

Relational Inclusion blog #33: The Magicians of Time

I think I first noticed it with my grandad. There was an air about him. He never seemed to be in a rush, and he had time for everyone and everything. He never seemed to be cross. I mean - on the odd occasion when he wasn't happy about something there was a look in his eye, but I don't think I ever heard him raise his voice.

He made you want to smile, like there was a secret joke that only he could hear which gave him something to smile about and then he had to share it with everyone around him. He always seemed to create air or space where there wasn't any.

Then I noticed it in sport, when I started to watch rugby and then football. How the very best players had so much time both on and off the ball. They seemed to float through the game, and it seemed effortless to them. Everything slowed, the ball, the crowd, the noise. They moved inside a kind of bubble, untouched by the chaos around them.

Then I noticed it in squash. The small court is unforgiving; there is no room to hide and no margin for error. I found myself running like a lunatic from front to back and corner to corner. And then I was lucky enough to play with some really good players, and they did that trick with time again. They floated around the court. No step or breath wasted. They flowed with the game and the game flowed with them.

Time in schools is different again. The best teachers and leaders seem to **create time** in the same way great players do. They move through the day with presence rather than panic. In the same meeting where others rush to fill the silence, they wait — and in the waiting, people breathe. In classrooms full of noise, they find stillness. They notice. They listen. They make space for the young person who can't find their words. They move with the rhythm of human emotion, not against it. And in those classrooms and assembly halls, a hush of anticipation descends. They do that trick with time. And because of it, everyone around them starts to slow down too — to see more clearly, to feel more deeply, to belong a little more fully.

More recently I met some therapists and some counsellors, who, to my surprise, weren't sitting on a *chaise long* and they didn't have *long and flowing scarves*, but they did do that trick with time. They had a way of slowing things right down. Of having a way of using words which asked questions out of genuine curiosity and reflection. They weren't looking for an answer or judging the world or the word. It was as though the rest of us were looking through foggy mirrors and seeing reflections of bits and pieces and half stories. But some of the therapists were looking through a window and seeing the world for what it was and not what their emotions were dragging into their field of vision.



I don't think I'll ever manage to be like that, to live in the world in truly that way, detached yet fully present in the moment. Detached - I guess - from the madness, from the hustle and bustle, from racing emotions, from the impulses that drag us from moment to moment. Wouldn't it be wonderful to embody Rick Hanson's HEAL:

Have a positive experience,

Enrich it by focusing on the details,

Absorb it to let it sink in, and

Link it to other experiences, especially negative ones, to soothe and reshape them through neuroplasticity

I think back on the gallop that has been my life. The impatience. The rush to do and to be. The emotional roller coaster of friendship, of love, of work, of family, of sport, of music. It doesn't surprise me, with so much stimulus and noise, that it's any wonder we spend so much of our lives drowning instead of gently applying the brakes, feeling the ground and tasting our breath. And maybe that's why, in the end, we gasp for those last few breaths — eyes wide — finally understanding what we missed all along.

It's easy to shout and be cross with the world. When we're angry or sad or don't really know how we are feeling it's somehow natural to point the finger and blame. But that is an untrained instinctive response, and we don't have to behave like that. Our nervous system can learn and does listen.

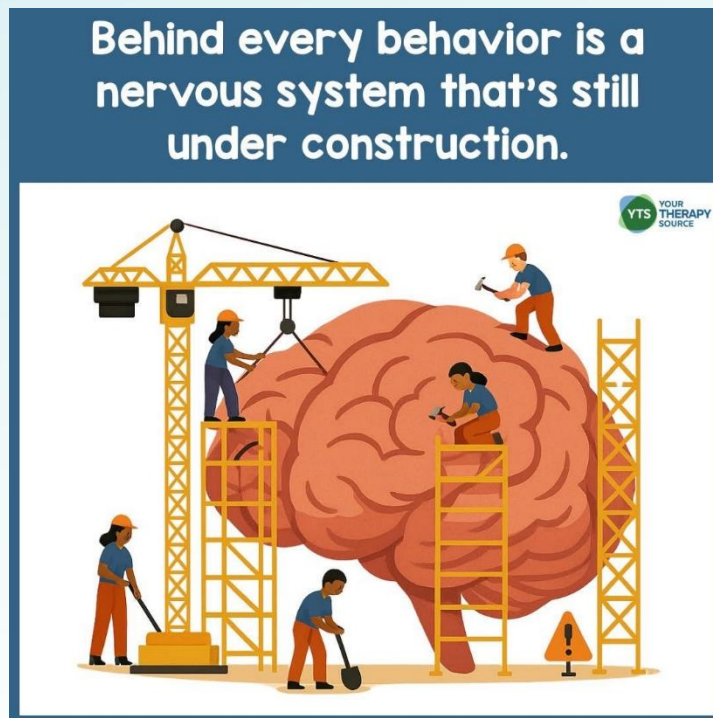
I no longer think there is a right way or a wrong way but there is always another way, a different way. We don't have to stamp and scream all over the world to get things done or to feel heard and we can't make people listen or see us anyway.

I think this is Relational Inclusion. To move through the chaos of the world and not be consumed by it. To live, teach and lead, to be driven by what really matters, to want less because finally we can see and appreciate more. And maybe that's the heart of it — the point of slowing down, of learning to breathe again. Our children don't have to inherit the roller coaster of chaos and carnage that was passed down to us. As the old saying goes, "A healthy man wants a thousand things, a sick man only wants one."

My one-a-day quotes for this week are:

- 1) *The older I get, the more I realize that your identity is just a story you keep telling yourself. "I'm not a morning person." "I'm not good with money." These are stories. Not truths. Change the story. Watch the identity shift. You're not fixed. You're fluid. Choose fluidity. (@scottdclary)*
- 2) *The morning rush is a race against the clock. But the tone of your voice becomes the soundtrack for your child's day. One moment of calm connection is worth more than being perfectly on time. (Arsalan Moin @psychtreatment)*
- 3) *If we do not transform our own pain, we will most assuredly transmit it. (Richard Rohr)*
- 4) *In our culture, we have been misled to believe that the tougher we are, the more respect we will gain, but that is simply not true.
What we gain by being tough is fear, and fear is not respect. Respect is gained by giving it away.
Rebecca Eanes*
- 5) *When did we start to believe that to make children behave the way we want, we must first make them feel bad? Think of the last time you made a mistake. What helped you learn more? Being shamed and punished for what you did? Or being taught the skill you needed to learn so you didn't make the same mistake again? Let's extend the same grace and teaching to our kids that we hope others will give us.
@nurturedfirst*
- 6) *When a child breaks something, their first emotion is fear. Try to ask, "Are you okay?" before you react to the mess. This single question teaches them that they are always more precious than any object.
(Arsalan Moin @psychtreatment)*
- 7) *Parents who make the choice to empathize with their child, instead of criticizing them, are helping to create a society where we empathize with others, instead of judging them.
(@ RESPONSIVE_ PARENTING J. MILBURN)*

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



DID YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD'S BRAIN ISN'T FULLY DEVELOPED UNTIL THEIR MID-20S — MAYBE EVEN LATER?

THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX

the part of the brain that helps control impulses, manage emotions, and think through consequences — is one of the last areas to mature.



So when a child acts impulsively or struggles with big feelings, it's not defiance — it's development.

Their emotional 'engine' develops early, but their 'brakes' take years to catch up.

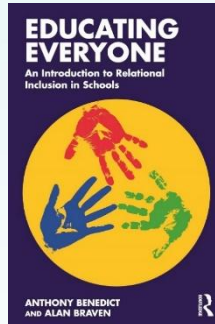
Calm guidance today builds the brain for tomorrow.

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My recommended read is about handwriting and executive function: [When Executive Function Skills Impair Handwriting - The OT Toolbox](#)

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:



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

"The only reason you know how to ride a bike is because someone you trusted let go of you."
(unknown)

Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

CEO Ambition Community Trust