter 7: A Plan for Change</li> </ul> <p>The chapters in this section describe how administrators can support an entire staff through the change process. The focus is on building leadership skills and using those skills to generate staff buy-in, establish new structures, and create accountability for making necessary changes.</p>

Ideally this book is meant for an entire staff, both teachers and administrators, to use together. Used in this way, it will have a profound impact. That's not to say, though, that it can't be used by individuals or smaller groups. It can.

You will get the most out of the book by reading it cover to cover. But if you are drowning and need something you can try

tomorrow, feel free to jump right to the chapters that could fill your immediate need. We might suggest, for example:

- ▲ If you are a classroom teacher struggling with a disruptive student who is wreaking havoc in your classroom, then jump to Chapter 5.
- ▲ If you are an administrator looking for how to improve office discipline or how to have a conversation with staff about what needs to change, then jump to Chapter 6.
- ▲ If you are a teacher or support provider looking for de-escalation techniques to use with volatile or oppositional students, then jump to Chapter 4.

Whether you read the entire book or just one section, whether you read it on your own or with a team, you will walk away with practical techniques you can try immediately to support those students who need it the most.

#### **Authors' Note About Pronoun Use:**

Throughout the book, we use “they” and “their” as singular, gender-neutral pronouns in place of using “he” or “she.” This was a conscious and purposeful choice on our part.