



Learning from the bumps in the road: Insights from early childhood leaders by Holly Elissa Bruno, Janet Gonzalez-Mena, Luis A. Hernandez and Debra Ren-Etta Sullivan

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This collection of authentic stories and insights outlines a variety of challenges and relevant issues we experience in our own journey towards personal and professional growth in the early childhood sector. Its purpose is for us to reflect on our own experiences, and how we, as determined in the book's title, can learn from any 'bumps in the road'. Written by four accomplished professionals and respected leaders in early childhood, this book shares practical, personal and relatable experiences that provoke thought, and the hope for further discussion and debate amongst readers. The experiences and ideas shared empower us to find our own silver linings, and to face our own challenges and experiences head on, whilst inviting us to treat these challenges as an invitation for growth.

Bruno, Gonzalez-Mena, Hernandez and Sullivan have been working together in the early childhood sector for over a decade, with each coming from different and diverse backgrounds. Together they explore how specific challenges and hurdles in their personal and professional lives have supported their growth as individuals, and as early childhood leaders. Sharing their reflective thinking on these genuine experiences over time helps the reader to relate, to understand, and to make meaning from the topics covered.

The authors cover 12 topics in this book, each leading four of these in chapter form, which are followed up by thoughts and stories from the other three writers. As a result, the book and subsequent ideas are presented in a way in which you feel you are sharing a coffee catch-up with friends, debating topics you are passionate about, sharing ideas and experiences in order to learn with and alongside your colleagues and peers. At times, the authors do not agree; at times they do. Their multiple perspectives enable you to take what you want from their thoughts, and leave what you don't. This adds value to the book's ability to be relatable to professionals from different walks of life.

Topics covered include communication, leadership, socio-emotional competence and the crucial requirement for self-esteem and confidence in ourselves, cultural awareness and diversity, developing a sense of community and 'building your village', technology, assessment, and the undoubted importance of fun and laughter in learning and in life. Each chapter is structured differently, keeping the reader engaged, having fun, enjoying the content, and providing the time and tools needed to reflect on their own practice, thoughts and philosophies in meaningful ways. The way in which each topic chapter is structured results in productive, and constructive advice and strategies to utilise in practice, supporting your own professional and personal journey as appropriate.

The presentation and content of this book makes it easy to pick up and put down again reading parts in different sessions, rather than needing to read it all in one go or in any particular order. Whichever topics interest you at the time, or which are most relevant, can be read and re-visited time and time again, to support yourself, your team or your learning community. This book is not a read only once type, it is something I would come back to again and again. I thoroughly enjoyed the way in which each topic presented some vital take-away, thought-provoking messages, challenging my own thinking, my practice, and my thoughts and theories on different topic areas. The authors challenge you with questions for further discussion, prompt thought in quiz



form, present strategies in go-to lists, and share practical advice that you can utilise as it suits your own circumstances.

If anything, this book could have benefitted from having more examples, more experiences shared, more ways in which we can relate the topics and ideas to our own lives and professional practice. After all, exploring multiple perspectives is about learning from others. The authors' stories and experiences are often so interesting and engaging, you are left devouring every offering that they make with hungry enthusiasm, so that you are left wanting to hear more about where they have come from, what they have learnt along the way, and what experiences have shaped them into the people and professionals they are today.

This book would be a great read for teachers and educational leaders wanting to develop themselves personally and professionally in the areas of challenge that we face in the early childhood education sector today. The ideas within are motivating, practical, realistic and empowering.

Learning from the bumps in the road is an uplifting and empowering resource where the authors 'tell their truths' in order for you to recognise, explore, and challenge your own. This book is an influential tool for personal and professional development for students, teachers and leaders in the early childhood sector, with the objective that these ideas will be shared, discussed, debated, and bought together to support the community of people who lead the way in caring for and educating our most vulnerable citizens, children.

Reference

Bruno, H.E., Gonzalez-Mena, J., Hernandez, L.A., & Sullivan, D.R.E. (2013). *Learning from the bumps in the road: Insights from early childhood leaders*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf.