

Relational Inclusion blog #19: Consequences

This week we had a post wedding family party - that is a whole other story - but in essence we had a very small family gathering at my mum's house in Leeds to celebrate our wedding because we basically didn't invite anyone to the actual wedding.

The first lesson I learnt was this was exactly why we didn't invite everyone to our actual wedding - that sounds mean. I just mean it was unnecessary hassle, and it was mildly stressful and all the things we didn't want on our wedding day.

The second lesson came from daughter number 1 (I don't mean I have favourites - it's just she's my first born - hence the number 1). We had afternoon tea at my mum's house and about twenty people from my family came. The average age was roughly 72 (I might be being generous) - how quickly life changes and the people you've grown up with and looked up to suddenly change and look very different - that's a different story again. However, what it reinforced was that a family party for septuagenarians isn't a great setting for a 9, nearly 8 and nearly 5-year-old.

After an hour they had had enough. After two, we were pushing it. By three, and the decision by my wife to get the train home, we were in choppy waters. I had this great idea. After about the fiftieth time of one of the children appearing and complaining that brother or sister had said or done this or that, I pulled them all together and said, "Look guys, you've done really well. It's tough and I get it but if you can last until everyone has gone without arguing or falling out anymore then you can each get a special treat for dessert..."

I know - dad of the year stuff.

So off they toddled (middle daughter claiming she didn't want a special treat but two out of three ain't bad). We got close. Nearly all the guests had left. Daughter number 1 appeared and whispered into my ear. Her sister was crying.

Now I'd set them some kind of gymnastics / bed bouncing challenge - so I thought she'd just crashed off the bed or something. But no. Daughter number 1 had upset daughter number 2. I won't bore you with the petty details.

No longer dad of the year, I announced, "Well you've blown it haven't you?" Which caused daughter number 1 to instantly shrink into huff mode. Meanwhile my four-year-old boy gleefully announced, "I'm getting my treat, I've not upset anyone."

Just the commentary I needed. Actually, exactly the commentary I needed.

Pause. Reflect. Act.



I took myself into another room physically and mentally. I tended to daughter number 2, then I called daughter number 1 and explained that we needed to talk, and that it might not be the talk she was expecting. She was hiding behind a fold-up bed.

"It's your choice but if you choose not to come, you'll never know," I coaxed. I knew that would be enough to draw her out. It did.

I knelt and called her to me, and she came for a cuddle. The words that came out took me a little by surprise.

I said, "You've done an amazing thing." I could feel her confusion. "Your sister was crying because of a choice you made. And you knew that this would mean that you blew the deal. Yet you came downstairs into a room full of grown-ups and you whispered into my ear that your sister was upset. You put aside the consequence of what you had done to make sure that your sister was okay and that, for me, is bigger than anything. You knew the risk of what that might mean and you did it anyway and I'm So proud of you for doing that."

Sometimes, as a parent, I'm too quick to dish out consequences. When I was a classroom teacher, I always gave the kids the chance to work off what they had done, to get it right next time, to repair. Why don't I do that as easily as a parent?

Maybe threats and consequences are idle. Maybe they don't mean anything. They lead to seeing something through for the sake of it which can remove the chance for an opportunity to learn. Maybe an act of goodwill and genuine sacrifice beats a consequence hands down every time, if only we'd make room for it.

I seem to have stumbled upon a series of quotes which reinforce this message, which also suggests it's the right message for this week!

1) *Saying less is incredibly helpful.*

Not every thought is valuable

Not every feeling needs to be voiced

What is often best is to slow down and spend time developing a clearer and more informed perspective

Ego rushes and reacts,

But peace moves purposefully and gently

(Unknown)

2) *Every morning we are born again. What we do today is what matters most.*

(Buddha)

3) *Just because it's taking a while doesn't mean it's not happening.* (Unknown)



My two print and stick to the wall images this week are:

What is EMPATHY?

EMPATHY IS:	EMPATHY IS NOT:
- Putting yourself in someone else's shoes.	- Feeling sorry for someone.
- Really listening without making any judgements.	- Trying to change someone else's emotions.
- Sensing someone else's emotions that you have perhaps felt before.	- Giving advice.
- Letting someone know you understand, see, or "get" their feelings.	- Putting the spotlight or attention on you.
- Showing that you care and are there with them.	
- Saying something like: "What has this been like for you?" "This must be so hard." "Thanks for sharing with me." "I'm here with you."	

EMOTIONAL AGILITY

How to Build & Repair Trust:

A Three-Part Framework

ABILITY
You are able to do what you say you are going to do.

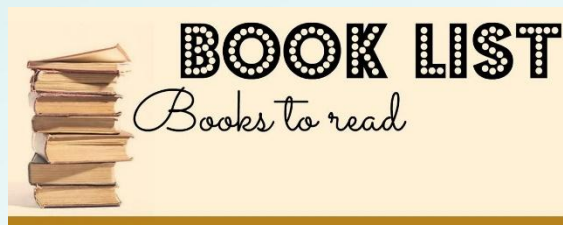
EMPATHY
You care about the emotional impact of what you do.

INTEGRITY
You actually do what you say you are going to do.

SUSAN DAVID

My recommended read this week is about neuroscientific progress and early education:

[Should We Educate Our Children Later?](#)



This week's book recommendation comes from Leanne and looks well worth diving into:

When I first begun my forest journey, I was part of a boys project in Tameside (and I was working in early years). As part of this we did a big research project on various aspect of boys learning, response to stress and how they play. I went to a seminar with a lady called Ros Bailey. She was brilliant and basically said:

'Have you ever asked why they play like this , or do this?'

She wrote the book below. It looks at the brain development , especially in boys. It even talks about the debate of gun play and why allowing it can help them regulate. It's an early years focus and looks at the Why.

It's an 'oldun' but a 'goodun' and still relevant.

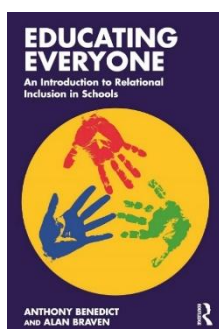
The Cleverness of boys (Early Years Library) Paperback –

by [Sally Featherstone](#) (Author, Editor), [Ros Bayley](#) (Author)

If you have read any interesting books which support / develop / further understanding of all things relational inclusion, please add a comment through Substack.

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

Our book, Educating Everyone: An Introduction to relational Inclusion in Schools is out now and you must buy it and tell everyone else to buy it. It is available pretty much everywhere that sells books or you can get it here:



You can subscribe to my weekly blog here:

https://open.substack.com/pub/anthonybenedict/p/relational-inclusion-blog-15?r=5ki35n&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&showWelcomeOnShare=true

The final quote I'd like to share is something I read and it has really stuck in my mind:

4) *How can I blame the wind for the mess it made, if it was me who opened the window.* (unknown)

Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

CEO Ambition Community Trust