

## Relational Inclusion blog #12: Behaving Our Feelings

My eldest has taken to hitting or pushing me when she is cross. Now when I say ‘hitting’ I may be exaggerating a little. It’s generally a half-hearted attempt to *lash out* or shove. In the cold light of day, as I write this down, what’s happening is obvious. In the heat of the moment, things never quite appear that way though, do they?

The first time she did it I raised my voice. Some of it through shock and indignance (how dare she do that to me?) and some through bad habit.

“No!” I half shouted, “That is not okay.”

Shouting in our house doesn’t work for several reasons. The first is that, from a Relationally Inclusive perspective, we all know it means the person shouting is dysregulated. The second is that if I raise my voice crossly (even if I’m not *really* angry) it makes my middle daughter cry (regardless of whether it’s aimed at her or not). For that exact reason, it is never aimed at her, which leads to a further question – if I can manage to never raise my voice at my middle daughter, why don’t I apply this to all my children? Finally, we have pretty much established in our household that it is never okay to raise our voices at anyone. If, and when I do, my eldest will say (and rightly), “You can’t talk to me like that.”

This does sometimes create further problems as my learnt behaviour makes me want to reply, “How dare you answer me back. I am the adult; you will do as I say.” However, we all know, deep down, that doesn’t work and that by doing that I’m modelling the exact behaviour we’re trying to move away from.

So I’m in a pickle - what do I do? On one hand my daughter shouldn’t be reacting physically, and this does need careful handling – on the other – what is she trying to communicate through her behaviour? Clearly, she is *‘behaving her feelings’* and my job is to help her understand what those feelings are and co-regulate her so that she can manage the situation in a different way. Equally, I too am now quite cross and have to manage my own emotional response.

What did I do? Could I put all this reading and theory into practice?

- 1) I tried to practice the pause and remember what I know about dysregulated behaviour (mine and my daughter’s). I tried to remember PETER (see blog 4 - Pause; Empathise; Think; Exhale; Respond)
- 2) I texted my wife who was upstairs – I texted her everything my daughter had done wrong. In hindsight this served as one of those angry emails which you type in the heat of the moment but should never send. It worked in so much as I got everything out of my system **and**, once you’ve typed a message like that and re-read it a bit later, things begin to seem a little petty.

- 3) I did some **furious** washing up (boy did those dishes get it!) and some heavy breathing (somewhere between snorting and growling) which ultimately counted as some serious exhaling.

But, having done all that, I managed to ground myself and put things back in perspective. I no longer wanted blood and could talk to my child in a true *dad to daughter way*. I talked to her about how I imagined she must have been feeling; about how I had probably asked her to do something whilst she was right in the middle of doing something else; about how that might not have seemed very fair; we discussed what we should and shouldn't do when we feel that way *and why*.

Both of us felt happy. Both of us felt loved. I am not, for a minute, expecting her to remember all that the next time something goes wrong – she's 9. And next time it happens we will do the same thing again. Hopefully, eventually, our co-regulation will enable her to self-regulate – maybe even some of it by the time she is ten. And wouldn't that be a thing?

With this week's theme being 'behaving our feelings', I thought this Brene Brown quote was particularly fitting:

- 1) *In order to empathise with someone's experience, you must be willing to believe them as they see it, and not how you imagine their experience to be.*

It also made me think again about punitive measures and how so often what we are trying to do is force our will onto someone else. Again if punitive measures actually worked, well we wouldn't need Relational Inclusion would we (but they don't):

- 2) *The goal of true discipline is for children to gain insight into their behaviour, develop empathy and begin to fix their mistakes. It's not the same as punishment.*  
(The Parent Therapist)

And obviously we so often forget the part we, as adults, play in all of this. I think about this next quote often:

- 3) *Children are not responsible for other people's emotions, including **ours**. They should not carry the weight of making us happy, nor be blamed for making us sad or angry. Children are **not** responsible for how we feel, how we react, and how we behave. **WE ARE**.* (Inside Parenting)

None of this is easy:

- 4) *Gentle parenting (teaching) isn't 'soft', It's hard work. Staying calm, setting limits, and teaching emotional regulation takes more effort than yelling ever will.*  
(KJ Althoff)

My two things to print and pin to your wall this week are:

## HOW TO SELF REGULATE

| WHEN I'M FEELING   | I WILL  |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>ANGRY</b>       | Pause until I am able to think clearly so I can respond rationally instead of reacting                    |
| <b>OVERWHELMED</b> | Write down what I need to get done and focus on one task at a time based on importance                    |
| <b>INSECURE</b>    | I will work on appreciating and accepting myself, flaws and all. I am more than I give myself credit for. |
| <b>REJECTED</b>    | I will acknowledge that this feeling sucks but I will not let it consume me. Rejection is redirection.    |
| <b>DISCOURAGED</b> | I will be kind to myself and remind myself of the reason why I am trying. I will use that as my strength. |

@ReachOutRecovery

This is everyone's job:



My recommended article to read is called: The Lost Einsteins: Why nurture in education is the key to unlocking human potential

<https://www.nurtureuk.org/the-lost-einsteins-why-nurture-in-education-is-the-key-to-unlocking-human-potential/>

In schools, as we return to the silly season of exams and tests and their accompanying pressure, I wanted to share this:

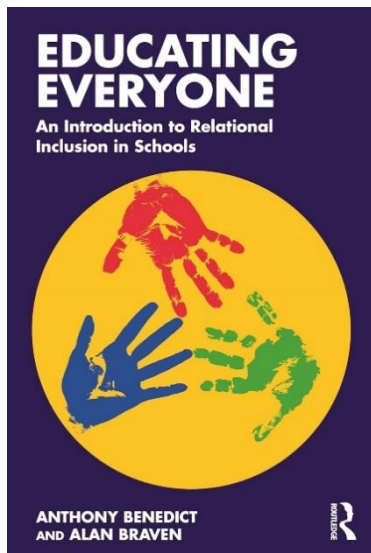


If you find the Relational Inclusion blog useful, feel free to share with your networks.

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 out now and is available to order here:



Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

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