

## Relational Inclusion blog #26: Time

*"Time is a concept*

*By which we measure*

*Our wasted lives"*

I wrote that years ago. Obviously ripped off from a much more famous John Lennon quote about God. (And for those physicists out there, I'm referring to *clock-time* as opposed to the existence of time itself).

These last two weeks I've been teaching my daughters to tell the time. They were full of criticism for how 'badly they've been taught it at school' - at least according to them.

I was trying to explain to them how it's such a hard thing to teach to thirty children at once.

Now - proud dad moment - after two weeks they can both tell the time - but it did make me realise something a little bit more complicated.

In essence we're teaching them a concept that they don't yet need, that can't really access or make sense of.

Let me explain. Other than time being a man-made concept (look back at my Lennon bastardisation) time is something that works differently for children. And - to some extent - their true understanding or sense of time marks the end of a part of an innocence of childhood.

As adults we mark time because we must get up for work. That means setting an alarm to get us ready to hopefully be *on time*. Then we have meetings or lessons or phone calls or whatever arrangements which get us through the day all marked by *time*.

This reminds me of two GCSE poems - *Island Man* (which compares the experience of living life in the Caribbean and the concrete of London) and *Wha Fe Call I* (which explores all the names for different British mealtimes).

The point I'm making is - we - as adults - have become servants of time - which is of course a man-made concept (again clock time; not the physics of time). Time which is punctuated with meals and breaks (Elevensis; fag breaks; afternoon tea etc).

But to kids this makes absolutely no sense.

My eldest will confidently tell you something lasted *about twenty minutes or two hours*, she can use the words of *time* without grasping a realistic sense of it.

For kids, they have *wake up time* - and they probably have no idea what time that is; they have *breakfast time* - again no idea; *school time* - ask anyone under 9 what time school actually starts ... they're clueless. This also applies to *lunchtime* and *home-time* - which basically represents the time they forget everything they've done that day. Ask most key stage 2 primary children to recount their day and you'll see what I mean.

So, it seems to me that time works very differently for children than it does for adults.

Then we try to teach them to *tell the time* and expect *secure knowledge* by year 4.

Now there is the maths behind telling the time. The rules of seconds and minutes. There is counting in fives - and then applying fractions (halves and quarters). Again, we're asking them to combine multiple concepts into a new concept which makes no sense - what the heck does a clock face mean to them? Some have numbers, some have Roman numerals, some have lines or dots and some are digital. None of which look anything like a face. And then there are these weird sticks which we call hands (but look nothing like hands) and they all act differently - seconds; minutes; hours.

My children want 'smart watches' (is that not an oxymoron?) but we have a no digital watch until you can tell analogue time rule in our hours - is that old fashioned? Mind you, with 'smart' watches you can change to an analogue face. Maybe it is smart after all!

And so, over the last two weeks I've thrust my watch in my 8-year old's face and asked: "What time is it now?"

And she's tried to combine all these rules without having any actual sense of what time means or does. Initially she would confidently say something like *it's forty past five*.

There is bright sunshine. We've not had lunch but definitely had breakfast not so long ago. It could never be anything to do with 5.

But that's the bit we don't tell them or teach them. How to make any sense of time.

I mean - I'm happy that now that my kids (or two of them) can tell the time - but breaking up the day into meaningful numbered chunks - I don't know - I know they need to be able to tell the time but - It feels like the machine and the factory production line.

Is that more important than their emotions and their happiness and really understanding how they are feeling?

The quotes I thought worth sharing this week are:

- 1) *You might not be where you want to be yet ...  
But you're also not where you used to be.* (unknown)
- 2) *We are taught to do what we are told until sufficient time elapses that we are allowed to tell others what to do.* (Gordon Livingston)
- 3) *If you start paying more attention to what your child is doing right today, you'll have a different child in front of you by next week.* (@itstheconsciousmum)
- 4) *Never forget that the good old days are happening right now.* (Sahil Bloom)
- 5) *When a child is upset, they can't make sense of the lesson. The time for logic will come – first, love.* (Inside Parenting)
- 6) *We have to break the habit of using shame to try to make people into who we want them to be.  
Shame disconnects. It shrinks. It hurts.  
The vulnerability of a clearly communicated, self-loving boundary will do so much more for you in this area.* (@theeqschool)
- 7) *My yoga teacher always starts class with this line:  
"Congrats. The hardest part is over. You showed up."  
I feel like that mindset applies to most other things.  
Worrying about a task is often far worse than the task itself. Starting is the hardest part.* (Steph Smith)
- 8) *Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.* (Viktor E. Frankl)

My two print and stick to the wall images this week came from a presentation given by Paul Wallis:

## Trauma as a Biological Event:



### Physiological Changes:

Increased heart rate, rapid breathing, and muscle tension.



### Impact on the Brain:

Effect on brain regions involved in processing emotions, reward and threat systems autobiographical memory, and decision-making.



### The Nervous System's Role:

Impact on the autonomic nervous system, particularly the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches which can become dysregulated by trauma, leading to chronic stress responses.



### The HPA Axis:

Impact on Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) axis, leading to imbalances in cortisol and other stress hormones.



### The Impact on Immune Cells:

Impact on immune cells, making them more reactive to stress and potentially contributing to chronic inflammation and other health problems.

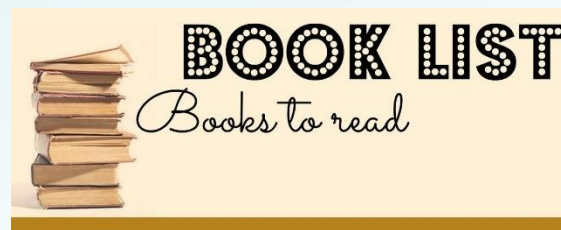
## Trauma as a Psychological Event

Core beliefs are deeply held beliefs that inform how people see themselves and the world. Trauma can create negative, skewed and rigid core beliefs, reducing mentalising capacity and increasing hypervigilance and avoidance





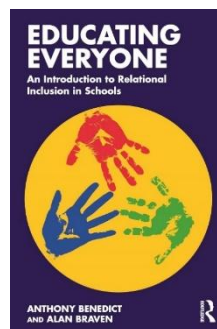
My recommended read is about the importance of cortisol: [A hero among hormones: why cortisol is something to celebrate rather than stress about | Health & wellbeing | The Guardian](#)



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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:



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Finally, I'd like to share a quote which has really stuck in my mind:

- 9) *It's a little embarrassing that, after forty-five years of research and study, the best advice I can give to people is to be a little kinder to each other.* (Aldous Huxley)

Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

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