

Relational Inclusion blog #44: On Riding a Bike

Last week my son finally learnt to ride his bike. And it's a funny thing. It made me feel prouder than maybe it should. Maybe it's because he's the last of my three children to learn. Maybe it's because he's probably the last child I'll ever teach to ride a bike.

I can't remember learning to ride a bike. What I can remember is the first time I rode one on my own. And now I don't know if that's a real memory or a pretend one. I remember it was a Raleigh Tomahawk and it was gold coloured. If you don't know your bikes, it was like a mini Chopper, and everyone knows a Chopper.

I have no idea how old I was, but I can remember my dad holding the back of my seat while I pedalled. And then suddenly something was different. For a bit I didn't notice and I'm still not quite sure what it was. Whether it was his voice in my ear or his hand on my saddle, or just the sense that the person who had been there suddenly wasn't.

So, I turned round to look at him, but he wasn't there. Or to be more precise, he was — just a lot smaller. He hadn't shrunk of course. I'd been riding unaided and just hadn't realised. He was way back down the street.

And then, I guess as happens to many, with the realisation he wasn't holding the bike anymore, I promptly wobbled then fell off.

In teaching my own children to ride bikes, that didn't happen. But something else did. Although it was different each time: they were slightly different ages, it was different seasons, and they have different temperaments, the same change appeared.

Something clicked. It wasn't about balance. It wasn't about confidence. They suddenly seemed bigger and stronger. The delicacy that had stopped them, often overnight, was simply gone.

Once you can ride a bike, you can always ride a bike. There's a moment that passes, where once you couldn't do it and now you can. And it happens in a blink.

Before the blink, it feels impossible. It seems that everyone around you can do it, but you can't, and you can't see how you ever will. And then, in a split second, suddenly you can. And the most bizarre thing is that once the moment has passed you can't remember how it felt not to be able to do it, or why something that is now simple, once wasn't.

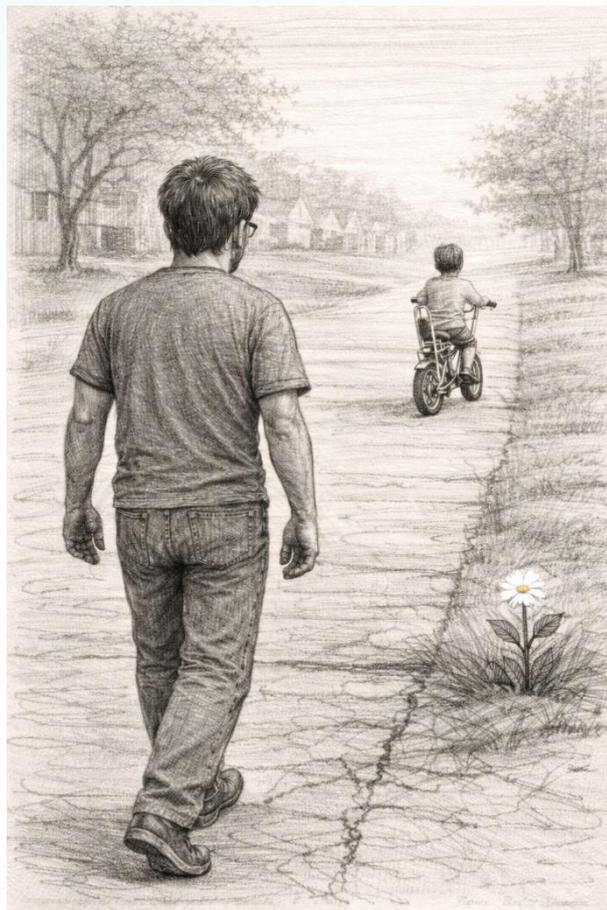
Everybody faces that moment differently. At least my three children did. My eldest shrieked a manic laugh and pedalled as fast as she could. My middle daughter set her face with grim determination but pedalled steadily and gracefully. My boy, with feet like Charlie Chaplin, was clearly delighted but had no urge to pedal fast or even particularly concentrate. I think his head was half full of Godzilla and his *atomic breath*.

And isn't this the bit we miss about how children learn? I'm not going to patronize you – we know learning doesn't happen in nice straight lines, but we do have a system which seems intent on measuring as if it does.

Riding a bike isn't just about riding a bike. It's the coming together of so many things that aren't to do with the thing you're doing but also completely are. And when it clicks, that's the magic.

It comes for everyone at different times, but at the right time for them, in the right space, when the right ingredients come together.

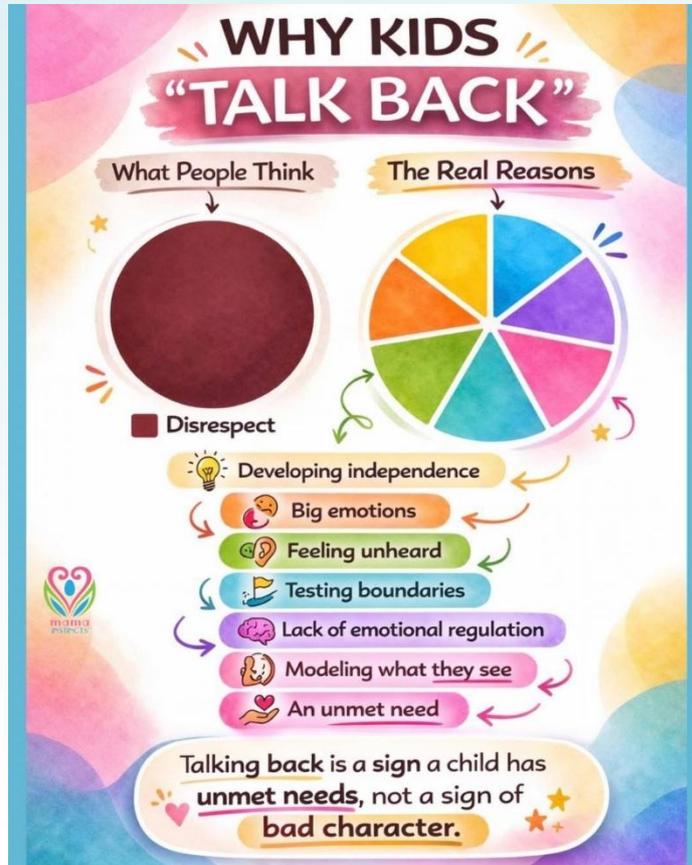
All we can really do is create the environment. When the environment is right and the conditions are right, everything else falls into place.



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

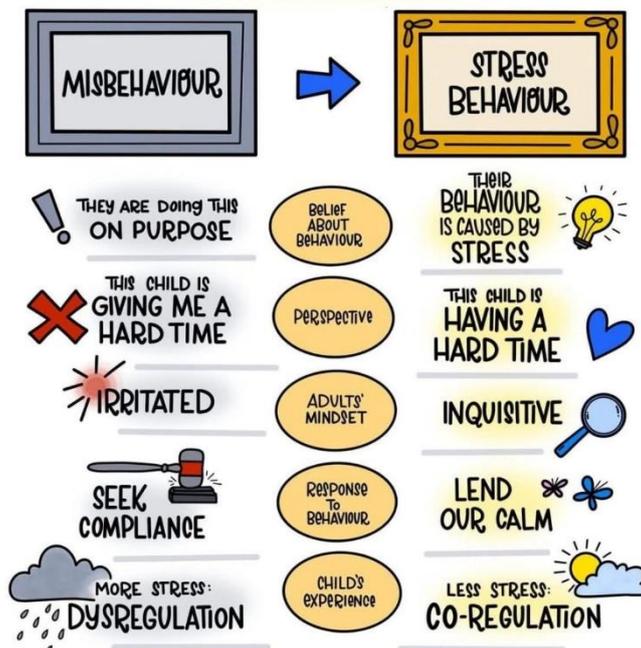
1. *Every child has a song inside. It's our job to turn up the volume.* (@musicwithnancy)
2. *Teach your children that saying, "I hear you... and I'm going to work on that." (and then actually making efforts to work on that...) is one of the most powerful demonstrations of love.* (@drelizabethfedrick)
3. *Everything changes when you realize that the best version of yourself is not a future version, but a daily choice.* (unknown)
4. *The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.* (unknown)
5. *Your voice is contagious. The LOUDER your voice is, the LOUDER children's voices will be. The LOWER your voice is, the LOWER children's voices will be.* (Maryln Appelbaum Marty Appelbaura)
6. *Students are asking us the question, "What do I do with this energy?" over and over again. Are we answering that question? When they tap their pencil, they are asking "what do I do with the energy in my hands?" When they move their feet, they are asking "what do I do with the energy in my feet?" When we say, "stop moving," we're not only not answering the question, we are teaching them to not pay attention to their bodies.* (JUDITH NORMAN)
7. *"When our children see us expressing our emotions, they can learn that their own feelings are natural and permissible, can be expressed, and can be talked about. That's an important thing for our children to learn"* (FRED ROGERS)

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



REFRAME THE BEHAVIOUR

"ONCE WE START REFRAMING, WE SEE EVERYTHING DIFFERENTLY..."
STUART SHANKER



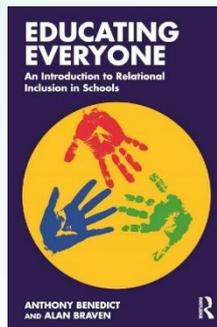
Learn more at Self-Reg.ca

@kristin.wiens

My recommended read this week is about parenting fads such as gentle parenting and tiger parenting, and why these are doomed to fail [Gentle parenting is doomed to fail | Maryanne Fisher » IAI TV](#)

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:

Sometimes the fastest way to get there is to go slow

Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

CEO Ambition Community Trust