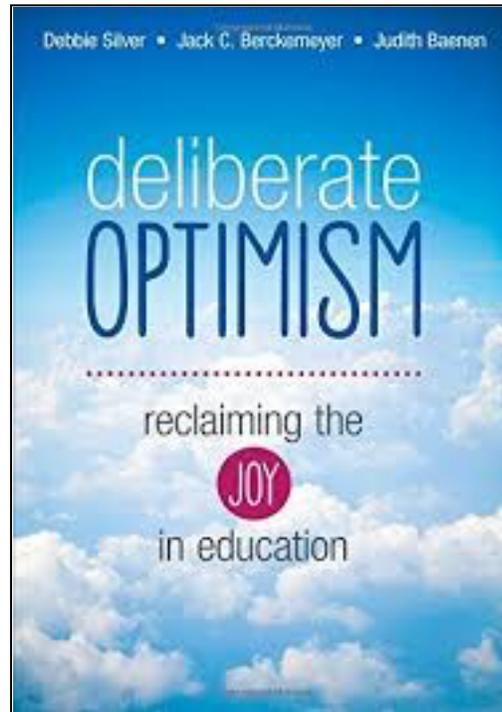




Nuts and Bolts Symposium

The Never-Boring Conference for Educators



Deliberate Optimism: Building a Positive Professional Culture

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The logo for Debbie Silver, featuring a cluster of colorful dots above the name 'debbie silver' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. Below the name, it says 'speaker • author • humorist' in a smaller, lowercase font.
debbie silver
speaker • author • humorist

Five Principles of Deliberate Optimism

1. Before acting or *reacting* **gather as much information** from as many varied sources as possible.
2. **Determine what is beyond your control** and strategize how to minimize its impact on your life.
3. **Establish what you can control** and seek tools and strategies to help you maximize your power.
4. Actively **DO something positive** towards your goal.
5. **Take ownership** of your plan and acknowledge responsibility for your choices.

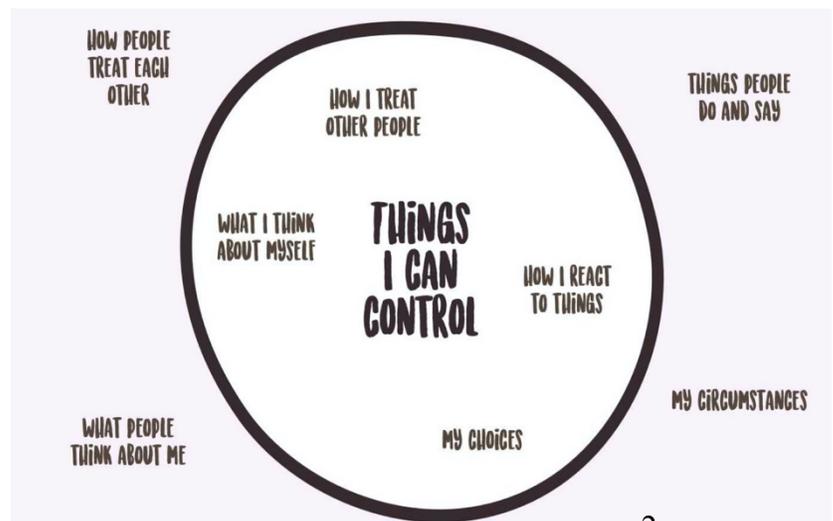
Determine what you can and cannot control

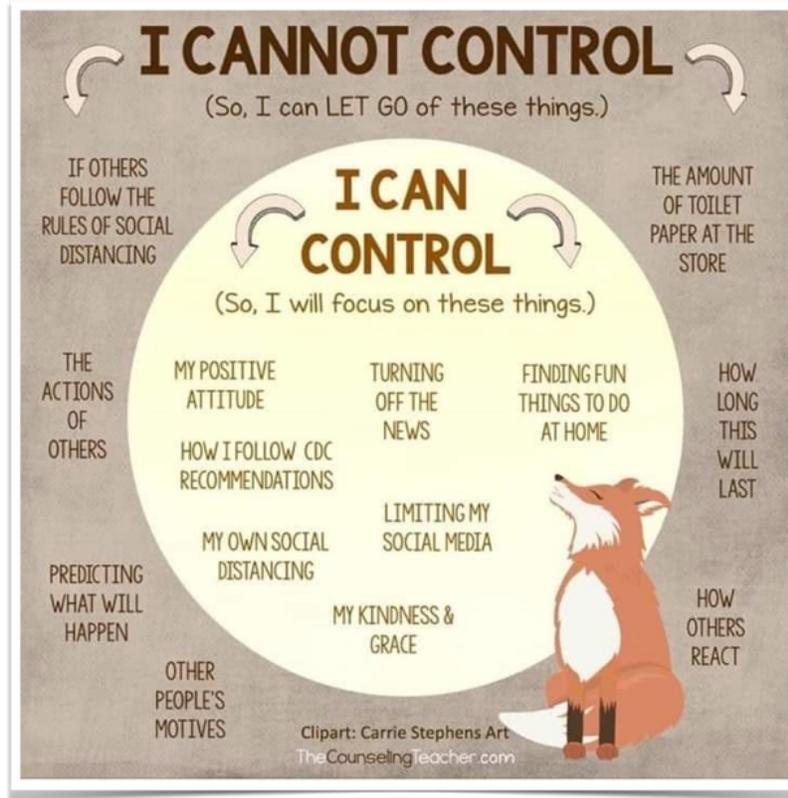
What You Cannot Control:

1. How others choose to feel about you.
2. How others do their jobs.
3. The friendliness or the lack of friendliness people demonstrate toward you.
4. Assignments given to you by a superior.

What You Can Control:

1. How you react to others.
2. How you do your job.
3. How you treat others.
4. How you handle what you are given.
5. What steps you take to alleviate the problem.





LEARNING STYLES

The way we see the world in a way that makes the most sense to each of us is called **perception**. Our perceptions shape what we think, how we make decisions, and how we define what's important. Our individual perception also determines our natural learning strengths, or **learning style**.

There are two perceptual qualities: **concrete** and **abstract**.

Concrete: This quality enables you to register information directly through your five senses: sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. When you are using your concrete ability, you are dealing with the obvious, the "here and now." You are not looking for hidden meanings, or making relationships between ideas or concepts. **"It is what it is."**

Abstract: this quality allows you to visualize, to conceive ideas, to understand or believe that which you cannot actually see. When you are using your abstract quality, you are using your intuition, your imagination, and you are looking beyond what is to the more subtle implications. **"It is not always what it seems."**

There are two ordering abilities in Gregorc's model: **sequential** and **random**.

Sequential: Allows your mind to organize information in a **linear**, step-by-step manner. When using your sequential ability, you are following a logical train of thought, a traditional approach to dealing with information. You may also prefer to have a plan and to follow it, rather than relying on impulse.

Random: Lets your mind organize information by *chunks*, and in no particular order. When you are using your random ability, you may often be able to skip steps in a procedure and still produce the desired result. You may even start in the middle, or at the end, and work backwards. You may also prefer your life to be more impulsive, or spur of the moment, than planned.

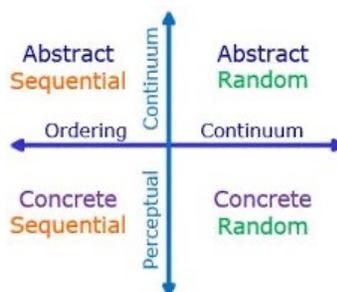
There are four combinations of the strongest perceptual and ordering ability in each individual:

1. **Concrete Sequential (CS)**
2. **Abstract Random (AR)**
3. **Abstract Sequential (AS)**
4. **Concrete Random (CR)**

No one is a "pure" style. Each of us have a unique combination of natural strengths and abilities. By learning some of the common characteristics of each of the four combinations used by Gregorc, we can recognize and value what our students do best. We can help them to improve in areas that are least used and understood.

Websites for Getting to Know Ourselves and Each Other

- **Online Gregorc Test** (not the actual one, but close enough)
<http://www.thelearningweb.net/personalthink.html>
- **Pretty good test for modalities:**
<http://www.agelesslearner.com/assess/learningstyle.html>
- **Another good modality test:**
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/bxb11/LSI/LSI.htm>



Dominant Style Characteristics

(From work by Dr. Anthony Gregorc, Ph.D.)

<http://www.gregorc.com/instrume.html>

The following classifications are the property to Dr. Anthony Gregorc. They have emerged from his extensive research on the topic of learning styles. For a full presentation of this material along with a self-scoring inventory, please visit Dr. Gregorc's website at <https://www.anthonfygregorc.com/publications>

Gregorc's 4 Basic Learning Styles

Abstract Random

Their Traits

- Sensitive
- Compassionate
- Idealistic
- Empathetic
- Imaginative
- Sentimental
- Spontaneous
- Flexible

What They Do Best

- Listen to others
- Understand feelings and emotions
- Focus on themes and ideas
- Bring harmony to group situations
- Establish positive relationships with everybody
- Recognize and meet the emotional needs of others

What's Hard For Them?

- Having to explain or justify feelings
- Working with dictatorial/authoritarian personalities
- Working in a restrictive environment
- Working with people who are not friendly
- Concentration on one thing at a time
- Giving exact details
- Working under exact time restrictions
- Accepting even positive criticism

How to Support Them During Challenges

- Offer encouragement and understanding
- Allow them to personalize their teaching
- Allow chances for them to be spontaneous and fun
- Provide opportunities for camaraderie with colleagues
- Relax restrictive timelines when possible
- Engage them in community building

NOTES:



Abstract Random
"Let's just jump in and
DO This!!"

Gregorc's 4 Basic Learning Styles

Concrete Sequential

Their Traits

- Factual
- Organized
- Dependable
- Stable
- Hardworking
- Conventional
- Consistent
- Accurate

What They Do Best

- Apply ideas in a practical way
- Organize
- Fine-tune ideas to make them more efficient
- Produce concrete products from abstract ideas
- Work well within time limits.

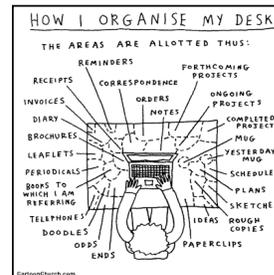
What's Hard For Them?

- Working in groups
- Discussions that seem to have no point
- Working in an unorganized environment
- Following incomplete or unclear directions
- Working with unpredictable people
- Dealing with abstract ideas
- Demands to "use your imagination"
- Questions with no right or wrong answers

How to Support Them During Challenges

- Be sure directions and guidelines are clear and specific
- As much as possible, limit surprises
- Teach new technology slowly and step-by-step
- In group meetings try to limit distractions
- Use straight talk and simple language
- Provide definitive timelines
- Recognize their hard work

NOTES:



Concrete Sequential
"Everything requires
order."

Gregorc's 4 Basic Learning Styles

Abstract Sequential

Their Traits

- Knowledgeable
- Thorough
- Analytical
- Objective
- Structured
- Systematic
- Deliberate
- Logical

What They Do Best

- Gather lots of information before making a decision
- Analyze ideas
- Research
- Provide logical sequence
- Use facts to prove or disprove theories
- Figure out what needs to be done

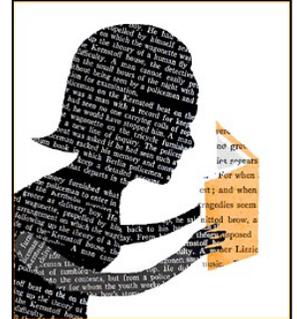
What's Hard For Them?

- Being forced to work with those of differing views
- Too little time to deal with a subject thoroughly
- Repeating the same tasks over and over
- Lots of specific rules and regulations
- "Sentimental" thinking
- Expressing their emotions
- Being diplomatic when convincing others
- Not monopolizing the conversation

How to Support Them During Challenges

- Understand they need to see the "big picture" first before they buy in
- Keep your discussion with them calm, cool, and impersonal
- Provide opportunities for them to reflect, ponder, analyze, and evaluate
- Use facts rather than emotional techniques to persuade them
- Limit the amount of meetings they have to attend
- Occasionally allow them space to work alone

NOTES:



Abstract Sequential
"Where's the
evidence this will
actually work?"

Gregorc's 4 Basic Learning Styles

Concrete Random

Their Traits

- Curious
- Quick
- Intuitive
- Realistic
- Creative
- Innovative
- Instinctive
- Adventurous

What They Do Best

- See many options and solutions
- Contribute unusual and creative ideas
- Visualize the future
- Offer a different way of doing things
- Accept many different types of people
- Think fast on their feet
- Take risks

What's Hard For Them?

- Restrictions and limitations
- Formal reports
- Routines
- Re-doing anything once it is done
- Keeping detailed records
- Showing how they got an answer
- Having no options

How to Support Them During Challenges

- Allow them to use a trial-and-error approach
- Limit excessive and/or redundant record keeping
- Support their inventiveness in finding new ways to address goals
- Appreciate their intuitive flashes and insights
- Provide time and opportunities for open discussions (for problem solving, not debates)
- Encourage them to take leadership roles in promoting change

NOTES:

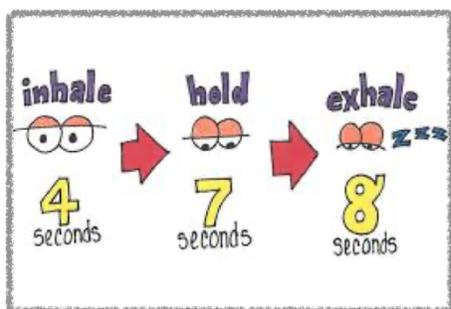


Concrete Random
"Everything is kinda neat.
I'll just try different stuff."

EXTROVERTS/INTROVERTS



The 4-7-8 Breathing Technique



Before starting the breathing pattern, adopt a comfortable sitting position and place the tip of the tongue on the tissue right behind the top front teeth. To use the 4-7-8 technique, focus on the following breathing pattern:

- empty the lungs of air
- breathe in quietly through the nose for 4 seconds
- hold the breath for a count of 7 seconds
- exhale forcefully through the mouth, pursing the lips and . . . making a “whoosh” sound, for 8 seconds
- repeat the cycle up to 4 times

Concentrate on a signature strength

The VIA Character Strengths Survey

Your greatest strengths lie within.

www.viasurvey.org

Building a Positive Professional Culture

Presented by Dr. Debbie Silver

List of Resources and Suggestions for further reading:

Brassell, D. (2012). *Bringing joy back into the classroom*. Huntington Beach, CA: Shell Educational Publishing, Inc.

Seligman, M.E.P., & Maier, S.F. (1967). Failure to escape traumatic shock. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 74(1): 1-9.

Seligman, M.E.P. (2006). *Learned optimism: How to change your mind and your life*. New York, New York: Vintage Books.

Silver D.(2010), *Drumming to the beat of different marchers*. Chicago, IL: Incentive by World Book, Inc.

Silver, D.(2013). *Fall down 7 times, get up 8: Teaching kids to succeed*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

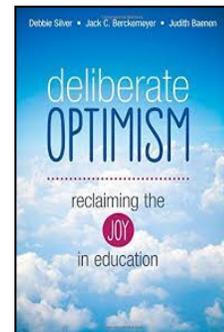
Silver, D.(2014). Freedom to fall and get up and succeed. *Principal Leadership* 14(5): 48-51.

Silver, D. (2013). Relax and recharge: 5 ways to de-stress this summer. *The Classroom Teacher* 34(2): 18.

Silver, Debbie, Jack Berckemeyer, & Judith Baenen, 2014. *Deliberate Optimism: Reclaiming the Joy in Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press/AMLE.

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Discussion Guide for Deliberate Optimism: Building a Positive Professional Culture

1. Describe the most optimistic educator you ever had or presently know. List the qualities about that person that lead you to believe they have (had) a positive of life. What distinguished that person from other teachers? How did (do) you feel when you were (are) around them?
2. List three uncontrollable issues affecting your school that bother you. Estimate the amount of time you and others are your school worry or talk about them weekly. What are some ways you can circumvent the issues and minimize their impact on your teaching?
3. Which learning style best describes you? Name some positives and some negatives that are associated with your style. Are those true about you? Why or why not?
4. Do you have introverts on your staff? What steps should school leaders and other teachers take to make sure introverts feel valued and appreciated?
5. Give an example of how you changed the way you reacted to a circumstance after you “reframed” it (began looking at it from a different perspective).



**Sometimes the strength within
you is not a big fiery flame for all
to see; it is just a tiny spark that
whispers softly, 'You've got this,
keep going.'**

—author unknown