



Relational Inclusion blog #58: The Wrong Trouser Leg

When I was little, I didn't really want to go to school. From what I can remember, it wasn't that there was anything particularly wrong with school. It was just that I wanted to stay at home and play. I had a good imagination and wanted to stay lost in the worlds and adventures I created for my Star Wars figures or Lego.

That might have been about how boys develop and when they are ready to learn. It might just have been that playing was fun and learning wasn't.

Now I have my own children, and they don't want to go to school. For my eldest, this is more about friendship groups. For my other two, they just don't seem to like school.

I did get a possible insight into some of my son's reasoning this week. For a five-year-old, I think he has a pretty good emotional radar. Take a typical morning. I've three kids to get ready for school and usually daughter number one is the most distracted. I like to think I've adapted my routine and tempered my response, but every now and then (and probably more often than I'd like to admit) I suddenly feel my son wrap his arms around me and give me a cuddle.

Just to be clear, he's not one for cuddles or kisses as such. When I feel that cuddle, it usually means I'm getting something wrong. I'm being snappy or grumpy, usually when one of the children has gone off-piste. It's his way of letting me know and, I think, showing me warmth to calm my nervous system. It's a silent but very purposeful act.

This week he announced to my wife that he thought his school had set him on the wrong path. I was more than intrigued.

I wasn't even aware he had any concept of being on a path, never mind the wrong one.

I'll have to translate the rest of the conversation. I'm not fully fluent in five-year-old, but I'm getting there, and unless you have one of your own, it can get a bit confusing. There is an irony there which isn't lost.

He thinks he has been put in the wrong class. His teacher shouts a lot. A cringe moment, given how much time I spent shouting as a teacher. He seems uncertain whether the shouting is directed at him, the class, someone else, or all the above.

He then said something about how big people can shout at small people, but small people

aren't allowed to shout back. That sounds very much like something I would have said, though I'm not convinced I've ever said it in front of him.

It reminded me of the infamous Miss Trunchbull line from Matilda:

"I'm big, you're little. I'm right, you're wrong. And there's nothing you can do about it."

This is compounded by the fact that his teacher last year didn't shout. He seems to have drawn one of two conclusions. Either the school has made a mistake and given him the wrong teacher, or he has been placed in this class having done something wrong and is being constantly punished for it.

This made me think about something I've read about trauma and children. Children who are harmed don't experience themselves as victims. They make sense of their world the only way they can. They assume the problem must be them. That somehow they are the cause of the anger, the aggression, the violence.

If the people who are meant to keep you safe are the ones hurting you, the only conclusion that makes sense is that there must be something wrong with you. From there, it follows that if you could just change something about yourself, it might stop.

But with my son, something about this is different. He hasn't tried to change or blame himself to make sense of it. He's worked out there's a glitch in the matrix. He just can't understand how or why he's got caught up in it.

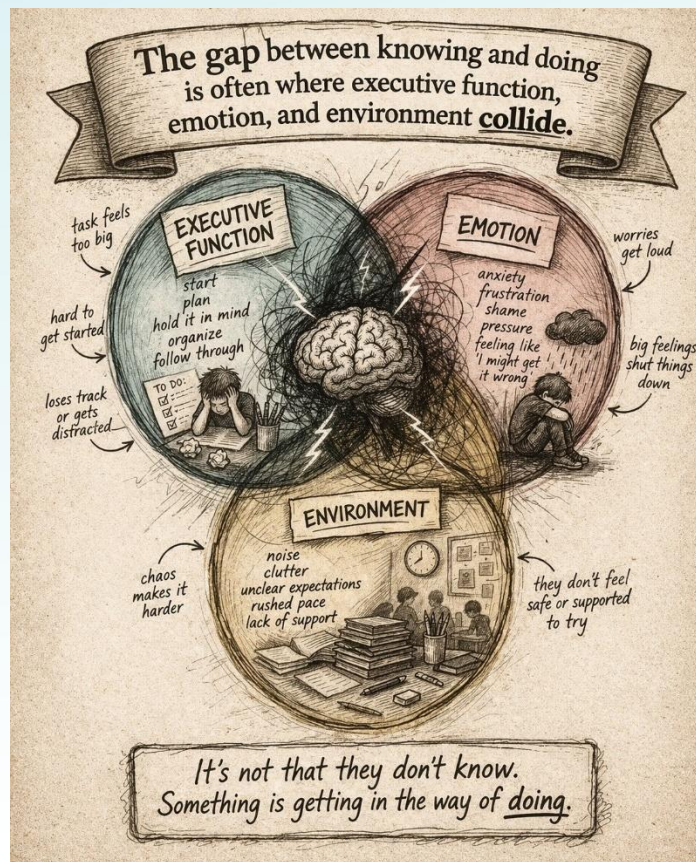
We've got better at asking what's happened to them. But we haven't quite got that right either. If a child experiences their day as something to get through rather than something to belong in, they must make sense of it the best way they can. And as long as we continue to create and sustain systems that leave children trying to make sense of something that doesn't feel right, it's not them who are getting it wrong.

It's us.

My one a day quotes for this week are:

1. *Everything will make sense someday. So for now, laugh at your mistakes, smile through the tears, and keep reminding yourself that everything really does happen for a reason. (unknown)*
2. *When your child is upset: Hold your child, hold your tongue, and hold space for their big emotions. (@untigering)*
3. *Some adults ask, "How will kids learn if there aren't consequences for their actions?" What's interesting is that by "consequences," most people mean "punishments". Kids don't need to learn from punishments any more than adults do. If I burn dinner or lose my car keys, I don't need someone to punish me on top of that. The experience is the teacher. Why do we feel we must add to this?" (Sarah R. Moore)*
4. *A student can know they're safe.... and still feel unsafe in their body. That's the nervous system, not defiance. (Regulated classroom)*
5. *"A four-year-old will be a four-year-old only once. Concentrate on meeting his present needs. Don't foist future academics on him. If he's allowed to truly play now - spontaneous play with room for running, leaping, ka-powing, crying, dancing, painting, spilling and creative problem-solving, then he will be ready for academics later." (Heather Shumaker Author & National Speaker)*
6. *There are so many things you cannot control but you can control the words you choose to say and the way you treat other people. (unknown)*
7. *If you could erase all the mistakes of your past, you would also erase the wisdom of your present. Remember the lesson, not the disappointment. (unknown)*

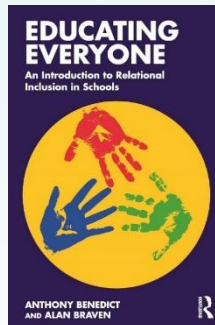
My two print and stick to the wall images this week are:



My recommended read this week is about the difference between tantrums and meltdowns: [The difference between tantrums and meltdowns](#)

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 more regulated I am, the less challenging my child's behaviour seems to be.
(Lori petro)

Thanks for reading
Anthony Benedict

CEO Ambition Community Trust