

## Relational Inclusion blog #10: Practice the Pause

This week's theme is *practice the pause*. We, as humans, are so busy. We get caught up in the hustle and bustle of our own lives to such an extent that sometimes we forget to take notice, to remember that we are living, and life is something to be savoured, enjoyed and shared. It is so easy to forget that the little ones who exist alongside us are people too.

Last night, during bath-time, my little boy threw two or three of his toy sharks out of the bath and onto the floor. I imagine there was some great ocean battle occurring in his imagination. The plastic toys were full of water, and they hit the floor like burst water balloons and landed with a splat. There was water everywhere.

My little boy carried on regardless, engrossed in his game.

Instinctively I called out his name in that frustrated tone I imagine only tired parents use. I said something like, "Why have you done that, you've soaked the floor."

He glanced up at me with his four-year-old eyes - he was trying to read my expression and my emotion- and in that moment I managed to check myself and read what his face was telling me.

He was oblivious to what he might be in trouble for. He is good natured, so he was pretty much prepared to roll with whatever it was I was morning about. To some extent he was pacifying me.

I reflected on what had happened, changed my tone and asked if he knew that the toys were full of water.

He didn't

I explained that they were hollow and so filled up easily. That he needed to empty the water out before he threw out the toys. And I did notice a flicker of change in his eyes. He wasn't in trouble, and this was a learning opportunity which I think he took.

I suppose my point is- in the not-so-distant past, he would have been told off, I would have been a little cross, he'd have absolutely no idea why this crazy adult's mood had changed and it was only a bit of spilled water.

It's about being in the moment. Or sitting alongside our children in the moment - and remembering what experience feels like for a four-year-old (or whatever age). And then using whatever happens as an opportunity to learn together. It doesn't take any more time than getting cross and grumpy - and everyone's nervous system stays regulated.

I've no idea whether at next bathtime he'll again throw his water bomb sharks or not. I do hope that I'm able to check myself though. And if he hasn't taken on board what I tried to explain, then I'll try to explain it differently. After all - I am supposed to be the grown up.

My first quote is a nod to the first guiding principle of Relational Inclusion:

- 1) *When we take the perspective that our child is truly doing the best they can with the brain development that they have, we have more patience, empathy and understanding.* (Wildflower parenting)

My second quote is a nod to the second guiding principle – Relationships:

- 2) *Every child has a story – Relationships allow you to hear it and become part of it.* (Dr Brad Johnson)

My next three quotes are about this idea of behaviour and why a Relationally Inclusive approach is so important in these times where some still believe that a punitive approach is the way forward:


- 3) *Children learn from fixing their mistakes, not paying for them.* (The Therapist Parent)
- 4) *Empathy with children during a meltdown is not rewarding behaviour. It's meeting a need; the need for connection and understanding.* (Rebecca Eanes)
- 5) *Behind every 'behaviour problem' is a student who lacks the vocabulary for what they're feeling. We're not teaching compliance – we're teaching the language of emotions that no-one else bothered to explain.* (Unknown)

My last three quotes are for us – the 'grown ups'


- 6) *Too many people think that the grass is greener somewhere else but the grass is green where you water it.* (The open invite)
- 7) *Ask yourself ... Did you have a bad day, or did you have a bad five minutes that you're making the entire story of your day? Answering this honestly, every day, could change the quality of your life.* (Lori Gottlieb)
- 8) *It rained in my head  
For months  
But now,  
Look at all the flowers* (Unknown)

I have two images to cut out and stick on your wall:


## HAND MODEL OF THE BRAIN




At the base of your brain, represented here by your wrist, is the brain stem. It's responsible for basic things like breathing and keeping your heart pumping.



Your thumb, folded in, sits in the middle, just like the amygdala in the brain. The amygdala is responsible for sensing danger and telling the brain + body.



Your fingers are like your pre-frontal cortex- that's the part of the brain that helps us manage emotions and make complex decisions



When fear, danger, or intense emotion overwhelm our amygdala our prefrontal cortex goes offline and we "flip our lid." That's why sometimes it is so hard to make thoughtful decisions when we are very upset.

When brains are overwhelmed like this, they need a break to reflect and reconnect.

CONCEPT CREATED BY DAN SIEGEL, MD. VISUALLY TRANSLATED BY LINDSAY BRAMAN

<p><i>Anxious</i></p>  <p>Are you really there for me?</p>	<p><i>Avoidant</i></p>  <p>I can't find you, because I can't find me.</p>
<p><i>Disorganized</i></p>  <p>Go away, don't leave me!</p>	<p><i>Secure</i></p>  <p>I'm right here. And you're right there.</p>

for The Secure Relationship

Instead of an article, I have an extract from a book I'm reading. I think it draws everything I've talked about nicely together...

- 9) *One morning, watching her European friends and Ye'kuana men dragging a heavy dugout canoe up the riverbank, Liedloff was shocked at the contrast. "Here before me were several men engaged in a single task," she reflected later. "Two, the Italians, were tense, frowning, losing their tempers at everything, and cursing nonstop." On the other hand, the Ye'kuana men "were laughing at the unwieldiness of the canoe, making a game of the battle, relaxed between pushes, laughing at their own scrapes and especially amused when the canoe, as it wobbled forward, pinned one, then another, underneath it... All were doing the same work, all were experiencing the strain and pain. There was no difference in our situations except we had been conditioned by our culture to believe that such a combination of circumstances constituted an unquestionable low on the scale of well-being and were quite unaware that we had any option in the matter." The Ye'kuana men, she went on to recount, "were in a particular merry state of mind, revelling in the comradery... Each forward move was for them a little victory.!"*  
(The Evolved Nest, Darcia Narvez and G.A. Bradshaw)

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If you would like adding to the mailing list please email Hannah:

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Our book, *Educating Everyone: An Introduction to relational Inclusion in Schools* is available now and for this week only I can share a 30% off voucher. Click on the image and use this code: PASCHAMP30



Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

CEO Ambition Community Trust