Relational Inclusion blog #34: What We Choose to Not See

Last week the builder was round replacing our shower - let's not get caught up with the fact it was a builder and not a plumber, that's a whole other story. When he was in the kitchen - presumably checking the leak had stopped, he noticed a crack above our sink. And to be fair, it was no ordinary crack. We probably should have noticed it ourselves. It runs horizontally for roughly two metres below our kitchen window. Half of it is hidden by tiles and it's amazing what you choose not to see.

He said that it looks pretty bad. In fact, we're likely to need a new kitchen because he'd need to take out the sink and the dishwasher and, to make matters worse, the wooden counter around the sink is rotten and that will need replacing as well. He doesn't really know what it is so he'd have to take everything out to investigate and then it's likely that the external wall will need rebuilding.

Great.

The positive is, according to him, that it's all likely to be covered by our house insurance. I don't know about you but as soon as insurance is ever mentioned I get that sinking feeling. This is partly because, as Daniel Kahneman points out in T*hinking Fast and Slow, '*our fear of loss and bias toward safety make us overpay for protection against unlikely risks', partly because I always feel like it's going to be a massive pain and the insurance company will do everything they can to not pay or make everything difficult, and partly because I'm rubbish at things like this and have no idea who my house insurance is with and it's a ball ache to trawl through my rubbish filing system and work it out.

I let my avoidance tactics and procrastination take control for a couple of days and then I bite the bullet, track who I'm insured with (actually, I narrow it down to three possibles and take an educated guess on one) and make the call.

Surprisingly I'm not sent through endless automated options and not put on hold. I am passed through several different departments. Then I get to speak to someone and explain the crack. They immediately explain that it sounds like subsidence *which is exactly what you don't want (sir) because if it is subsidence you'll never get home insurance again*.

Useful – not.

This is becoming the massive pain I expected. I check my window of tolerance, take some deep breaths and ring the builder. I then ring the insurance company back and explain that it's probably not subsidence but is possibly the weight from the roof.

That's fine sir. We will pass your details to the subsidence teams, and they can check whether it's subsidence or not. If it's not, they'll give you a letter which you can show to any potential insurers.

I must admit; I surprise myself at how calm I'm genuinely feeling. The old me would have been fizzing by now and winding myself up for a big row. The new me has somehow already accepted the farcical dance whilst also recognizing the person I'm talking to is just doing their job and getting angry with them won't help anyone including me.

They say someone will contact me next week.

On Monday they ring. I'm ready for the roller coaster and I'm certainly not disappointed. The people we use for our house insurance use a third party. The third party explain that since we have changed our insurance in the last eight weeks, I have to contact the previous insurance as the crack hasn't just happened, but they assure me everything will be fine. This is all news to me as we have had the same house insurance for ten years. However, I go with it.

Don't you just love the merry go round? I'm walking the dog; I'm breathing fresh air (at least as fresh as inner-city Manchester air gets) and so I continue to play the game.

Eventually I get through to the old insurer and tell the same story, which is now well rehearsed, but I'm bored. The old insurer gives me the same narrative about subsidence but says a letter explaining it isn't subsidence is next to useless and would rather not put it through as subsidence so is there another reason?

Finally - someone talking my language. I explain that it's the weight of the roof. I expect a fanfare and a payout.

Oh. We won't cover you for that, that sounds like dodgy building work. You are only covered for one of our ten perils which you can find in your policy documents (which I don't have). *Just call us back when you have found the peril.*

I think by this point the old me would most likely have exploded. I would have been full of rage at the world and the ridiculousness of insurance whilst also being quite worried at the £50k the builder estimated this was all going to cost which I don't have tucked away in my rainy-day box. My nervous system would have kicked fully into fight mode, I'd have snapped at my wife, my children, the dog and anyone else in close range. I'd have wanted to shout at the sky. I would have slipped into *it's not fair mode* and been convinced that nature itself was conspiring against me -

But I surprise myself and don't do any of those things.

I distract myself. I wash up. I give myself time to think. I don't go instinctive irrational rage - which used to be my go-to. And then I have a different thought. I ring another builder who I knew a few years ago. I send him some pictures of the crack and explain what's been going on.

And he tells a totally different story. He's not sure what it is but it's an outward facing wall. All the appliances can be moved; the counter can be replaced if necessary and everything can be put back together relatively easily. He'll come over and have a look in a couple of days.

It makes me think of something I read a week or so ago: "The less angry you get, the more you allow" attributed to the author and philosopher Naval Ravikant. It basically suggests that by controlling your anger, you open yourself up to more possibilities and different perspectives.

My blood pressure thanks me, my nervous system isn't flooded with adrenaline, and I think there really is another way we can approach pretty much everything. The crack's still there. But so am I — calmer, clearer, and though I'm still trying to change the world it doesn't have to be by stamping and snarling.

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

1. *If we do not transform our own pain, we will most assuredly transmit it* (Richard Rohr)

2. *We're all just one accident, one diagnosis, one unexpected phone call away from a completely different life. Stay humble and don't take anything for granted. Nothing is permanent.* (© FB/Buddhism)

3. *They asked: "How do you know you're on the right path?"*
   I said: Because peace got louder than panic. Because alignment started feeling better than approval. Because my soul finally exhaled - and whispered, "this way."
   (abundance alchemist)

4. *You're not grown until you know how to communicate, apologize, be truthful & accept accountability without blaming someone else.* (unknown)

5. *You won't always recognize your own transformation while you're in it. It might feel like confusion, exhaustion, or even grief. Let it. The old you is dissolving, so the new you can emerge. Growth isn't meant to feel safe; it's meant to set you free.*
   (VEX KING)

6. *Don't let your bad days trick you into thinking you have a bad life.* (unknown)

7. *"Every storm has two purposes. To destroy what isn't solid, and to reveal what is."*
   (unknown)

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

DECODING BEHAVIOUR

Behaviour	Possible Meaning
• Shouting or talking back	• Feeling unheard, overwhelmed, or needing control when feeling chaotic
• Running off or hiding	• Flight response triggered — feels unsafe, anxious, or overstimulated
• Refusing to follow instructions	• Need for autonomy, sensory overload, fear of failure, or having difficulty processing information
• Hitting or lashing out	• Fight response — frustration, fear, or inability to express big emotions with words
• Crying or shutting down	• Emotional overload, shame, or exhaustion — a need for comfort, not correction

My recommended read is about how anger affects the brain and body:

How Anger Affects the Brain and Body [Infographic] - NICABM

How Anger Affects Your Brain and Body [Infographic - Part 1] - NICABM

How Anger Affects Your Brain and Body [Infographic - Part 2] - NICABM

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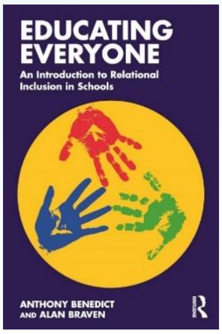
Our book, Educating Everyone: An Introduction to relational Inclusion in Schools is out now and you must buy it and tell everyone else to buy it. It is available pretty much everywhere that sells books or you can get it here:



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

Someone once said, patience is not the ability to wait, but the ability to keep a good attitude while waiting. (@Lewis Howes)

Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

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