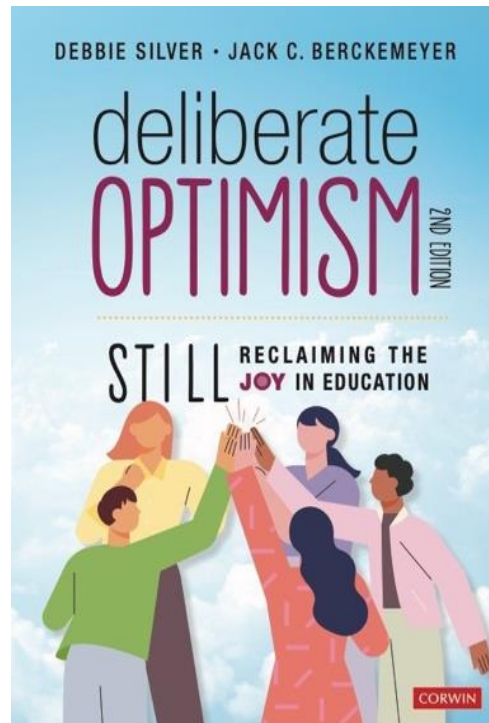




National Association  
of Federally Impacted Schools



## Building a Positive School Culture: Helping Teachers Thrive

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debbie silver  
speaker • author • humorist

## The Teacher

“Concerning a teacher’s influence, I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or deescalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

--Haim Ginott

### What Children Want and Need

“Kids today want what kids have always wanted – the undivided, focused attention of the adults in their lives.”

--Debbie Silver



We want to give every student a **reasonable chance at success.**



FOR THE TEACHERS

FOR THE KIDS

FOR THE FUTURE

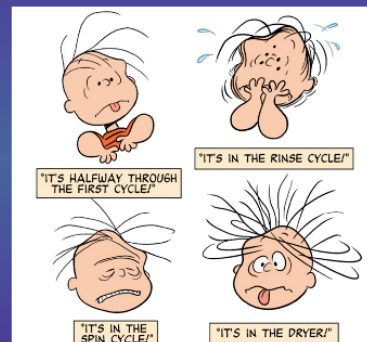
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## CHANGE



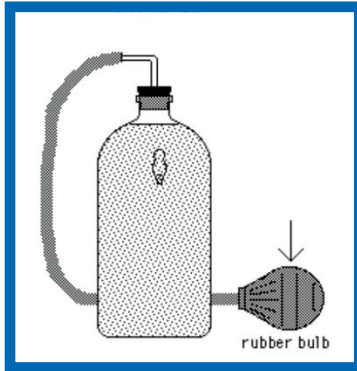
It's not so much that we're afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between that we fear . . . It's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to.

— Marilyn Ferguson  
The Aquarian Conspiracy



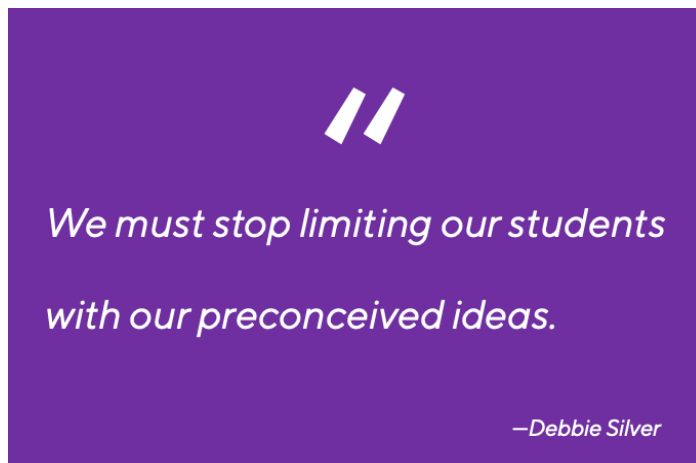
## Remote Control Cartesian Diver

By Dr. Bill Deese, Louisiana Tech University



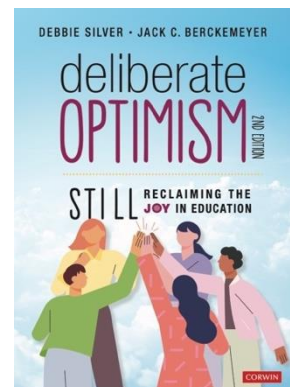
You can amaze your students by operating your Cartesian Diver by "remote control." Start with the standard Cartesian Diver set-up. Drill a hole in the bottle top just large enough to accommodate a piece of aquarium tubing. Use another bottle (any size, but smaller is usually more convenient). Drill a hole in its cap also large enough to accommodate the aquarium tubing. Fill the second bottle with water and insert a piece of aquarium tubing 3 or more feet long inside each bottle.

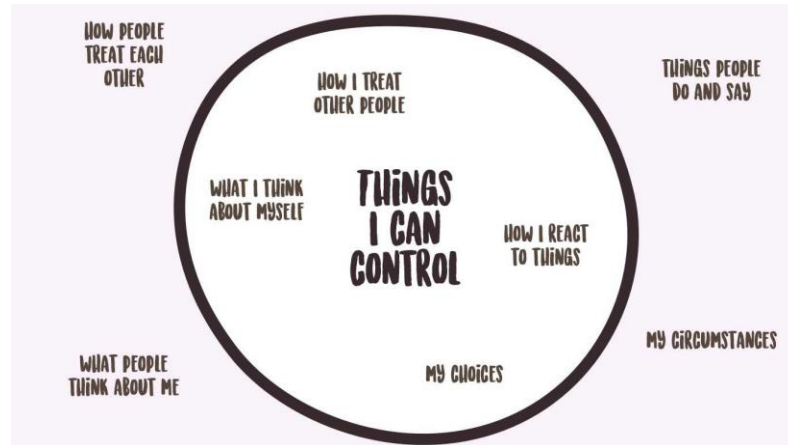
By squeezing the small bottle, you will increase the pressure in it. The increased pressure in the small bottle will result in an identical increase in pressure in the large bottle, thus sending the Cartesian Diver to the bottom of the large bottle by a "remote control" device.



### Four Principles of Deliberate Optimism

1. Gather accurate information.
2. Control what you can.
3. Do positive things.
4. Own it.





### Making "Let It Go" Paper

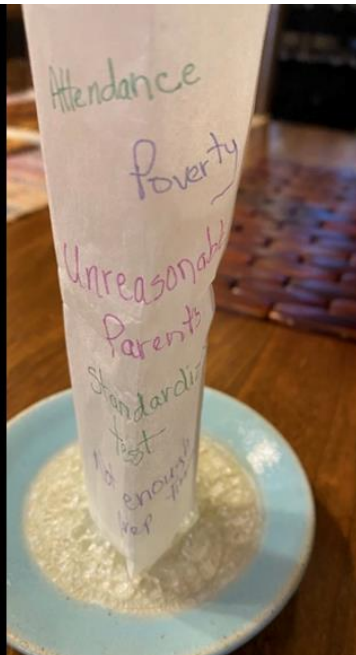
Adapted by Debbie Silver

#### Materials:

- 1 tea bag (any size) for each person or group
- Staple remover
- Markers (fine tip)
- Small Dish
- Matches or Lighter

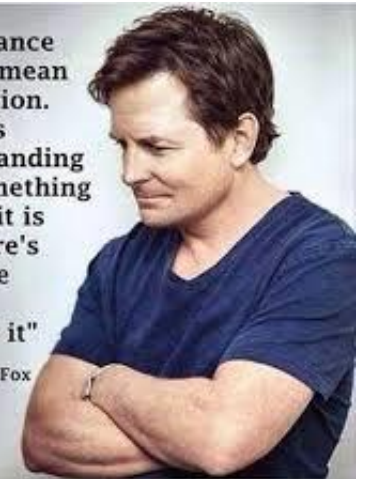
#### Instructions:

- Take a single tea bag
- Remove the staple. Discard the string.
- Unfold and tilt the tissue cylinder to remove tea (can be saved to make tea later)
- On the tissue write or draw things you realize you cannot control
- Stand the tissue cylinder on a flat dish
- Light it at the top and prepare to let go of the things you cannot control



"Acceptance doesn't mean resignation. It means understanding that something is what it is and there's got to be a way through it"

- Michael J. Fox



## Do Positive Things!

- Can't find the time to give every student personalized feedback? Give it to one or two students.
- Don't have time to call all the parents you need to contact? Call one.
- Can't face learning all the new technology? Learn to do one new thing.
- Bothered by the catty remarks made in the lounge? Stand up for someone.
- Need to connect with a difficult student? Write them a letter identifying specific strengths you see in them.

do  
SMALL  
WITH THINGS  
GREAT  
LOVE

## TAKE RADICAL RESPONSIBILITY





Don't gossip. Just DON'T. It never helps. It only makes conflicts worse and darkens your mood.

Commit yourself to loyalty – to your class, your team, your administrators and the school. You are seen as the "authority" in your community – build optimism, not defeatism.

-- Debbie Silver

## BEFORE YOU OPEN THE DOOR, PUT A SMILE ON YOUR FACE!

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW YOUR DAY WENT. OR WHAT YOU'RE DOING NEXT. OR IF YOU'RE STARVING.

FOR 30 SECONDS, AT LEAST PRETEND THAT YOU'RE ELATED TO SEE THEM.

MAKE THEM FEEL LIKE YOU WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING BACK HOME.

AFTER ALL, THEY'RE YOUR FAVORITE PEOPLE IN THE WHOLE WORLD. I HOPE.

BUT YOUR ATTITUDE SETS THE TONE FOR THE REST OF THE EVENING WITHIN 5 SECONDS OF WALKING IN THE DOOR.

COMING HOME IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU DO.

THAT'S YOUR WHOLE LIFE. FIX IT.

START TODAY.

Benjamin Holmgren quoting Brené Brown



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Presented by Dr. Debbie Silver

### List of Resources and Suggestions for further reading:

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. (2021). *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, D. & Stafford, D. (2017). *Teaching kids to thrive: Essential skills for success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Silver, D. & Berckemeyer, J. (2023). *Deliberate optimism: Still reclaiming the joy in education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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