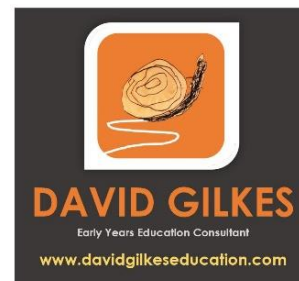


## THE RIGHT TO GO SLOW

ECA TAS BRANCH/B4 EARLY YEARS COALITION FORUM – 28<sup>th</sup> Aug 2021

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Sometimes we can feel overwhelmingly busy, and it can be very easy to get caught up in this narrative of needing to 'get things done', 'tick things off' or 'rush onto the next thing'. But what would happen to us all – to the families, to the children and to the adults who work alongside them – if we embraced an attitude of 'slow'? What opportunities exist for us to be more truly present – to be able to listen to and respond in more connected and authentic ways? What possibilities arise if we are better able to appreciate the richness that lies within everyday moments and interactions, in children's ideas and in wonderings, in our shared work as a community of learners who are more able to lean into that space of 'being'?

We all have the right to put the brakes on – to **breathe** - to inhale and exhale – to find the balance – to prioritise doing things *with* and *alongside* children and families, rather than *to* them...

#### **I invite you to take time to breathe – to inhale, exhale and find the slow...**

- ...in relationships (authenticity, connection, time)
- ...in order to remain curious, inquisitive, reflective and joyful
- ...in how we listen and plan/design learning
- ...in everyday moments, in routines - leaning into flow and rhythms
- ...in order to welcome beauty
- ...in our interactions with families and colleagues
- ...in order to advocate

#### **Exhale and find the slow...**in relationships

Building relationships takes time. We need to slow down to ensure that we are providing the time needed for genuine, authentic connections to be made – not only between us and the group, and each child within that group, but also between the children and the relationships that grow between us and families and colleagues. We cannot do this quickly. We need to ensure that everyone feels welcome, respected and that a sense of belonging. This is so vital for wellbeing.

*What opportunities exist for you?*

#### **Exhale and find the slow...** in order to remain curious, inquisitive, reflective and joyful

We know that in order to ensure the children we work alongside remain curious, inquisitive, reflective and joyful, we need to model and live these attitudes and dispositions ourselves – and we can't do that if we're moving too fast. Part of our role as a teacher is to have an attitude of wanting to know more – to get closer and be more sensitive to the children's ways of working and being. Curiosity, inquisitiveness and joy lead to discoveries, to creativity, to innovation. All these things require time- time for testing things out, time for revisiting, time for failing and trying again, time for our thinking to be shaped by others, time to express our thoughts and ideas in many different ways. We need to give ourselves permission to slow down – that way can we put ourselves in a place of really understanding the children and families we work alongside and understand why we do what we do.

*What opportunities exist for you?*

#### **Exhale and find the slow...** in how we listen and plan/design learning

When we truly listen to children we can respond to their interests and their wonderings. We can gather documentation and think about how this information can be used to design possible experiences or questions or ways forward that are more authentic, meaningful and connected. It becomes a co-constructed process – rather than just a series of activities that an educator has planned in advance. It becomes a process of learning alongside,

something done *with* children rather than something done *to* children. Once again this takes time – we can easily get caught up in the busyness or the idea that we need to cover a whole lot of things. We can't truly listen to children if we are moving too fast! Moving too quickly means that we are less present – we are less able to be in empathy with, or indeed open our hearts to, the children's thinking and theories. If we move too fast, we don't afford the time for the children (and the adults) to make connections – to see the relationships that might exist between ideas, materials and each other. And that's part of our role. The danger can be getting lost or caught up in 'busyness'...or ending up with a series of one-off, decontextualized and shallow activities – tasks that might be 'done' rather than pieces or moments of ongoing research or opportunities for going deeper and building on understandings.

*What opportunities exist for you?*

**Exhale and find the slow...** in everyday moments, in routines

How do we juggle slow with routines and requirements that exist in our context? If we slow down, we are more able to recognise and lean into natural flows and rhythms – we're more able to see the potential richness that exists in the everyday moments, conversations and interactions. If we slow down and lean into natural flows and rhythms, particularly those shaped by the children, we are better able to be more responsive to what it is that children might need from us at given times throughout the day. This really comes back to listening but also having and making *choices* as an educator.

*What opportunities exist for you?*

**Exhale and find the slow...** in order to welcome beauty

Surrounding ourselves with beauty is important – it is important for our wellbeing, it is important for children to have signs of care and tenderness, it is important for learning, for making connections. Beauty is very subjective. What is beautiful for one person is not necessarily beautiful for the next. But one thing is certain – beauty speaks to us. We can tell when it is absent, we can tell when it has been neglected, but likewise, and particularly in our early years and education settings, we can also tell when it has been given the deep consideration, time and the attention it deserves. This requires us to slow down. I invite you to consider how you have set up your spaces in order to welcome beauty – Have you approached indoor and outdoor spaces and materials with the love and tenderness they deserve? What messages are they intentionally or unintentionally giving about what is valued, how the space can be used, joy, cosiness, familiarity or excitement and possibilities...invitations to wonder and linger, to pause and reflect, to be by yourself or with others.

*What opportunities exist for you?*

**Exhale and find the slow...** in our interactions with families and colleagues

Families are placing an enormous amount of trust in us when they leave their children with us each day. Families, like children, need us to slow down and make the time for connections and building relationships with us. They are their child's first teacher and, as such, we need to prioritise the time to listen and learn from them - once again, to place ourselves alongside and not be seen as the keeper of the early childhood expertise. Our colleagues can be wonderful support people, helping us to exhale and find the slow. Find your tribe and look after your own and each other's wellbeing.

*What opportunities exist for you?*

**Exhale and find the slow...** in order to advocate

EVERYTHING WE SAY AND EVERYTHING WE DO MATTERS

## REFERENCES:

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