

Relational Inclusion blog #42: Blink and I'm There

How many times have you heard someone say, “You blink and it’s gone?” More times than you can count, I imagine. This morning I experienced the exact opposite. I blinked and there I was, right in the middle of it, left wondering how on earth I’d ended up here.

Let me backtrack a little. At 4.30am the dog woke me up with his whining. I think I’ve gained a new superpower. Normally I’m a heavy sleeper, but one whine from him and I’m on red alert, my eyes spring open and, like a ninja, I’m up and dressed without making a sound (at least that’s how I imagine it; my family may tell you otherwise).

There are two reasons why I do this. The first is because I don’t want to risk him waking the whole family up and then having grumpy children to get ready for school. The second is because if I leave it too long he will have weed on the floor and I’ll have to clean that up before I walk him.

I take him outside, settle him back down, creep back into bed and try to steal another couple of hours’ sleep before the real morning routine starts.

Maybe this is the real reason for my ‘blink and I’m there’ morning. Maybe I’m so tired it’s actually an out-of-body experience and the real me is causing chaos and managing things dreadfully. I digress.

I go and wake my little boy at about 7.15. He needs a ten-minute warning before he gets up properly. Why we’ve created an adult snooze button for our five-year-old I’ll never know. This morning is more problematic than usual because he was overtired last night and wouldn’t go to the toilet before bed (I’m acutely aware there’s an accidental subplot of urine sneaking in today). This means he’s likely to have had an accident - and I’m not disappointed to discover he has. If there’s one smell I’ll never get accustomed to, it’s stale human wee.

Luckily, he’s in a good mood, so I whip him up, wash him down, strip his bed whilst congratulating myself on how straightforward this has turned out to be.

At which point I hear a wailing cry from downstairs. It’s daughter number one.

“What’s happened?” I call down.

She has been faffing, trying to feed the dog her crusts. She knows he needs to stay in the kitchen, or it will be more than crusts he’s eating — I’m sure you can put the missing pieces together.

I get downstairs and she is crying because the dog has licked her egg.

“Why are you crying?” I call out as I go back to retrieve my son from the bathroom — and then I deliver that terrible Dad line: “Crying isn’t going to bring your egg back.”

But I’m not cross. I’m not even mildly angry. This is just another Tuesday morning, and besides, as I’ve explained, I’m sensing a semi out-of-body experience probably because I’m so tired.

I come back down, give her a cuddle, and in a genuinely concerned voice ask again, “Why *are* you crying?”

This is when she delivers the killer blow, “I thought you’d get angry and shout at me.”

And that’s the ‘blink’ moment. I am very firmly in the here and now. And it’s not a here and now I’m proud of. It’s like my very own Ghost of Christmas Past, except there’s no ghost; it’s my ten-year-old daughter standing right in front of me, red-faced and tearful.

Once she is calm, I check in again and have to ask, “I don’t get angry and shout at you, do I?”

And she replies, “Not very often. Not anymore.”

I’m not sure how that makes me feel. The most important thing for now is that she isn’t upset anymore and this is easily sorted. A fresh, un-licked poached egg for her, and the old egg, which she delights in feeding to the dog, restores the morning to its regular routines.

A friend came to stay last week. She had given her mum *Educating Everyone* to read and her mum had asked what our house was like — as in she wondered how we were raising our children and whether I put into practice everything I preach. I recommended she reads my blog...

But that question, and this morning’s near-madness, did remind me that how we talk to our children is so important. After all, what they hear from us becomes their inner voice.

As Phil Banks wrote in his Silver Bullet Blog, “*Belonging is fundamental to our wellbeing – it shapes how we see ourselves and how we behave.*”. And mornings may be mayhem, and we might be in a rush, but if we don’t model kindness and curiosity we’re passing down an angry, fiery inner voice which they may well carry inside them and struggle with forever.

I also read something that said words to the effect of: *one day your child will sit across from someone and describe what it was like to be raised by you — make sure it’s a story worth telling.* The way we choose to operate becomes our personal responsibility.

Ignorance is no excuse. As with everything I write about, it is always okay to get things wrong. Relational Inclusion is very much about recognising that, learning, and then doing something differently. And if we can manage that in most of our moments, and then model that for our children, we might just change the world.

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

1. *He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.*
Friedrich Nietzsche
2. *We talk about "teaching kids to listen to their bodies".
Often kids are inherently good at listening to their bodies.
It's just that when they do it in inconvenient ways, we call it "behaviour".*
(@occuplaytional)
3. *I have yet to meet a child who enjoys misbehaving. rather I see a child who is working to communicate a message about an unmet need in increasingly desperate and extreme ways.* (Dr Vanessa Lapointe)
4. *When we take children's ideas seriously, we grow alongside them ... When we slow down, listen deeply, and wonder together, we uncover the extraordinary within the everyday-and honour children not only as learners but as thinkers, leaders, and fellow travellers on the human journey.* (Carol Flanagan)
5. *The goal isn't to raise a child who never gets upset.
It's to raise a child who learns what to do when they are.* (@thrive. family behaviour coaching)
6. *What if we accepted that movement is NOT misbehaviour, and that keeping children from moving is actually the cause of many challenging behaviours?* (Rae Pica)
7. *A child's behaviour has more to do with how they feel than it does with what they do*
(@The_Therapist_Parent)

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

www.SocialWorkersToolbox.com
If you want this as a free PDF, comment "CHILD" and we will message it to you.

WHAT A CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR IS REALLY TELLING YOU

Children behave in certain ways because something inside them needs attention. Their behaviour is a signal, not a choice.



WHEN A CHILD IS OVERWHELMED
The child is taking in more noise, emotion, or activity than their brain can manage. Their stress system switches on. Their body reacts before they can think. This can look like shouting, crying, running away, or refusing.

WHEN A CHILD IS IN PAIN OR FEELS UNWELL
The child cannot explain the pain or discomfort. Their behaviour becomes the way they show it. This may look like irritability, aggression, or refusing to take part.

WHEN A CHILD IS HUNGRY OR THIRSTY
The child has low energy. Their brain cannot stay steady. Small problems feel big. They may become tearful, angry, or restless.

WHEN A CHILD IS EXPERIENCING SENSORY OVERLOAD
The child's senses are taking in too much sound, light, touch, or movement. Their brain cannot filter it out. This leads to distress, covering ears, hiding, or having a meltdown.

WHEN A CHILD IS SEEKING SENSORY INPUT
The child needs movement, pressure, or touch to feel balanced. Their body feels unsettled. This can look like climbing, jumping, fidgeting, or rough play.

WHEN A CHILD IS TIRED
The child's brain is struggling to keep control. They cannot manage strong feelings. They react quickly and cannot think about consequences.

WHEN A CHILD DOES NOT FEEL SAFE
The child feels unsure, threatened, or unsupported. Their brain goes into protection mode. This can look like clinginess, anger, shutdown, or trying to escape the situation.

WHEN A CHILD DOES NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU WANT
The child feels confused or unsure about the task. They fear getting it wrong. This can look like refusal, avoidance, or acting silly.

WHEN A CHILD NEEDS CONNECTION
The child feels disconnected from their caregiver. They need reassurance that the adult is present and safe. Their behaviour becomes louder or more intense to get that closeness.

WHEN A CHILD IS UNDER STRESS
The child may be worrying about home, school, friends, or changes in routine. Their brain is busy with the worry. They have less capacity to cope with normal demands. This may show as anger, withdrawal, or shutting

WHAT TO DO

-  Look at the need, not just the behaviour.
-  Help the child settle through calm presence and simple words.
-  Meet the need when you can.
-  Teach skills only when the child is calm.

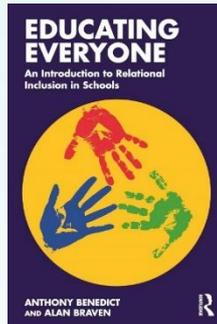
www.SocialWorkersToolbox.com



My recommended read this week is [Belonging is the Answer - What's Your Question?](#)

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:

You cannot control the waves, but you can learn to row.

Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

CEO Ambition Community Trust