

Relational Inclusion blog #38: On Being Present

Thursday evenings are always tricky.

My wife has gone back to university which means I'm on daddy duty, tea duty, tomorrow's snacks-and-uniform duty, and spelling-and-reading-book duty. The dog is in the dog house (which you'll find out about in next week's blog), and both my girls go to Cubs which doesn't finish until twenty past eight.

You'd think that might make things easier, but two under-tens spending an hour and a half running around like lunatics in the enjoyable, disorganised chaos that is Cubs doesn't exactly set the tone for a calm bedtime routine.

It's nearly nine o'clock and I'm sitting in the bathroom with daughter number one as she showers. She won't let me out of her sight because she's scared of *The Witches* again (see last week's blog). I'm sitting on the toilet — and let's be clear, I'm not actually using the toilet (you'll be pleased to know) — our bathroom is small and there isn't anywhere else to sit.

She's yabbering on and I'm trying to write the blog about *why the dog is in the dog house*.

She asks me something and I hear myself saying, "Just a minute, I just need to finish this." And that's my wake-up call — the whole point of this blog.

Daughter number one is going to be ten in thirteen days. I know this because we have a countdown calendar. I know this because every chance she gets, she asks me to guess how many days until her birthday. I know this because she is absolutely fizzing about turning ten. I'm not sure anyone in the history of birthdays has ever been quite so excited.

As my wife informed me last night, daughter number one has also discovered boys. Her hormones have kicked in, and she is suddenly totally distracted by all "the silly boys" — her words, not mine.

My wife says this fondly. "Don't you remember that happening to you?"

If I'm honest, I don't. Maybe it's different for boys. Maybe it's just me.

So, I'm trying to write next week's blog and she's telling me a completely disjointed story that involves at least one boy, some chasing, some silly face-pulling and a lot of hysterical laughter.

And then I look at her properly. She's totally caught up in her story, and her beautiful face is beaming.

And I nearly missed it.

I think lots of things at this point and my thoughts are wrapped in just a little bit of guilt and shame. I think she is growing up and I'm missing it. She's at that age where I can still see the child — the little girl — but I can also glimpse something else. An older her. A teenager. Maybe even the woman she's going to become.

And suddenly all the stuff in my head — the relational inclusion, the neuroscience, the emotional intelligence — feels a bit hollow, because I'm not actually living the thing I keep talking about. My head is full of this morning, tomorrow morning, work, writing, and ideas. Ideas are wonderful, writing is wonderful, but it's all a bit rubbish if I'm missing the actual life happening right in front of me right here and right now. And with children, you blink and those moments are gone.

I talk so often about the gallop of the curriculum, the rush to get through content — and yet here I am, galloping through my own life. It really is a roller coaster, but at some point, we all need to make a conscious effort to stop and smell the flowers.

When I was roughly my daughter's age, my grandpa used to tell me I needed to learn to sit still. I always joked that *I'd sleep when I'm dead*. But he had a point. Blink and childhood is over. Blink and life has gone.

So maybe the simplest thing — the thing I keep forgetting — is that being here, now, with the people we love, is the whole point. Life can be hard, and life can be tough, but life can also be beautiful. It's often those tiny moments which are so easily missed that really make things sparkle.

Why don't we try harder to be actually present just for the sake of the moment? I'm not saying it's easy. My mind buzzes with millions of what-ifs and maybes, and I love that about myself. But surely it's worth a go. And like anything, presence is a habit - and habit takes practice.

In the back of my mind, I hear The Flaming Lips sing:

*Do you realize
That you have the most beautiful face?
Do you realize
We're floating in space?
Do you realize
That everyone you know someday will die?*

So, I put my phone down, sit on the toilet as a seat, and listen — properly this time. Because she's ten in thirteen days, and this moment is only happening once.

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

- 1) *If we are stressed, overwhelmed, and dysregulated, we cannot be a regulating presence for our students.
We will likely escalate their dysregulation. (@EM_ GENTLE)*
- 2) *Be a child. Pay attention to small things.
Don't be led by prejudice. Take nobody's word for anything. Observe and think. Ask simple questions. Seek simple answers. (unknown)*
- 3) *When we offer children guidance instead of punishment, we help them build skills rather than instil fear. (@HOMESCHOOLTOGO)*
- 4) *Behind every policy, every rule, and every procedure, there is a child whose potential is boundless,
whose rights are non-negotiable, and whose dreams are valid. (Charmaine Thanermy)*
- 5) *We need to teach children how to name their feelings long before they are labeled 'stubborn' or 'difficult'. These words describe behaviors - not children. Kids will figure out a way to communicate their wants and needs - so why not give them constructive solutions? (GENERATION MINDFUL)*
- 6) *If you don't like where you are, move.
You are not a tree. (Jim Rohn)*
- 7) *Growth comes when you realize that you do not have to experience life the way you have been told to. (@MasteringLawofAttraction)*



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

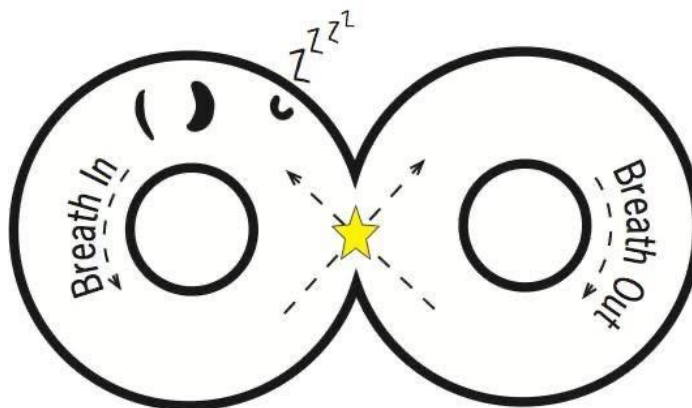


If you think you're
going in circles



Just shift your
perspective

Lazy 8 **Breathing**



Trace the Lazy 8 with your finger starting at the star and taking a deep breath in.

As you cross over to the other side of the Lazy 8, slowly let your breath out.

Continue breathing around the Lazy 8 until you have a calm body and mind.

My recommended read this week is about 'consciously detaching' from worldly wants:

[Happiness researcher explains his 'reverse bucket list' - Upworthy](#)

Neil has also recommended a book this week:

It's not a book about relational inclusion as such but this was an interesting read, and I think it would be good for school leaders. It's about challenging the 'norms', seeing the bigger picture and building a positive culture for the long-term. It's from the business world but very applicable to education with it being an 'infinite game'.

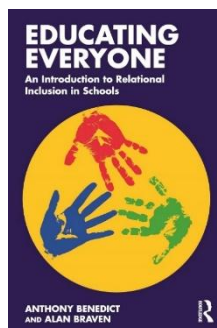
[The INFINITE GAME Book | Go Beyond Reading - Simon Sinek](#)

This is a good summary:

[Book Summary: The Infinite Game](#)

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:

Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate. (unknown)

Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

CEO Ambition Community Trust