



Relational Inclusion blog #4: Words

'The Words We Use'.

1. Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.  
"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least-at least I mean what I say-that's the same thing, you know."  
"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see!'"

The words we use are so important.

2. Many people have said: *"if we change our words we can change the world."*

It is important to think carefully about the words we use. Especially when we, or those around us, are dysregulated. And how often have we asked children to say sorry? Do we ever consider that forcing children to say sorry is making them lie?

3. Empathy implies that the child feels bad for what they have done, and in order to feel bad they have to understand how they have made another feel. For instance, if a toddler hits or bites another toddler at a playgroup, saying they are sorry would imply that they understand that the other child is in pain, It also implies that they regret hurting the other child and wish to make them feel better. If they have poor empathy skills (as is normal for this age), they will not have such train of thought. In fact, if they bit or hit another child in order to get hold of a toy that they wanted, they may believe that the injured child feels happy, as they themselves are happy now that they have the toy. Forcing the child to apologise in this instance does not make the child sorry; all it does is force them to lie. (Sarah Ockwell-Smith)

We must also remember, especially with children (who may not have the vocabulary), if we don't have words we may **'behave our feelings'**.

I thought this image might be useful in changing our words:

## YOUR WORDS

## MATTER

	INSTEAD OF...	TRY
	Be quiet.	Can you use a softer voice?
	What a mess!	It looks like you had fun! How can we clean up?
	Do you need help?	I'm here to help if you need me.
	I explained how to do this yesterday.	Maybe I can show you another way.
	Do I need to separate you?	Could you use a break?
	Stop crying.	It's okay to cry.
	Do you have any questions?	What questions do you have?
	You're OK.	How are you feeling?
	It's not that hard.	You can do hard things.
	We don't talk like that.	Please use kind words.

WE ARE TEACHERS

It is not just about the words we use with children. It is how we let words affect us:

4. You will continue to suffer if you have an emotional reaction to everything that is said to you. The power is sitting back and observing everything with logic. If words control you that means everyone else can control you. Breathe and allow things to pass. (Bruce Lee)

We must also think about the words we use inside our own heads:

5. “Don’t speak negatively about yourself, even as a joke. Your body doesn’t know the difference. Change the way you speak about yourself, and you can change your life.” (Bruce Lee)

I’d like to remind you of the Five Key Terms of Relational Inclusion. If we all just change to using these five words in our schools and places of work, we can start to make that difference (I have also attached this infographic as a PDF):



# The Five Key Terms of Relational Inclusion



## Dysregulation

**When a student is in crisis and are struggling to manage their emotions**

Emotional dysregulation is the inability to manage emotional responses or keep them within an acceptable range of typical emotional reactions. (e.g. sadness, anger, irritability and frustration).



## Co-regulation

**When an adult helps a student to manage their emotions**

Warm and responsive interactions that provide the support, coaching and modelling children need to understand, express and modulate their thoughts, feelings and behaviours.



## Self-regulation

**When a student can manage their own emotional responses**

Conscious personal management allowing someone to guide and manage their own thoughts, behaviours and feelings.



## Window of Tolerance

**The zone in which a person can function most effectively**

This is where intense emotional arousal can be processed in a healthy way allowing you to function and react to stress or anxiety effectively.



## Attachment Seeking

**As opposed to 'attention seeking'**

Often anxious students need a secure base as a result of on/off parenting. They use over developed verbal skills to gain reassurance.



I don't watch *Traitors*, but I caught a little bit of an interview with a woman who had put on a Welsh accent for the whole show. She said something like, *by doing this it meant I always had to pause and think before I spoke. I couldn't just jump into conversations.* The graphic below provides some strategies for this:



This week's article is about creating an attachment aware school:

<https://psychology.smartschool.services/insights-into-creating-an-attachment-aware-school/>

Finally - I have found this acronym 'PETER' which I think is really useful to bear in mind when managing dysregulation

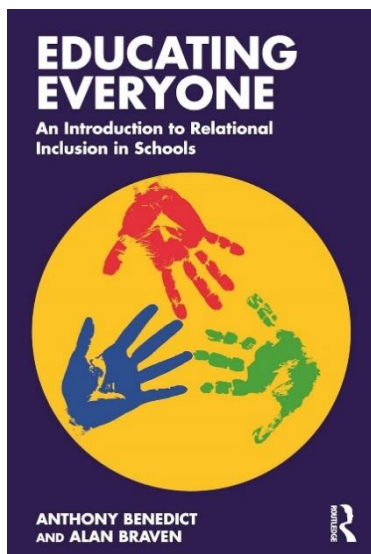
- P = Pause: don't react immediately.
- E = Empathize: try to understand how the child is, or was, feeling and their point of view.
- T = Think: think about different ways you could respond and the learning that would happen as a result.
- E = Exhale: take a deep breath, breathe out, relax your shoulders, and picture your anger leaving your body.
- R = Respond: now is the time to respond to the child, not before.

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* comes out in April and is available to pre-order here:



Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

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