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Growing Great Schools Workbooks

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN EDUCATION



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NOT ROCKET SCIENCE...



- Seems obvious
- Common sense
- Not always happening
- But growing evidence base
- Perhaps more complex after all?
- Certainly challenging

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TODAY'S LECTURE WILL COVER

- Healthy relationships at the heart of wellbeing
- Defining what this means
- Summarising why so many are unhealthy?
- Relationships in school
- Double whammy kids and epigenetics
- How to establish the positive with students
- The magic of the micro-moments
- Social and emotional learning
- The ASPIRE principles

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WHY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

- Longitudinal research says that the quality of our relationships is more important than anything else for our wellbeing
- see Waldinger's Ted Talk on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KkKuTCFvzl>
- Strong committed relationships where you can rely on another person are not only good for our emotional health and resilience but also physical health and longevity.
- We also know that teacher-student relationships are strongly linked to effective educational outcomes
- see John Hattie's meta-analysis entitled "Visible Learning".

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NOT AN EXTRA...

- Relationships and emotions exist all day every day in schools, families, communities
- There is a symbiotic interaction between how people feel about themselves and the world they are in and the quality of the relationships they experience
- Without both awareness and action negativity can be the default mode
- It makes sense to promote the positive

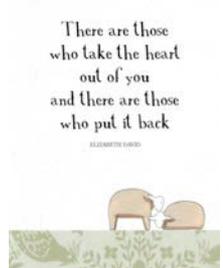
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RELATIONSHIPS AT THE HEART OF HAPPINESS

- Think about the best relationship you have ever had
- What made it so good?
- What did it make you feel?
- Discuss the qualities of that relationship with a partner



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HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS...

- ...are respectful – people listen to each other and don't pre-judge, including where there is conflict
- ...are warm and friendly - welcoming, smiling
- ...show interest – that you matter
- ...are equal – one person does not dominate or tries to control
- ...use strengths-based, positive communication – comments more on the good, than deficits
- ...are kind and supportive – people do things for each other
- ...are inclusive – does not show power by keeping others out
- ...are trustworthy and reliable – people do what they say they will do
- ...have generosity of spirit – go out of their way to be caring and considerate without looking for reward.
- ...are enjoyable – laughing together builds resilience and a positive history and expectations

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SO WHY ARE SO MANY RELATIONSHIPS DYSFUNCTIONAL?

Do you know someone who...

- is being bullied
- has experienced racism
- has been the victim of abuse
- has experienced an adversarial relationship breakdown
- was neglected as a child
- works in a toxic environment
- lives with on-going conflict
- Do you know someone who...
- has a sense of entitlement – thinks they are superior to others
- regularly puts others down
- Is homophobic
- never listens
- Is judgmental
- makes jokes at the expense of others
- Is self-absorbed

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WHAT IS GOING ON?

Savage Chickens by Doug Savage



- Individualism and materialism
- Competition rather than cooperation
- Leads to greed, envy and jealousy
- Self-serving relationships
- Reduced empathy, weaker ethics
- Exclusive belonging leading to racism, sexism, homophobia, loneliness
- Increasing inequality
- A downward spiral leading to lower overall wellbeing for all
- Low expectations about treating others well

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RELATIONSHIPS IN SCHOOL

- Teacher – student
- Teacher – whole class
- Teacher – teacher
- Leadership – staff
- Student – student
- School – home
- Teaching staff – other staff
- Social capital – the quality of relationships across the whole institution – levels of trust, collaboration and support.

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SOME RECENT FACTS AND FIGURES

- 2017 1 in 8 children have a diagnosed mental health difficulty –
- In 2017-18, there were 198,090 investigations into possible harm to children, up 56% since 2012-13
- In 2018 4.5 million children were living in poverty in the UK (Social Metrics Commission)
- The UK has one of the highest rates of family instability in the developed world, in particular among cohabiting couples with children under twelve (DeRose et al, 2017).
- About 1 in 5 children are exposed to domestic abuse
- Figures from ONS suggest 244,000 people under 19 are carers - about 23,000 are under nine.

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PUNISHED, DISCONNECTED FROM A SYSTEM THAT CAN'T COPE



- Fixed period exclusions increased in England from 4.29 per cent of pupil enrolments in 2015/16 to 4.76 per cent in 2016/17. Now to be called suspensions
- The number of permanent exclusions has also increased, from 339,360 to 381,865.
- The highest numbers are those with special educational needs.

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SCHOOL MIGHT BE THE ONLY PLACE...

- where a young person might feel wanted, valued, acknowledged.
- where someone is pleased to see them
- they get a smile
- that is stable and predictable
- where they get opportunities to succeed
- they matter
- they have a voice and someone listens
- someone believes in the best of them
- they feel they belong
-

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ONE GIRL'S STORY

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NO CHILD IS BORN BAD



- Babies are born with different sensitivities, innate strengths and challenges but none are born bad.
- We all have different genetic predispositions

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GENES AND THEIR EXPRESSION

- Epigenetics is the impact of environment on genetic expression
- It is far greater than we ever imagined.
- Not only rats but human beings
- The most important factor in the environment is the quality of relationships the child experiences. Everywhere.



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EVERYDAY MAGIC CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

- Ordinary magic needs ordinary magicians : The power and practice of positive relationships for youth resilience and wellbeing

Published in Kognition&Paedagogik (2017) No. 103.

- You can download the English version from www.growinggreatschoolsworldwide.com/publications or www.sueroffey.com



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WORDS MATTER



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WORDS DETERMINE HOW WE SEE OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER

- What we say TO people helps create their self-concept – how they think about themselves and who they are.
- We need to be using strengths based language
- Using deficit labels gives children nothing to live up to
- What we say ABOUT others influences how they are perceived
- What we choose to say can change both expectations and the emotional climate



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THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

- is not necessarily about doing more... It is about doing differently
- It is a way of thinking and a way of being
- Relationships can be high quality if people have the knowledge of what works and the skills to put this into practice - but they also need the belief that this matters and the commitment to take action

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MICRO-MOMENTS CAN TRANSFORM INDIVIDUALS AND CULTURE

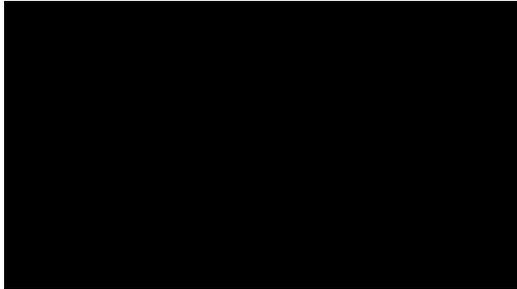


- Going WALKIES
- Welcoming
- Acknowledging
- Listening
- Kindness
- Inclusion, Interest
- Enthusiasm
- Smiling and Silences

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EVERY OPPORTUNITY



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ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

- **With individuals**
 - Make them feel welcome
 - Find something about them to like and let them know
 - Use strengths based language
 - Find something about them outside school and have brief conversations with them about this
 - Even better find something you share
 - When you need to refer to their behaviour use I statements and make sure they know it is the behaviour that is unwelcome, not them
- **With the whole class**
 - Model respect at all times
 - Reduce competitiveness and increase cooperative working
 - Talk about mistakes as an important part of learning
 - Build a positive growth mindset
 - Make mistakes yourself
 - Be light-hearted and have fun!
 - Be in charge of your class but do not try and control students
 - Social and emotional learning

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AT SCHOOL
WHAT ARE OUR CHILDREN LEARNING?

- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to be
- Learning to live together
- Delors Report for UNESCO 1996
- OECD Learning Compass 2030

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KNOWLEDGE OR WISDOM



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SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- **Learning how to be: care for self**
 - Self awareness
 - Self respect
 - Emotional understanding
 - Emotional regulation
 - Strengths identification
 - Confidence
 - Goal-setting
 - Leadership
 - Communication skills
- **Learning to live together: care for others**
 - Challenging belief
 - Shared humanity: commonalities
 - Situational awareness and empathy
 - Conversation skills
 - Conflict management
 - Ethics and integrity
 - Human rights / responsibility
 - Care for the planet

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CONCERNS RE SEL IMPLEMENTATION

- Concern that talking about social and emotional issues in schools is not safe for teachers nor students
- Risks personal disclosure
- Teachers not comfortable
- Can make things worse rather than better for vulnerable young people

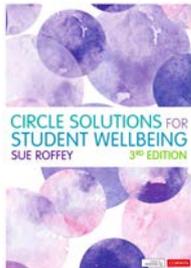
The dangerous rise of therapeutic education

Kathryn Ecclestone and Dennis Hayes.

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- Published March 2020
- Includes the ASPIRE pedagogical framework for implementation
- Over 175 activities plus many more on line to download.
- A facilitation checklist
- A planning guide for Circle sessions
- 12 dimensions of SEL
- An assessment schedule

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SO HOW DO YOU BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL?

- **A**GENCY:
- **S**AFETY
- **P**OSITIVITY
- **I**NCLUSION
- **R**ESPECT
- **E**QUALITY
- Not stand alone but interactive

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BE IN CHARGE – NOT IN CONTROL...



- Empower students
- Give choices
- Give chances
- Put responsibility back where it belongs

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SAFETY

- Physical, Psychological, Emotional
- Being accepted for who you are
- Being able to take risks and make mistakes
- Being able to trust others to do as they say
- Not being singled out
- Feeling someone has your back

A child who has been rejected or hurt will often not feel safe. They may see threat everywhere and their amygdala quickly go into fight, flight or freeze mode. It will take time for them to believe that that they are safe in school. Circle solutions discuss issues, never incidents, uses the third not first person, avoids individual competition and gives the option to 'pass'.

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POSITIVITY

- Being strengths and solutions focused.
- Promoting positive feelings, being valued, included, respected.
- Addressing issues from a solution focused approach, not a problem-based one. What do we want rather than what we want to get rid of. Friendship, inclusion and upstanding than than bullying.
- Identification of strengths for self and others.
- Having fun together and encouraging playfulness and laughter – raise oxytocin levels
-

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INCLUSION

- Feeling you belong, you are accepted and you matter is one of the strongest factors for wellbeing
- Resilience research
- Behaviour research
- Prevention of violence research



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EXCLUSIVE BELONGING



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EXCLUSIVE BELONGING

- **EXCLUSIVE**
- bonding social capital (Superglue – David Puttnam)
- Only those like me
- May be intolerant of difference
- Can promote racism, homophobia, extremism etc
- An 'I-it' orientation

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INCLUSIVE BELONGING

- **INCLUSIVE**
- Bridging social capital (WD40 David Puttnam)
- Open to all
- Accepting of difference
- Promotes equality
- An 'I-you' orientation
- Shared humanity

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RESPECT

- Respect for individuals and respect for culture
- To have regard for someone's rights, feelings and wishes
- Not making quick judgments and finding commonality
- Encapsulated in the Golden Rule: treating others as you would wish to be treated. This is in all major religions in the world
- Self-respect comes from personal integrity – behaving with consistent values.
- Not putting others down

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EQUALITY
ILLUSTRATION ©ELIZABETH STANLEY



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EQUITY
(ILLUSTRATION ©ELIZABETH STANLEY)



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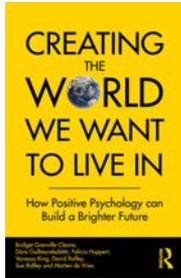
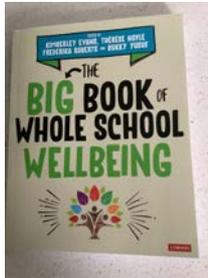

EQUITY IN ACTION

- Being flexible for those that need extra or different
- What are your policies and practices around gender, race, sexuality, mental health?
- What are the subtle messages conveyed by what is said or not said, illustrated or not illustrated.
- Who makes decisions, whose voices are represented, whose faces appear?
- Who are the 'disappeared'?
- Who are given accolades, positions, statuses?

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MORE TO READ!

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QUESTIONS

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RELATIONSHIPS ARE ABOUT A CONTINUUM OF FEELINGS

- Feeling valued or taken for granted
- Feeling heard or ignored
- Feeling in control or feeling helpless
- Feeling confident or intimidated
- Feeling comfortable or anxious
- Feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness or feeling marginalised / excluded
- Feeling positive or feeling miserable

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POSITIVE EMOTIONS BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL

- A feeling of being valued enhances cooperation
- A feeling of being cared for enhances understanding and compassion
- A feeling of being respected promotes respect for others and willingness to listen to them
- A feeling of being included enhances commitment and motivation
- A feeling of fun relieves stress and fosters belonging
- A feeling of belonging enhances resilience
- Feeling good improves creative problem-solving abilities

All of this promotes well being and caring communities

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MORE INFORMATION

- www.creatingtheworldwewanttolivein.org
- This site contains references that provide the scientific evidence for the book and resources that take these ideas further
- www.growinggreatschoolsworldwide.com - information, research, good practice and links with others who seek an education to meet the needs of the whole child and every child.
- This includes links to books and journal publications including Circle Solutions for Social Emotional Learning and ASPIRE.
- Contact sue@sueroffey.com
- Twitter @sueroffey

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