



Relational Inclusion blog #48: On Making Sense

Many years ago, I read a short story called *A Table is a Table*. It's about an old man who lives on his own. He starts thinking about nouns and wonders what would happen if you mixed them all up.

So:

He called the bed picture
He called the table carpet

and so on.

In essence, I think it's about this: language and meaning work better when they are shared.

In schools, we spend a lot of time on language. On vocabulary. On what we used to call comprehension. But I'm beginning to think that even when children can "comprehend" the words, they understand them in very different ways.

My little boy made this very clear to me three times this week. And when things happen multiple times, it feels like maybe I'm meant to be noticing something.

After school, when I collected him, he told me very proudly that he had something in his bag for me. He kept it five-year-old cryptic. When we got home he handed me a card. It was Mother's Day at the weekend so I presumed it was for his mum and put it away with the other cards.

When he woke on Sunday, I gave him the card to give to his mum, but he was very put out and said it was for me. I was still half asleep and gave it to his mum anyway. Wrongly, as it turned out. When we opened the card, he had written:

'To dad, happ muvers day'

The following Monday was INSET day for my children. I'm not even sure we use that expression at home, but my wife phoned me at lunchtime and explained that my little boy had kept talking about 'cricket day'. I was a bit lost. For some reason I thought of the cricket set my daughter had got for Christmas and wondered if, because the sun was out, he randomly wanted to play cricket.

But no. What he had heard was '*INSECT*' day, which made much more sense to his five-year-old brain than 'inset', which meant nothing. He'd translated it again into crickets, presumably because they're what we feed the chameleon. I missed the opportunity to

explore with him what he thought should happen on cricket day. Maybe they would all be released for him to catch. Who knows.

He wasn't getting it *wrong*. He was making sense of something with the tools he had, in the best way that he could.

Finally, my son's obsession with the trampoline reappeared with the sun which has fortunately decided to show its face again. That's good news, it's great exercise and it tires him out for bedtime. It's also bad news because he always wants a grown-up to bounce with him. Unfortunately, I had a funny tummy so wasn't particularly looking forward to the prospect of bouncing.

I explained that, in my weakened state, it might cause an accident. This was exactly the wrong thing to say to a five-year-old whose eyes filled with glee. I don't want to think what he was imagining. So, I then explained I had a tummy bug.

You can see where this is going. His eyes lit up again.

"What happens to the bug when your tummy is better?" he asked. "How do you get it out?"

I started to explain before I caught on. Of course, he was imagining an actual *bug* of some sort. Maybe he's going to be an entomologist when he's older, there is definitely a creepy crawly theme going on here.

All of this left me wondering about the word soup we drip in front of our children.

And what about those children who live very different lives? Those carrying trauma. Those living with relational or financial poverty. Children who are neurodivergent or growing up around it. It left me thinking about just how much we presume. How much we take for granted. The more I think about it, the less sure I am that other adults really see things the same way, never mind the children.

Sometimes my little boy's teacher picks him up for daydreaming. He's only five, and a July baby. I read recently that children live very much in the present. The article suggested that maybe that's why the world seems so magical when we look back.

Magical. And very muddled.

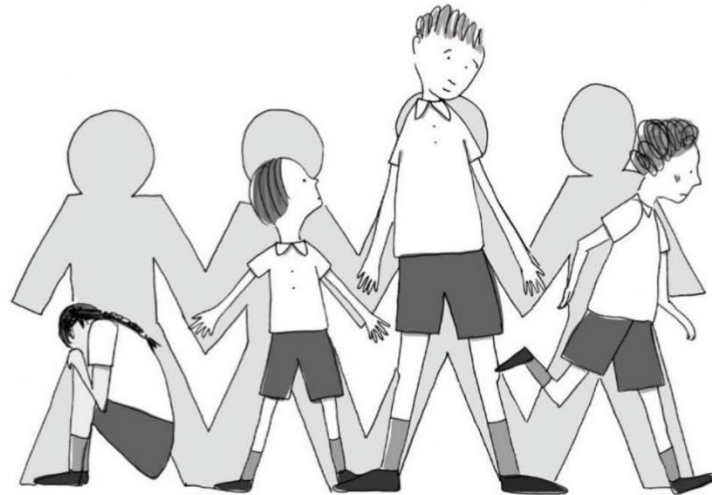
I'm not surprised he sometimes just stares into space.

My one a day quotes for this week are:

1. *If your peace depends on everything going right, that's not peace, that's control. Learning to be steady in uncertainty, that's real growth* (The Mind Spire)
2. *"You need to put on your own oxygen mask first" does not mean a parent has to choose between their own needs and their child's. What it does mean is a dysregulated parent is going to struggle to help regulate a dysregulated child so in order to help your child, your own regulation becomes vital as well...* (J. MILBURN)
3. *"Our kids won't ever know all of the storms we weathered...only that the roof never leaked."* (unknown)
4. *look to the ones who speak of solutions more than fears, the ones who amplify hope the loudest* (Lines, Here and There)
5. *All it takes is one parent who shows up with love, respect, understanding and support to change everything for a child.* (INSIDE PARENTING)
6. *Children who are taught to ignore their feelings grow into adults who struggle to find their inner compass.* (Eli Harwood)
7. *In life, tiny stresses can shake your peace more than big problems do. Pay attention to the little things - they decide how calm or chaotic your day becomes.* (UnknownLifeLesson)

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

One size will never fit all.

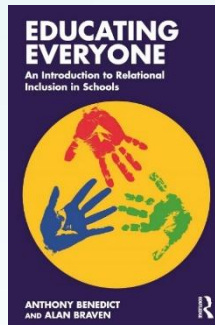


My recommended read this week is the newly released inclusive teaching framework:

[Inclusive Teaching Framework](#)

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 magic in your Childhood wasn't because you were a child, it was because you were living in the present. (unknown)

Thanks for reading

Anthony Benedict

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