



Relational Inclusion blog #51: Monkey Chatter

At bedtime my daughter and I often have the strangest conversations.

I used to think she was stalling so she could stay awake longer. I've since learnt that this isn't stalling. It's the brain relaxing and processing the day. I still have to manage this carefully, because her ideas can last for hours (and if I'm honest, I'm not totally convinced there isn't a tiny bit of stalling involved).

Tonight, we somehow ended up talking about Neanderthals, the size of their brains, and how we knew their brains were bigger than ape's.

To which my daughter replied, "Scientists often get things wrong."

I said, "That is the wonderful thing about science. Someone has an idea and it lasts until someone challenges it and shows a different way, and that's okay and a good thing."

She then asked, "But how do scientists get paid?"

At this point I did have to remind my daughter that it was late and time to sleep. Over the years we've managed to get to a place where she knows she can have three questions and then it's time to stop and settle.

I said, "We've reached the no-more-questions-it's-time-to-sleep rule."

As often she does, she said, "This is the last one."

I explained that they have an idea, and if it's an idea someone is interested enough in, they will pay for the person to research it.

To which she replied, "I have an idea for a science research."

She said quickly, "That wasn't a question. It was a statement," in response to the no-more-questions-it's-time-to-sleep rule.

I said, "That sounds interesting, you can tell me all about it in the morning."

But I was in a conundrum. Consistency matters — if I bend, the questions will go on all night. But I was genuinely intrigued, and something told me we might miss a golden moment if we stopped.

I asked what her idea was.

She said, "Really?"

I nodded, "Go on, you have to tell me." Knowing full well it might go anywhere.

She said, “You know how you can hear the sea in seashells? Well maybe you could take a shell that you can hear the sea in and put it away for maybe ten or twenty years. Will you still be able to hear the sea after all those years or will the sound get quieter as time goes on?”

I thought about explaining why it sounds like you can hear the sea.

I thought about her questioning whether Santa was real last Christmas and setting a trap which involved her wrist, her dressing gown belt and her stocking.

But most importantly, I thought of what I had just heard and the magic of childhood that she had just described. And I wanted to bottle it (and her) and keep it forever.

I said, “That is such an interesting idea, we can discuss it some more in the morning.”

And tonight, I don’t know which one of us will sleep more like a baby.

You know, I’ve often wondered why the ‘talk tap’ turns on just as I want my children to go to sleep. But there is science behind this, an important shift that happens as bedtime calls.

Children’s days are busy, sometimes chaotic, and often unpredictable.

As they settle in bed, the demands stop, the noise fades, and expectations soften. Their bodies and brains move out of *doing* mode, and when a child feels seen, heard, safe, and connected, the thoughts they’ve been carrying all day flood to the surface.

This isn’t because they’re trying to be difficult. They aren’t stalling to delay the inevitable, and they aren’t suddenly remembering more and better questions.

At this point in the evening, their nervous system finally has time to relax and breathe. All the questions, worries, memories, and ideas that were pushed down in the bustle of the day spill out.

It’s often called verbal decompression — the brain’s way of processing the day once the external pressure has been removed. It’s the moment when the world goes quiet enough for a child to hear their own uninterrupted thoughts again.

When the bedtime questions begin to flow, what we often see isn’t defiance or delay. It’s regulation. It’s a young nervous system saying, “I think I’m safe enough to be myself.”

My one a day quotes for this week are:










1. *Being hard on children does not make them stronger. People are strengthened through compassion and understanding, regardless of gender or age. (unknown)*
2. *If children are our future, then why do we spend more time correcting their behaviour than teaching the skills behind it? (unknown)*
3. *It starts with intention. Then a behaviour. Then a practice. Then a habit. Then it's second nature. Then it becomes your identity. (unknown)*
4. *Stop proving yourself, start understanding yourself. (unknown)*
5. *Nothing truly belongs to you - not people, things, or thoughts. (unknown)*
6. *If we learn how to listen, our children's nervous system won't feel it needs to scream to be heard. (unknown)*
7. *Behaviour changes when safety increases. (unknown)*

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

UNMET CHILDREN'S NEEDS CHECKLIST

www.SocialWorkersToolbox.com

When a child is struggling, ask: what might they need right now?

<p>1 SAFETY</p> <p>Do they feel physically safe? Do they feel emotionally safe with me? Has something changed or feel unpredictable?</p> <p><i>You might see:</i> Clinginess – fear of avoiding situations – hypervigilance</p> 	<p>2 CONNECTION</p> <p>Do they feel noticed and important? Have we had positive time together today? Are they looking for attention, but not asking directly?</p> <p><i>You might see:</i> Attention-seeking behaviour – interrupting – testing limits</p> 
<p>3 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT</p> <p>Do they feel understood? Do they have words for how they feel? Have their feelings been dismissed or ignored?</p> <p><i>You might see:</i> Big reactions – shutting down – frustration – tears</p> 	<p>4 PREDICTABILITY AND ROUTINE</p> <p>Do they know what is happening next? Have there been sudden changes? Are expectations clear?</p> <p><i>You might see:</i> Anxiety – resistance – difficulty with transitions</p> 
<p>5 AUTONOMY AND CONTROL</p> <p>Have they had any choices today? Do they feel overly controlled? Are they trying to have a say?</p> <p><i>You might see:</i> Saying "no" – power struggles – refusal</p> 	<p>6 SENSORY NEEDS</p> <p>Are they overwhelmed by noise, light, or touch? Do they need movement or quiet? Are they overstimulated or understimulated?</p> <p><i>You might see:</i> Restlessness – irritability – covering ears – withdrawal</p> 
<p>7 REST AND PHYSICAL NEEDS</p> <p>Are they tired? Hungry or thirsty? Unwell or uncomfortable?</p> <p><i>You might see:</i> Irritability – low tolerance – sudden emotional outbursts</p> 	<p>8 ACHIEVEMENT AND COMPETENCE</p> <p>Is the task too hard or too easy? Do they feel capable? Are they worried about failing?</p> <p><i>You might see:</i> Avoidance – giving up – frustration – low confidence</p> 
<p style="text-align: center;">KEY MESSAGE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Behaviour is communication. Look for the need, not just the behaviour.</p> 	
<p style="text-align: center;">WHAT HELPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm and curious • Name what you notice • Offer support before correction • Keep responses predictable • Build connection first 	

Safety, Connection and Problem-Solving



Survival State

BRAIN STEM

The Survival State represents the primal brain and asks the question, "Am I safe?" The only way to soothe the Survival State is through the creation of *Safety*.

[Learn More →](#)



Emotional State

LIMBIC SYSTEM

This Brain State represents mid-level functionality and asks the question, "Am I loved?" The only way to soothe an upset emotional state is through *Connection*.

[Learn More →](#)



Executive State

PREFRONTAL LOBES

The Executive State represents the optimal state for problem-solving and learning. This Brain State asks the question, "What can I learn from this?"

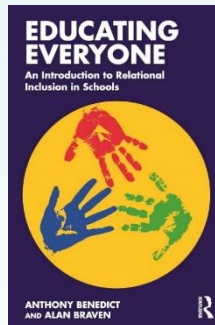
[Learn More →](#)

<https://consciousdiscipline.com/methodology/brain-state-model/>

My recommended read this week is: [Conversing helps language development more than reading alone | UCLA Health](#)

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:

Practice noticing small miracles. You'll realise that most miracles you encounter are tiny and that they are simply everywhere. (unknown life lessons)

Thanks for reading
Anthony Benedict

CEO Ambition Community Trust