

Relationships

These past couple of months we have lived through an extraordinary slice of history. We asked some of our leaders and readers in early childhood to share their reflections on this moment in time and the value and importance of human relationships.

Bobbi-Jo Burkitt



I turned the key in the door with a knot in my heart and bid my home away from home a whispered farewell.

Just like that, my life as I had come to know it and love it seemed to be on a momentary pause. A centre usually so full of love and life and laughter, empty. Inspiring to look at, but where were the inspiring people? The children, whānau, and kaiako that make this building come to life. It is our place. Our place of well-being, belonging, contribution, communication and exploration. Our place we spend countless hours among one another's company. Living our days in this engaging and beautiful profession. Giving love, respect, and pieces of ourselves each and every day to our children and families. What now?

When I first heard the news of the impending lockdown, I was coming back from my lunch break. I had parked my car on the residential street that our centre is on and heard the blare of a radio coming from a nearby house. I stopped in my tracks. I could hear Jacinda's voice and based on her tone I knew that by the time I walked the 30 or so steps into the centre, life would feel a lot different.

I took a deep breath and walked inside. Children continued their explorations. Teachers looked at me bewildered. The energy was different. We all began to scramble internally with what we were hearing. I tried my best to remain calm and walked up to every teacher to check in with how they were doing. It was at this point that the news slowly made its way into my conscious and I realised we wouldn't be open for at least 4 weeks, that I simply decided to be still. Be with the children in the last fleeting hours of our time together. The laundry can wait. Packing up half the office can wait. I needed to be with the children, perhaps more so than they even needed to be with me. So, we took out our finest chinaware, sat down on the floor with a few infants and toddlers, and had a tea party. Water spilled everywhere as they were used to drinking out of normal glasses and not teacups with super tiny handles. We were fancy. We drank. We spilled. We dribbled. And we all sat there in what essentially became a big puddle. Wet. But happy. Soggy. But content. Together.

And before it became the token word of 2020, I realised why I felt such a knot in my heart upon closing the centre. We were a bubble without the title. A big beautiful bubble. Sharing space, creativity, ideas, love, kai, energy, and nourishment for the soul. Moments of calm, chaos, laughter, joy. Moments of frustration, moments of strength. We have felt every emotion in the walls of our place.

And now here I was locking the door. Knowing this place would be empty. Knowing our relationships would continue but take on a different form. Knowing we'd miss some of our children's first steps, miss first words, miss the questions and curiosities. Miss out on so many facets of the lives we share with these little beings. And that was a hard realisation, but it just reiterated to me why I do what I do. Why I adore this profession. Because at our core, we are human. Because we teach with our hearts and live with our souls. We seek out and need connection to sustain our wellbeing and contribute to that of others.

I do it for the children that give love and laughter so effortlessly. I do it for the moments you can connect with families and share a story and a laugh. And I do it for the teachers that show up every day and give so much of their energy and life so freely. I do it because I see the importance of connectedness and relationships. Because social distancing is weird. Hugs are meant to be given, not restrained. And life is meant to be shared, not lived in isolation.

May we all reconnect with softer hearts, and a rekindled appreciation for our big beautiful bubble.

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