



## Relational Inclusion blog #55: Best Intentions

My children's school lets the kids walk on their own (with parental permission) once they reach Year 5. The prospect of this has been beyond exciting for daughter number one. She is on the cusp of the next part of her life (I have mentioned this before) and the possibility of walking to and from school with her friends (and definitely not her grown-ups) seems to have opened an exciting window of possibility for her.

To be honest this beats me. I would have taken a lift to school over walking any day of my young life. And I shouldn't complain really. We try to encourage our kids to be outside, to be healthy, to walk and not be in cars (again I have to admit this is more my wife than me), to think of the planet.

We decided (along with every other parent in the world) that the best time for this would be spring, when the days are longer and lighter. As the winter lifted, we let her do a few practice runs with her sister (which involved me driving ahead, waiting discreetly, and making sure I could see they crossed roads sensibly) and then to her delight, a few weeks ago, she was finally allowed to go it alone with a small group of friends.

And it went pretty well. Until my wife got a message on one of the millions of WhatsApp groups that seem compulsory for parents to join. As far as I know, it wasn't a hoax. The main body read as follows:

### *The Incident*

*Yesterday morning, a group of primary-age children were approached by an adult female. The individual's behaviour was concerning; she claimed to have lost a small boy and asked the children to assist her in the search. She reportedly instructed the children to separate from one another, look down different side roads, and search through bushes. The children involved acted correctly by remaining hesitant when the woman could not provide the boy's name or school. They did not follow her instructions and remained safe.*

As is often the way, I got the message whilst I was in the middle of one of the rare occasions where I was enjoying the tiny bit of social life you must steal whilst you have a young family. It came out of context, and I didn't pay it too much attention. Until, of course, I got home.

My wife is a little more cautious than me (some may say less cautious and more sensible) and had decided this was one of those times for a family chat. A check-in. Making sure our kids were up to speed with what we used to call 'stranger danger'.

The children listened carefully, answered in that well-rehearsed way that primary children do (with an inherent and innocent belief that will be shattered when they are teenagers) and that seemed to be that.

Until, of course, bedtime. It's always bedtime.

And eventually what we found underneath the behaviour was that daughter number one no longer wanted to walk to school. And with a little more prompting and a little less parent stupidity, it was of course because she no longer felt safe.

And now I don't know whether we did more harm than good. Was there a different way we could have said the same thing that might have stopped a transfer of anxiety? Possibly.

What stayed with me was the speed with which something so light became so heavy. A day earlier her world had begun to widen. The thrill of independence. Not needing us at the school gate. It felt like growth in its simplest form. Our daughter stretching toward the next version of herself.

And yet childhood is a delicate thing. It expands quickly, but it bruises easily. Windows open and close faster than we expect. We talk about keeping them safe. We rehearse it. We check roads. We drive ahead and wait discreetly. We have family chats at kitchen tables. All of it done with good intention. All of it done out of love.

But love is not without its shackles.

Children, and the decisions we make around them and for them, are fragile. As parents we dance this dance. On one hand we want to wrap them up and protect them from the world; with the other we have to prepare them to live in it. To walk in it. To make responsible choices.

Somewhere between protecting and preparing, between warning and freeing, there is a balance to be found. Too little and we feel reckless. Too much and we risk shrinking something that had just begun to grow.

Just like in our classrooms, we set the climate in our homes. Our children feel our warmth. But they also sense our anxiety, our tension, the subtle shift in the air. We cannot wrap everything up. We cannot remove every story, every possibility, every shadow from their path. And we cannot keep hold of them forever.

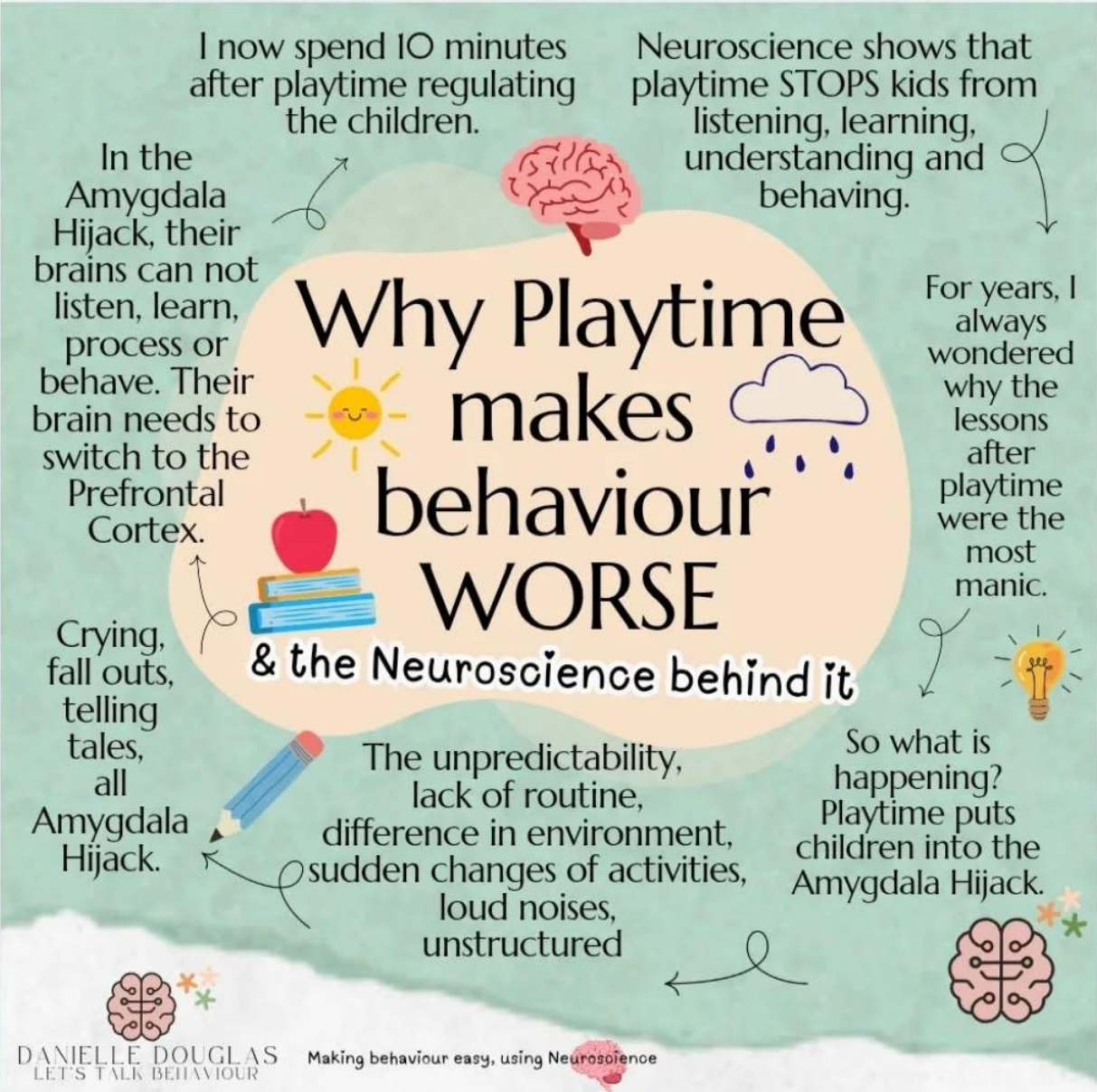
So we stand there, in spring light, trying to work out how much to hold on and how much to let go. Hoping we've got the balance about right, and the skill to repair when we get it wrong.



My one a day quotes for this week are:

1. *The oar moves the water backward to propel the boat forward.*
2. *Circumstances don't make the man, they only reveal him to himself*
3. *The shell sings to the ear long after the ocean is gone.*
4. *The same boiling water that softens the potato hardens the egg.*
5. *Mirrors show us as we are; windows show us as we could be.*
6. *Understand the message, don't punish the messenger. Behaviour is communication*
7. *We learn decision making skills through actually making decisions ourselves, not by having decisions made for us. Often we learn more from our "wrong" decisions than we do our "right" ones. (J. Milburn)*

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



I now spend 10 minutes after playtime regulating the children.

Neuroscience shows that playtime STOPS kids from listening, learning, understanding and behaving.

In the Amygdala Hijack, their brains can not listen, learn, process or behave. Their brain needs to switch to the Prefrontal Cortex.

For years, I always wondered why the lessons after playtime were the most manic.

**Why Playtime makes behaviour WORSE & the Neuroscience behind it**

Crying, fall outs, telling tales, all Amygdala Hijack.

The unpredictability, lack of routine, difference in environment, sudden changes of activities, loud noises, unstructured

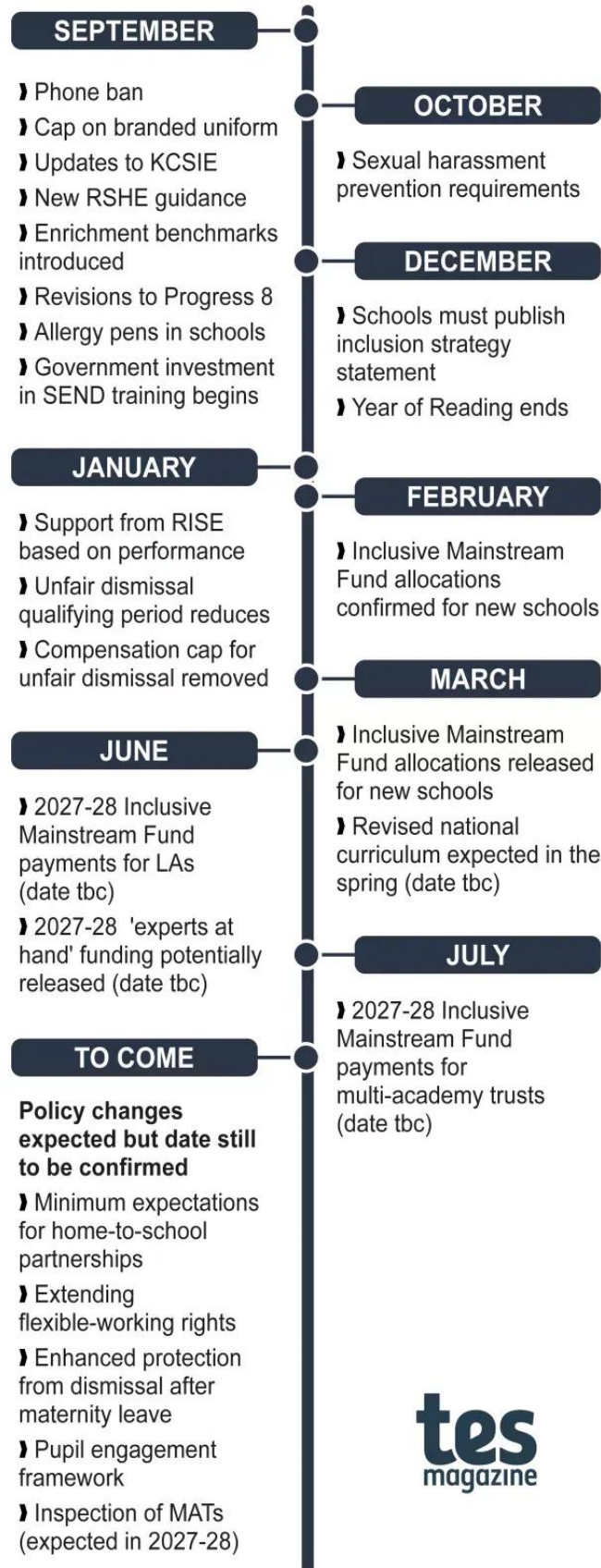
So what is happening? Playtime puts children into the Amygdala Hijack.

**DANIELLE DOUGLAS**  
LET'S TALK BEHAVIOUR

Making behaviour easy, using Neuroscience



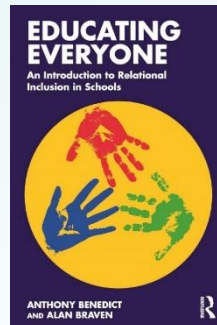
## Key changes to expect in 2026-27



My recommended read this week is about [Why mindfulness doesn't work for some people – and what to try instead | BBC Science Focus Magazine](#)

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:

*Two things to remember in life: take care of your thoughts when you are alone and take care of your words when you are with people. (inspiringandpositivequotes.com)*

Thanks for reading  
Anthony Benedict

CEO Ambition Community Trust