

D. Psych by Public Works

Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University

CONTEXT STATEMENT

The development of a therapeutic parenting practice for a digital age; clinical roots to community settings



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Abstract

This is my doctoral thesis by public works, in which I conduct a reflexive audit of my own body of public work, that is my 15-Minute Parenting practice. My question has been whether or not a play-based, therapeutic, self-directed, theoretically robust and psycho-educational parenting practice can bridge the gap between the clinic and the family home. My aim was to develop such a practice and explore its effectiveness amongst my target demographic. It is my assertion that this is possible and I present my 15-Minute Parenting practice as an example of this. I further advocate that the use of multi-media is essential in bringing this 15-Minute Parenting practice to the general public and outline how I have utilised multi-media platforms in amplifying my 15-Minute Parenting practice. I draw upon 4 epistemological strands to explain how 15-Minute Parenting has been developed and how it continues to develop and evolve. At the centre of the 15-Minute Parenting practice is my assertion that play is not only the language of children but is a universal language that can bridge the chasm between adulthood and childhood. In my 15-Minute Parenting practice, I introduce people to the seriousness of play in a fun and playful way advocating that opportunities for shared joy (enjoying and being enjoyed by each other) within moments of meeting (connection) between a parent and child can be transformative in the parent-child relationship. The 15-Minute Parenting practice is encased in a 3-book series but is supported by a weekly podcast of the same name as well as a weekly parenting radio show that airs on an award-winning national radio station in Ireland. I am seeking to highlight the effectiveness of bringing print media, radio, television and social media together in bringing my 15-Minute Parenting practice to a wider audience. The implications of focusing on strengthening and enhancing the parent-child relationship outside of the psychotherapy clinic is a move towards de-psychopathologising what are more mild-moderate behavioural challenges that fall within the range of what might be referred to as “typical” child development. This research also has implications beyond the parent-child relationship and I am exploring questions as to how it might also apply in the lives of (non-parent) adults and what the benefits of a playful state of mind are in all of our lives. With reference to the terminology, I am using in this context statement I wish to emphasise that I view and treat all family constructs as equal. I have worked with a wide variety of family formation and am accepting of all clients. When

I say parent-child, please read it as speaking to the relationship between a child and their caregivers (those providing a parental presence), whomsoever they be.

Keywords: Play; Children; Teenagers; Parenting; Mental Health; Media; Psychotherapy; Self-Directed

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Introduction

There are 4 key strands to my 15-Minute Parenting practice. I've created a framework (as a table) for the reader to understand at a glance each of these elements, which will be fully explored in this thesis. These elements will be explored across the 4-parts to this document detailed below.

Table 1

15-Minute Parenting: Overview

15-Minute Parenting	the concept with theoretical and methodological underpinnings
15-Minute Parenting	the publications / a 3-book series that contains the practice
15-Minute Parenting	the media angle (a podcast, weekly radio national radio show and social media)
15-Minute Parenting	the daily play practice for parents and children at home

In part one I will describe my personal and professional development as a psychotherapist working in private practice and developing an accessible play-based, therapeutic parenting practice that bridges the gap between the clinic and the family home, with my reflections that arose from the writing of this context statement. In part two I will detail my methodological approaches. In part three I will detail the public works and in part four I will conclude with a critical evaluation including my leadership qualities in the field of work.

In evaluating my professional standing in the field of mental health amongst both professionals and the general public, I hope to provide evidence of how I have developed my career and how my 15-Minute Parenting practice is the encapsulation of my career trajectory to date. I have developed within my professional practice and also within my own personage over the course of my 20+ years practice. Upon graduating from my clinical master's programme I started working in the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector in Ireland and worked for approximately 15 years in a variety of NGOs specialising in Children's Rights, Child Protection, Child Sexual Abuse, Children-In-Care, Domestic Violence and overseas orphanages. I took the unorthodox decision to take leave of my last NGO role in the height of the economic recession in Ireland in 2010 and set up my private practice, a dedicated parent-child

relationship clinic where I quickly and steadily established myself as an expert and nationally recognised clinician in this area. In general, I believe that there is a need to reframe public and clinical practice discourse in a way that moves us away from only psychopathologising children's (more mild-moderate) challenging behaviour towards a narrative that sees children's behaviour within the context of the parent-child relationship and therefore the means to correct that behaviour is through strengthening the parent-child connection. Opening my parent-child relationship clinic in 2010, during an economic recession, was a response to one particular parenting stressor and extending my 15-Minute Parenting series of books to both middle childhood and the teenage years during a global pandemic (Covid-19) is another particular parenting stressor. My 15-Minute Parenting practice is not Covid specific, nor was it borne out of the Covid-19 global pandemic conditions. That said Covid-19 is an example of how robust the practice is in terms of its effectiveness and how adaptable and flexible it is. With Covid-19, an unforeseen need arose and my 15-Minute Parenting Practice could meet it. I believe this is evidenced in terms of media requests I received to provide supportive messaging to parents adapting work and family life around the pandemic restrictions. I was granted a broadcasting pass to travel beyond the geographical restrictions so that I could participate in media messaging in this regard. 15-Minute Parenting as a practice is especially effective during times of heightened parental stressors because it is parent-led (therefore saves expensive costs of outsourced psychotherapy treatment during a recession) and home-based (particularly relevant during the movement restrictions placed on families during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown periods). Beyond these specific and amplified periods of parental stress, 15-Minute Parenting practice has relevance in securing and sustaining parent-child connection right across the trajectory of our parent-child relationship, equipping parents with the language of playful parenting as a means of responding to the everyday parenting challenges that emerge.

I will set out the progressive development of my practice in as linear a fashion as possible by highlighting how specific projects, publications, media work, political lobbying and trainings I have provided have affected significant influence in the promotion of therapeutic parenting and psychotherapy in both professional and mainstream settings alike. I therefore self-identify as a clinician and an organisational

leader, qualities inherent in the profiles of Doctorate in Public Works students (Du Plock & Barber, 2008).

Part 1. Personal and Professional Development

1.1: Early Influences

“I also bring to my role as researcher my curiosity about the world and the human condition” (Etherington, 2004, p. 110).

First and foremost, this is a study of play and the role of play in the trajectory of human growth and development, both as individuals and also, perhaps especially, in how we relate to others outside of and in the world around us. My public works are intended to serve as a roadmap to bring us all closer to a more playful state of mind.

In terms of early influences in my work I would have to start with my family of origin. I am from a large, over-involved, family. We are over-involved in each other's lives and I have danced that line between what a blessing and a curse this can be in the process of separation and individuation. That said, as I have grown and become a parent myself, I recognise the pros far outweigh the cons in my instance. We are a playful family and I am grateful to have grown up in a playful environment because it taught me that *play is not merely a box of toys in the corner of the room, it is a state of mind and a way of being*. This is a line I use in my 15-Minute Parenting practice and in speaking about the 15-Minute Parenting concept. Developing and sustaining a playful state of mind, as a means of overcoming adversity and nurturing and sustaining connections, is a core principle of my work and my 15-Minute Parenting practice.

As I have grown into adulthood and indeed within my practice, I have reflected a lot on this last point. My mother was diagnosed with cancer when I was a teenager. It had a profound effect on my adolescence and my relationship with my mother in that our relationship dynamic shifted and I assumed a more adult/parental role both at home and in relation to my mother. For me this is encapsulated in a number of vivid visual memories. One being my having to help her in the shower in her hospital room after her mastectomy; another of applying bandages to her body wounds during radiotherapy and again when I shaved her head as her hair had started to fall out in her treatment. In these moments I assumed a parental role in response to her more child-like vulnerability, a role reversal of sorts. While still a teenager I was also the second eldest

of 5 siblings. We were young and we very much needed our mother. Yet we were contained and held together in a way that allowed my mother to be unwell and to recover (a cycle that would repeat many times in our family narrative) without 5 children depending solely upon her mothering. This is because we grew up with a large, loving other maternal presence, that of my paternal grandmother whose home was beside ours, with a shared back garden for both homes. “A child who feels his mother single-handedly holds his world together is bound to feel perpetually apprehensive about the possibility of a world without her” (Cohen, 2021, pp. 30-31). Cohen uses the term *maternal presence* (believing that the function of mother can be fulfilled by caring others in our lives) when he refers to Winnicott’s assertion “that the strength and depth of our creativity are determined by the quality of the maternal presence in our early lives. Our sense of permeability between the real and imaginary worlds is nurtured or diminished by the adults who care for us” (Cohen, 2021, pp. 28-29). The maternal presence afforded to us by the nurturing presence of my grandmother provided me with a secure predictability that allowed me to acknowledge my fears about my mother’s illness in a safe and steady way. In this way, she was a buffer against the potentially overwhelming uncertainty such an experience can bring into the life of children. To be afforded the opportunity to feel what you feel, when and how you feel it, within the safety of a secure attachment was an early life lesson that cemented the first foundation stone for what would (much) later become 15-Minute Parenting.

Replicating this holding relationship was a conscious goal within my own parenting when I had my daughter, who is named after my grandmother. I quickly felt that my desire to replicate something consciously spoke more to my own parental counter-transference and that the experience of parenting unleashes a more primitive onslaught of emotion, where instinct meets fear, desire and hope. My relationship with my grandmother and mother is certainly in there, but in a more unconscious way than I had ever considered. The initial development of my 15-Minute Parenting practice pre-dates my becoming a parent but the 15-Minute Parenting practice was certainly refined and enhanced by my experience of both being parented and parenting. In my experience of parenting, I became aware that in those emotionally heightened moments, be they underpinned by stress, rage, fear, love, joy or hope, my own attachment system was activated. In this activation it was not what I cognitively “knew” that was unleashed

within me, it was what I had lived. Becoming a parent motivated me to include a parental self-audit into my playful parenting practice. I felt that pull to go inwards within my self, my psyche, so that I could parent outwards this child in front of me. I felt both the challenge and the benefit of doing that. I began to refine my core belief that our parenting roadmap cannot lie within the covers of a book alone, it lies within the many layers of our unconscious and the challenge is to interweave each of those layers with an accessible narrative that releases them to a more conscious awareness in how we live our lives and specifically in how we parent. I believe the 15-Minute Parenting practice helps to facilitate this process, centring as it does on the landscape of relationship and written in the language of play.

When I was 16 years old, I picked up a second-hand copy of Freud's introductory lectures in a bookshop. I did not understand very much of it but even then, I felt strongly that I would like to understand it. I kept it and 3 years later I entered an undergraduate degree programme in psychoanalysis (Freud [Sigmund] and Lacanian tradition). I completed a 5-year programme of study that included 2 years clinical training at Masters level on a variety of placements. I am aware that I was young commencing my training but our life experiences are not determined by chronological age alone. I believe, reflecting on this time, that I was emotionally mature for my years and my experiences around my mother's illness was a catalyst for readying me for this training. I was especially drawn to clinical work with children, teenagers and parents from the outset. Classic Lacanian training does not focus on child psychotherapy per se but more in working with the child through their parent. As such I was drawn towards the object relations theories of the British School of Psychoanalysis and the work of Donald Winnicott and Melanie Klein and Anna Freud. In the years that followed my graduation from my masters programme and after I commenced work in the NGO sector, I joined a clinical supervision group with members of Espace Analytique in Paris. This was a group of Lacanian psychoanalysts all of whom work with children and it allowed me to explore the application of Lacanian theory to the clinic of the child in a more practical way than theoretical study and exploration enabled me to do. I started to find my way within Lacanian theory, in terms of how it was being applied within my daily clinical practice. This led to my being invited to contribute a chapter to a book on applying Lacanian Psychoanalysis to work with children (Fortune, 2017a). This also marked the start of my integrating that blending modalities could and

should be applied to the work rather than limiting the scope of the work. I began to see how I could interweave my theoretical training with my clinical experience and personal creativity and curiosity to ultimately emerge a more flexible and adaptable practitioner. This realisation is something that I drew heavily on throughout my career but particularly in developing my 15-Minute Parenting practice.

Soon after graduating from my masters in psychotherapy programme I undertook a 1-year postgraduate course in practice-based play therapy and began to develop my own reflexive practice as I interweaved my psychoanalytic training with play as a language and means of expressing and processing emotional experiences for the child subject. At this point I was seeking a theoretical bridge between the clinic of the adult and the clinic of the child and I latched onto Winnicott's writings, "whatever I say about children really applies to adults as well" (Winnicott, 1971, p. 40), and also:

Psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist. Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is that where playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play. (Winnicott, 1971, p. 38)

This had a profound effect and influence on my work and the way I approached my work. Just as Winnicott distinguishes between the noun 'play' and the verbal noun 'playing' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 40), it enabled me to separate out the content of play from the act of playing. Any time that we are 'wondering', we are engaging the imagination and as such we are playing. What is psychotherapy, if not a space to wonder and imagine?

I have been in pursuit of play and playfulness ever since then. I have always passionately believed that if we can increase the playfulness in our (both adult and children's) lives that we can enable a powerful change in not only the lives of children but right across our society. But this was not going to be achieved by just working with those who present for service intervention. I wanted to find a way to create an accessible yet therapeutically effective practice that would reach those who may never require a

parenting programme or a clinical intervention, as well as those who may not believe they need or even deserve such an intervention. And so, I started putting my hand up for media contributions. I simply started to say yes to invitations to speak on air and once I did, the invitations kept coming. Etherington writes about the type of reflexive researcher who has “risked using themselves transparently in their research and in their writing. By allowing ourselves to be known and seen by others, we open up the possibility of learning more about our topic and ourselves, and in greater depth” (Etherington, 2004, p. 25). In this context I view my media work as a key part of my role as a reflexive researcher. In speaking and writing in national (and international) mainstream media I began to build both a platform and an audience, while addressing an untapped source/need in terms of dissipating important and relevant information.

1.2: Finding my fit in the field

I quickly realised in my study that I was not what my Lacanian peers might describe as a purist. However, it is the theoretical framework of my 5-year study and 7 years of personal psychoanalysis and as such it has influence over my work. I was someone who sought to make meaning of the material, that is relate it to everyday lives and to push the boundaries of theories that ultimately looked like a more blended modality approach.

The Lacanian psychoanalyst Bice Benvenuto, now based in London and running the Maison-Verte-UK clinic, which bears the words *where play meets words* as a motto inscribed across the wall, speaks of the need for *a mutation* within the Lacanian working practice. This is a mutation of the theory and moreover, the practice. At an (online) conference hosted by the Freud-Lacan Institute (FLi) in Dublin, Ireland December 2020, she said, “to work with children, we must lean in, come off the couch and play to provoke something” (Benvenuto, 2020). In referencing Lacan’s 1958 paper, “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power” (Lacan, 1977/1997), she referenced his *how to act with your being* (the 4th of the 5 directions within the treatment he writes of) and said “one of the costs of acting with one’s being may well be this mutation” (Benvenuto, 2020). This is to say that we must re-examine what we do and what we have to invent in order to keep doing it.

I do not see this as a challenge within the Lacanian tradition of psychoanalysis alone. Over the course of my clinical career I have, at times, struggled to find my fit within the discipline. Perhaps this is why I studied under a number of theoretical treatment modalities and why I felt compelled to practice within a blended modality approach. I will expand on this in the next section but other therapeutic modalities I am trained in include attachment and trauma dyadic models, Theraplay and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Circles of Security, Stephen Brigg's Time Focused Psychodynamic Psychotherapy, Mentalisation Based Therapy and Polyvagal Theory. My searching for my fit within the field gave me an open mind to integrate new innovative psychotherapy approaches as I worked in the field. I believe this is what enabled me to not only find my fit, but to create my place within the field of psychotherapy and my 15-Minute Parenting practice is how I best express this.

Dilys Daws (a consultant psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic in London who specialised in infant mental health and child psychotherapy) in her presentation at the Tavistock and Portman 100 years festival in December 2020 said, "you learn a training and then you are free to adapt and adjust it to your own work, rather than just stick to it" (Daws & deRenata, 2020). This is something that I have always believed and has motivated much of my practice.

1.3: A turning point

I had been working in the NGO sector in Ireland for approximately 15 years before I started my own dedicated parent-child relationship clinic in 2010. It was the height of the economic recession in Ireland and I was CEO of a children's charity that worked in orphanages in Russia. In that role I had responsibility for the day to day running of the charity from its Dublin office but because of my clinical training and background I was also reviewing and developing programmes of de-institutionalisation and psychological resilience along with a young parents programme aiming to keep young mothers with their children rather than those children coming into the care system, thereby seeking to break an intergenerational cycle of children in the same family all growing up in state care. By 2010 it was clear that the charity could no longer afford my role, so I wrote them a strategy to keep functioning without the role of a CEO (the charity founder was very active and passionately involved throughout) and I resigned from the role. I had

long envisioned working for myself, starting something that would be my passion project and growing a therapeutic and playful parenting movement of sorts. I chose to do this at the height of an economic recession. In spite of how reckless this sounded at the time, I knew that what I was aiming to create was something that was not only needed but would fill a gap in the market, even during a recession, perhaps especially during a recession. However, my goal for the first two years in business was simply to stay in business and I worked very hard to build a brand, a reputation and a national visibility while living frugally.

I learned a lot and I learned it quickly. My clinic was located in an aesthetically appealing area that was well serviced but also expensive to run. My overheads were significant but I knew this was the right space for what I wanted to build. Because I had worked in orphanages in Russia, I quickly built a reputation for post-adoptive therapeutic work. Most adoption in the Republic of Ireland is foreign rather than domestic adoption. I trained in an American attachment and trauma focused model that was very new in Ireland, Theraplay, and became one of only two fully certified Theraplay Therapists, the only certified Theraplay clinical supervisor, Theraplay trainer and the Country Lead for the model in Ireland. This model afforded me a sought after but hard to source clinical specialisation. I began to work closely with state agencies and children in care. Like with other modalities I trained in I provided both classic Theraplay and also a blended modality approach that placed the parent-child relationship at the centre of my clinical practice. I saw that it was the relationship between the parent and child that was “my client” rather than either individual in the dyad. My clinical reputation grew as word-of-mouth referrals increased and I became known for this particular way of working. Further, I had grown my voice in the Irish media and parents were seeking me out to find out more about this way of working based on what I was sharing in my broadcasting role.

At this time, I had 5 other psychotherapists working within my clinic. However, those referring in were specific in wanting me to do the work and in wanting the way in which I was working and my waiting list was growing. Further, I was feeling pushed back into a clinic manager role and having left organisational management when I left the NGO world this was not what I wanted to be doing. Faced with a choice to expand the clinic into a second location to meet demand, which would solidify me as business

manager of the clinics, or downsizing one side to grow in a new direction, I restructured my clinic to provide psychotherapy myself but to grow my supervision and training/talks strands at the same time. I was finding that supervising and training other psychotherapists, psychologists, Guardians ad Litem, Social Care workers, play therapists and Theraplay trainees was an effective way to develop my own practice and body of work as it was what one supervisee called *your unique take and perspective on the work* that saw me in demand as a trainer and supervisor. At the same time, I was building a reputation for *lunch and learn* parenting seminars within corporate organisations where I would deliver a talk during the staff members' lunch hour and they would eat, drink and listen. This was another key development in my 15-Minute Parenting practice because in these settings I was refining my core principles and my skill to distil complex clinical concepts into bite-sized digestible pieces. At once I began to see the value to reaching a cohort of parents who would not otherwise see a need to attend for clinical intervention. The feedback told me that this cohort of busy, working, functioning well most of the time but with mild to moderate level parenting struggles parents were seeking a response, a toolkit that was not available. They did not want pop psychology. They wanted well-researched, theoretically grounded tips and tools that they could easily integrate into their parenting. *We want more of what you are talking about. What else can you cover for us* was a common feedback summary.

I had found my fit in the field by using a turning point in my career to create my place. As a reflexive practitioner I drew from my wide, varied and trans-disciplinary modalities, found a voice within the media to reach a wider audience beyond the clinical pool of referrals and adapted my clinical practice in a way that pushed me towards the development of a therapeutic parenting practice that could bridge the gap between the clinic and the family home. My question emerged at this point, could I devise a therapeutic parenting practice that was theoretically robust but easily accessible with practical play-based activities that (supported by the theory) would transform the parent-child relationship without need of professional intervention? I believed so.

Part 2: Methodological Approaches

2.1: My journey as a reflexive research-practitioner

The Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works (D. Psych) requires that the context statement be submitted as a reflexive audit of the public works. Reflexivity is a key aspect of qualitative research, with its practical foundation in phenomenology and hermeneutics (Walsh, 2003). As highlighted by Etherington, “Schon (1983) in his study of the ‘reflexive practitioner’ suggests that we form theories as we reflect on practices that are based upon the knowledge we bring from earlier experiences” (2004. p. 28).

Finlay and Gough (2003, p. 6) outline five reflexive variants observed in research subjectivity. These are listed as (1) introspection (focusing on the researcher’s experience and knowledge and moreover the explicit link between these two in both researcher and participant), (2) intersubjective reflection (a deeper exploration of what they describe as mutual meanings in the researcher relationship where the transference dynamics between researcher and participant form part of the analysis), (3) mutual collaboration (tends to involve use of a broad range of methodologies that sees the research participant as capable of their own reflexivity too), (4) social critique (researcher must strive to maintain the power balance between themselves and the participant to make the research process a more mutual experience while holding central the issues of researcher’s own embodiment that may emerge in conducting participant interviews) and (5) ironic deconstruction (pursuing an equalisation of mutual voices over the presumed expert voice by highlighting the ambiguous nature of language and how it is interpreted).

Further, I have found that an exploration of the impact that clinical and therapeutic conversations and/or observations has had on me is a key part of this reflexive audit. It is primarily from my time in the clinic with parents and children that I began to see the need for a different style of therapeutic parenting practice: a therapeutic parenting practice that stands apart from the traditional and well-serviced 10-session parenting programme practice. These more traditional parenting programmes tend to be behaviour modification in approach. I was seeing increasing numbers of parents who had ended up in my private clinic when what had started as a parenting challenge of

mild range had crashed into moderate level and was hurtling towards severe. In exploring the origins of the “issue” I could see a number of missed opportunities whereby a *small change would make a big difference* resulting in *less tears and more laughter* (both of these phrases are taglines within my 15-Minute Parenting practice). I began to turn my attention to the majority of parents who will experience a mild to moderate level of challenge within their parent-child relationship but who might never meet clinical threshold for treatment or require a 10-session state (behaviour modification) parenting programme. I wondered if such parents were given access to a therapeutic parenting practice that could be self-directed and easily put into practice at home, and what that might look like?

In describing how she and her fellow researchers adapted Esther Bick’s (a psychologist and psychoanalyst who established the child and adolescent psychotherapy training programme with John Bowlby at the Tavistock Clinic in 1948) renowned model of infant observation at the Tavistock Clinic, Wendy Holloway writes “this enabled us to see aspects of identity that were less the product of conscious, intentional production through narrative and more inclusive of embodied aspects of identity: affect, practices and unconscious subjectivity” (Holloway, 2016, p. 20). In this same article she adds that “reflection in the psychoanalytic sense is not just another word for cognitive activity; it requires keeping an open mind” (Holloway, 2016, p. 21). This brings to mind memories of my own infant observation study (2000-2002) and where my interest in the (trans)formative role of parent-child relationship was sparked. At her presentation during the Tavistock and Portman clinic 100 years festival, Dilys Daws said:

The therapist can provide a symbolic holding for the emotions going around the family and the experience of this holding may allow the parent to provide this same holding for the child...infant observation is a great learning for understanding transference and countertransference. (Daws & deRenata, 2020)

In this way, infant observation can itself be understood as an intersubjective reflexive approach and it is, for me, part of my reflexive journey.

2.2: Research methodologies

With the development of my public works I have moved towards reflexivity through a hermeneutic lens.

The methodology underpinning the development of my 15-Minute Parenting practice is largely an anecdotal hypothesis stemming from my 20+ years of clinical work with a variety of families. That being said, 4 epistemological strands inform my 15-Minute Parenting practice.

1. Narrative Inquiry
2. Phenomenology
3. Hermeneutics
4. Intersubjective Reflection (Reflexivity)

1. Narrative Inquiry

My use of **anecdotal analysis** is situated in the wider field of **narrative inquiry**, which I see as my primary methodology in developing this practice.

How we talk about something gives a shape to the experience we have had. Children use play to interweave their experiences with narrative in a bid to make sense of what has happened.

Narrative, therefore, can be said to provide a portal into two realms: (a) the realm of experience, where speakers lay out how they as individuals experience certain events and confer their subjective meaning onto these experiences; and (b) the realm of narrative means (or devices) that are put to use to make (this) sense. (Bamberg, 2010, p. 85)

My 15-Minute Parenting practice is rooted in a narrative exploration of how we experienced being parented to make meaning of how we now parent. Etherington writes that through her own research work she realised that “therapists were assisting people to co-construct stories of their lives by asking curious questions, inviting them

to thicken their stories and noticing emerging, half-told tales” (Etherington, 2004, pp. 74-75).

In my 15-Minute Parenting practice, it all starts with my *parental self-audit* (Appendix 1(b)), which is not about simply exploring *what happened* but is moreover an exploration of the meaning people made of what happened both at the time (in early childhood/adolescence) and what meaning we can now make of those experiences and identify how they are influencing our parenting now. These are the stories we live by. Etherington also writes of a 4-point ontology that is the basis for her approach to narrative inquiry. These 4-points are listed as:

we live storied lives and our world is a storied world; narrative represents, constitutes and shapes social reality; competing narratives represent different realities not simply different perspectives on the same reality; telling and re-telling one’s story helps a person create a sense of self and meaning.
(Etherington, 2004, p. 75)

I use my parental-self audit to interweave held but unspoken experiences and memories of being parented with a narrative that will bring conscious awareness to the patterns we are repeating in how we are parenting our own children. In supporting parents to find the words to “say it”, we reflect on how it was versus how we wish it was. I use how we wish it was as a starting point to make those *small changes that make big differences* in our relationships with not just our children but also in how we relate to the world. “Embedded in people’s stories we hear their feelings, thoughts and attitudes, and the richness of the narrative helps us to understand how they understand themselves, their strategies for living and how they make theoretical sense of their lives” (Etherington, 2004, p. 75).

Once this parental self-audit is complete, the broader play-based 15-Minute framework begins to ensure relational repair of those parent-child ruptures using the language of children, play, to fuel that all-important connection that parenting is about. This is mindful play. This is play that makes meaning of what happened and what is happening in the now moments between a parent and child, whatever age that child is.

There are many ways to tell a story. Treating play as a language and moreover *the* language of children and childhood is a core concept of my 15-Minute Parenting practice. I view play as the means through which children choose to narrate their experience. They “do” their communication rather than “speak” it and I believe that a crucial component to therapeutic parenting is to ensure parents have the language to attune to their children’s narrative with focused attention. This has been a motivating force in developing my public works.

As a general field, narrative inquiry “is grounded in the study of the particular”; the analyst is interested in how a speaker or writer assembles and sequences events and uses language and/or visual images to communicate meaning, that is, make particular points to an audience. (Riessman, 2008, p. 11)

I feel it is important to acknowledge at this point that my use of the intergenerational self and reflective parental self-audit may draw parallels with family systems therapy. Family systems therapy seeks to support individuals to resolve their relational struggles in the context of their family units, seeing the family unit as the root of these issues. Each family member works together with the others to better understand their group dynamic and how their individual actions affect each other and the family unit as a whole. My parental self-audit, which is the core of my 15-Minute Parenting practice, draws a parallel between how we experienced being parented with how we now parent. I draw on the family unit as the place our emotional triggers are embedded but this is something for someone to reflect on alone without direct reference to other family members, attuning only to how they experienced being parented rather than addressing this with other family members. Bondi “would argue that neither qualitative research nor psychotherapy are practices that claim to excavate and represent singular, universal, or stable truths about the lives of those who participate in them” (2013, p. 12), also elaborating that:

Instead, we offer a very particular kind of relationship and a very particular kind of space in which we hope that new meanings can be made and new stories

told, stories that may make life more liveable through an enrichment of meaning. (Bondi, 2013, p. 9)

It is my hope that this same kind of relationship, one that offers a particular kind of space in which new meanings can be made and new stories told can also be achieved within the parent-child relationship through my 15-Minute Parenting practice and orientating parents to the language of play and predictability in how they bid to connect with their children. I will discuss this further in part two when I detail my public works further.

Riessman writes that:

Narrative analysis refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form. As in all families, there is conflict and disagreement among those holding different perspectives...narrative analysts interrogate intention and language – *how* and *why* incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers. For whom was this constructed, and for what purpose? Why is the succession of events configured that way? What cultural resources does the story draw on, or take for granted? What storehouse of plots does it call up? What does the story accomplish? Are there gaps and inconsistencies that might suggest preferred, alternative or counter-narratives? (Riessman, 2008, p. 11) [Emphasis in original]

Narrative inquiry is important to me and is a methodology I have always engaged with. I am Irish and within our culture stories and storytelling is enshrined as a fundamental part of who we are as people. We are talkers. We are storytellers. Stories are how we make meaning of our history in Ireland, through poetry, ballad and *Scéal* (story). Stories have long since travelled from generation to generation.

I am drawing heavily on stories and family narrative as a base for how I developed this practice as I think stories and the sharing of stories between parents and children are

precisely the kind of playful mindset at the core of my 15-Minute Parenting practice. Stories are a great way to close that chasm that emerges (especially as we grow up from childhood into adulthood) between reality and creativity. Therefore, stories are a direct route to a playful mindset. Riessman (2008, p. 6) argues that the narrative impulse is universal. It is through stories that we enter a state of wonderment and ‘wondering’ is a foundation stone of my 15-Minute Parenting practice. For me, adopting a ‘wondering’ mindset is akin to adopting an inquisitive stance, as highlighted in Mentalisation Based Therapy (MBT), that is, staying out of a place of certainty and in a place of curiosity (Verheugt-Pleiter et al., 2008).

From this position of curiosity, we have the opportunity to make meaning, to move forward with fresh thinking and new perspective on the narrative certainly but the memory itself also.

2. Phenomenology

I draw heavily on strengthening and enhancing a parent’s capacity for present moment awareness within my 15-Minute Parenting practice, which brings a **phenomenological element** to how I view the process of “meaning-making”.

15-Minute Parenting is a practice that captures the phenomena of play, the experience of playing and its importance in the lives of children. I believe that giving parents practical playful techniques that have therapeutic impact, framed within accessible theoretical scaffolding, enables them to capture something that is otherwise inarticulable. Parents who use the practice come up with the narrative but through the practice that narrative takes on new meaning. In developing 15-Minute Parenting as a practice I am using play to return to the lived experience of the parent-child dyad. The parent and child immerse themselves *in* the experience to co-create new meaning as a result of this play-based engagement. For example, parents frequently present a narrative to me as to how difficult they find it to connect with their children after school. In response, I reflect on how we tend to greet our children after school with verbal questions as to how their day was and how little we tend to get back. I suggest instead that we first seek to playfully co-regulate with our children (having explained how young children do not self-regulate their emotions but rather co-regulate with their parents/important adults suggesting we see ourselves as the emotional thermostat that

sets the temperature in the relational moment) and mark the point of reunification (coming back together after a prolonged separation of a school day) in a more joyful way. I offer a game of *Mirrors* as a way of doing this. The parent tells the child that they are the mirror and must copy everything the parent does. No words are required; this is all about doing while reconnecting with sustained eye contact. I suggest that if your child is hyper-aroused following a busy school day, start with big moves to mirror and gradually bring the level down to a more optimum level of arousal and equally if your child is more hypo-aroused, start with small moves and bring them up.

Phenomenological research is an especially useful method for understanding someone's personal experiences. Part of where this practice came from was the insights my clinical work gave me into the actions, motivations, questions, held assumptions and both conscious and unconscious biases individual parents presented with when speaking about their relationship with their children. 15-Minute Parenting practice was my response to these insights gleaned in my clinical work and making this practice as accessible as possible to as many parents as possible is what has made it so effective.

Drawing on Heidegger's seminal work, *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927/2010), and his concept of *Dasein* or being-in-the-world, 15-Minute Parenting takes the idea that there is always a mood that reflects our engagement with the world around us and uses the playful connection between parents and children as an overt expression of that mood/engagement with the world around us and the people in it. My 15-Minute Parenting practice is rooted in the interactivity and relational aspect of being that Heidegger enshrines in the concept of *Dasein*. Further, the work of Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, (1943/2003) in distinguishing between an unhealthy conformity that aligns with our own upbringing and embracing a more authentic way of being or engaging in the world is of great interest to me in terms of how I use the parental self-audit in my 15-Minute Parenting practice. The parental audit brings parents back to how they experienced being parented, questioning how they felt about it at the time and how they feel now, reflecting on how that is influencing how we now parent and blending in the reflection on *how do we wish it had been for us* and using the answer to that as a new starting point.

My 15-Minute Parenting practice gives parents an accessible roadmap that is rooted in psychological theory and practice that enables them to make meaning of their children's play while strengthening and enhancing the parent-child relationship.

Under Narrative Inquiry I talked about staying out of a place of certainty and holding a more curious stance. Curiosity means we remain open to a new understanding, open to new meaning. Bondi (2013) says that qualitative research and psychotherapy are both projects of making meaning. She adds that "the meanings that qualitative research and psychotherapy generate circulate differently, qualitative research entering the public domain more overtly, while psychotherapeutic meanings circulate primarily through the way lives are lived" (Bondi, 2013, p. 9). My public works, my 15-Minute Parenting practice, is primarily focused on changing/influencing the way lives are lived, specifically how we parent our children. A secondary focus has always been to do this in a way that is simultaneously accessible to parents but appealing to professionals in my field who might see value in my work and my 15-Minute Parenting practice in terms of how they might integrate it into their own work.

The development of my 15-Minute Parenting practice in terms of my writing process and creative process in producing radio and podcast content is also an example of phenomenological methodology. What I mean by this is that developing 15-Minute Parenting from counter-transference in the clinic to parent talks to a tangible practice contained in a series of books that is supported by radio/podcast content has been in itself a process of becoming and a means through which I have made meaning of my work.

3. Hermeneutics

My 15-Minute Parenting practice is also an ever-evolving concept with a strong **hermeneutic** aspect in terms of how I am filtering constant feedback from parents. I then integrate my learning from how those using my 15-Minute Parenting practice are interpreting and applying it to everyday parenting challenges into my podcast, radio show and planning for future books.

Conducting a reflexive audit of my body of public works has been achieved by moving towards reflexivity through a hermeneutic lens. Hermeneutic methodology is about

interpretation (of texts etc.) and relies upon the art of understanding and communication. I believe this to be one of my strengths as both a clinician but also as a reflexive researcher. Over the course of my career, I have studied and trained widely but have always held a curiosity as to how I can interweave various theoretical strands into an accessible practice for parents to pick up and follow without clinical intervention. To do this I have relied heavily on my own lived experiences, my inter-subjectivity, my understanding of various theories and through the lens of hermeneutics, embedding those (often complex) clinical theories into an accessible parenting practice. If non-clinicians could not adequately understand attachment theory, the neurology of the emotional right brain, the inter-play of Polyvagal theory and the power of the inter-generational self in parenting then I would not have achieved my goal.

“I understand researcher reflexivity as the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of enquiry” (Etherington, 2004, p. 31). Reflexivity as a hermeneutic method is a process of discovery. For me that has meant a dual process of self-discovery but also a process of discovering, or uncovering, meaning in the theories that have framed and influenced my work from the beginning. I consider myself to be on an ongoing journey of discovery in both regards.

I have outlined how recurring themes in the clinic space were showing me a pattern in how mild-moderate challenges in the parent-child relationship were being presented as psychopathologised behaviours in children. I used this to form the basis of my hypothesis that parents, when given access to therapeutic relational play, could problem solve many issues at home resulting in a stronger relationship with their children. After much deliberation I settled on a book, then a series of books to house this practice of self-directed, playful psycho-education. Once the books were published and were selling well (as reflected in chart positions on best seller lists Appendix 1(d)) I saw a rise in contact from parents on social media platforms. This showed me that they were aware of me and the 15-Minute Parenting practice (as they started to follow me and see me as a professional to bring their parenting questions to) but had not integrated the 15-Minute Parenting practice into their parenting in a way that showed they did not need to bring those questions to me.

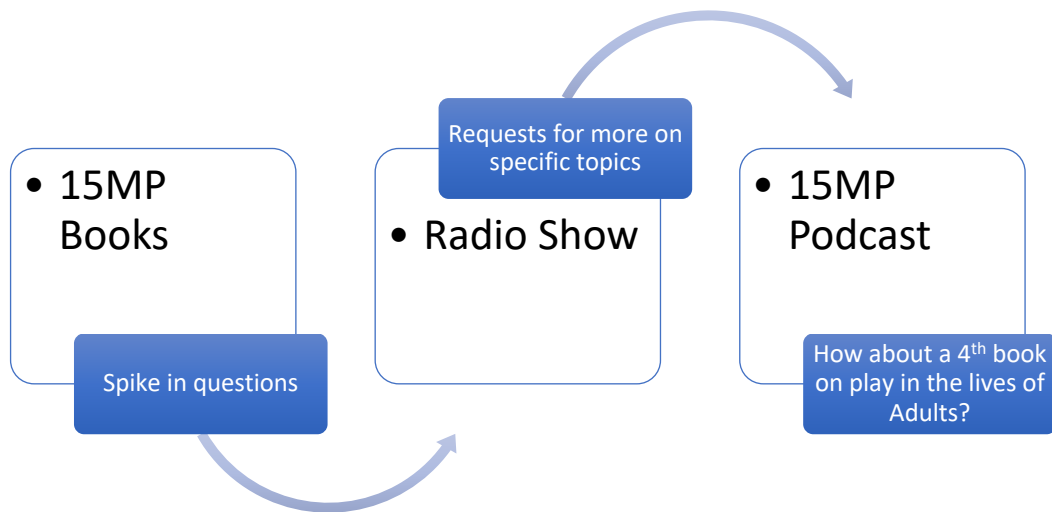
I could also see that there was a rise in engagement from my weekly radio show where I was using the same language as in my books to address parent's questions. Messages came in via social media and email asking me to say more on something I would have mentioned on the radio show in response to a question. This feedback told me that the time on the radio show to discuss a topic was not enough and I wondered how I could say more about a given theme or topic.

I used this feedback to develop my 15-Minute Parenting Podcast as a support to amplify the core principles of the practice in accessible 15-minute episodes. As soon as I did, I observed a steady growth in downloads of the podcast and that the podcast was driving more people towards the books. Parents began messaging me on social media requesting that I cover specific topics on the podcast and asking how 15-Minute Parenting could help with specific issues.

Now I saw a pattern of parents who contacted me citing my books, podcast and radio show in how they were approaching their children's behaviour. I am aware that parents access my 15-Minute Parenting practice via one of these three means (books, radio show, podcast) and that one drives them to another. This is reflected in two hermeneutic changes; the horizon of awareness and how it changes the practice with each hermeneutic cycle and also the changes in how parents learn to understand children's play.

Figure 1

15-Minute Parenting Feedback Loop



Note: Integrating the feedback loop to strengthen and enhance the 15-Minute Parenting practice has been an essential part of its success.

4. Intersubjective Reflection (Reflexivity)

My use of self-in-relation to Other and reliance on clinical phenomena of countertransference positions me/my work within the **intersubjective reflection** variant of **reflexivity** (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p. 8).

In preparing this reflexive audit of my public works I have found the 5 reflexive variants of (1) introspection, (2) intersubjective reflection, (3) mutual collaboration, (4) social critique and (5) ironic deconstruction (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p. 6) to be very helpful in positioning myself along the trajectory of the public works development. I am a psychoanalyst with a broad psychodynamic theoretical framework within which I work and make meaning of my work. In this regard, Finlay and Gough's 2003 definition of intersubjective reflection resonates strongly for me. In describing this particular variant, they write "[psychodynamic researchers] see unconscious needs and transferences as mutually structuring the relationship between researcher and participant" (Finlay & Gough, 2003, pp. 9-10). Over the course of my clinical career and the thousands of hours spent sitting with stressed and anxious parents as they recounted a list of overt behaviours, they self-categorised as "challenging behaviour" in their children I became increasingly aware of my own sense of frustration. I reflected

on this frustration in the context of the pull of my desire to reach in and then reach out to offer what I deemed (mostly) to be a small change that I believed would, or at least could, make a big difference in family dynamics. Moreover, I could see that I was motivated to de-psychopathologise the presented child's behaviour, which I saw as their attempt to communicate their own sense of frustration at not being "heard" within the family construct. Within the transference, I could see the important role of the projections and introjections enacted and was conscious of the importance of staying out of what I term the fix or change agenda I felt pulled towards. This enabled me to sit back, access clinical supervision and reflect on whose narrative was being triggered in such situations. Could this cohort of parents be empowered to self-correct these instances of challenging behaviour if they had access to a therapeutic roadmap within their own homes? This, I now see, was the beginning of 15-Minute Parenting but it took the reflective space of analytic supervision and personal therapy to allow me to access my (unconscious) personal motivations. "Countering these challenges, researchers interested in exploring intersubjective dynamics defend their mission to explore the co-constituted nature of the research looking both inward for personal meanings and outward into the realm of shared meanings, interaction and discourse" (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p. 10).

In describing reflexivity as an intersubjective reflection Finlay and Gough write that the researcher must:

Focus on the situated, emergent and negotiated nature of the research encounter and, for those of a psychodynamic persuasion, how unconscious processes structure relations between the researcher and participant. The process here involves more than reflection - instead, a radical self-reflective consciousness (Sartre, 1969) is sought where the self-in-relation-to-others becomes both the aim and object of focus. (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p. 8)

This concept of self-in-relation to other becoming the focus of the research is described by prominent research specialists as "not dissimilar from, for example, the autoethnographic, heuristic or narrative approach, but it positions concepts like transference, counter-transference and unconscious processes to the forefront" (Bager-

Charleson et al., 2018; p. 6). Finlay writes “[t]he Self is always in the mix with understanding of the Other” (Finlay, 2016, p. 6). I am aware of how much of myself or, my selves perhaps, are interwoven through my 15-Minute Parenting practice. The 15-Minute Parenting practice contains aspects of my academic self, my professional self, my personal self, my parent self, my child self.

One way of probing intersubjectivity is to recognize the multiple subjectivities and/or ego states involved. When we enter any research context, we take with us many ‘selves’: our researcher and therapist ‘selves’, and those from different periods of our lives and internalized significant others. (Finlay, 2016, p. 7)

It was in analysing patterns repeated through many conversations with my client population that I began to better understand my counter-transference, the pull I felt to give an overt direction within the treatment. This is where the phrase 15-Minute Parenting emerged. The most common phrase I heard from busy, working parents was that by the time they had finished work, negotiated traffic and had done the childcare pick-up, to rush home and get a dinner onto the table they felt “lucky if we had 15 minutes together before bedtime, what can we do in just 15 minutes a day”? And so, I rose to the challenge and set about addressing this question with practical therapeutic play activities, mindfully selected to respond to a child’s developmental stage but would also seek to strengthen and enhance the relationship between parent and child. I will be discussing the specifics of the 15-Minute Parenting practice and why 15 minutes in part 3 where I write about the body of public works themselves. At this point I want to flag the relational origins of 15-Minute Parenting given that “the ethical attitude in qualitative research is rooted in the recognition that such research takes place in relationship, often intimate in its revealing, between two people” (Josselson, 2016, p. 22).

In addition to these 4 (main) epistemological strands, I believe that **qualitative pluralism** (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2020) should also be referenced here.

A pluralistic approach seeks to minimise reductionism and enhance more holistic understandings of experiences, changes and practices of behaviours in context by engaging with a plurality of meanings. Counsellors and

psychotherapists recognise that all understanding is dependent on experience. In a complex world, humans will have a variety of experiences and likely a degree of disagreement and contradiction, in addition to some consensus. (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2020, p. 139)

15-Minute Parenting is not a clinical treatment model. It is intended to be engaged with as a self-directed playful parenting daily practice. I designed it to be theoretically rigorous and it evolved over the course of my 20+ years working with families in my clinical practice. But because it is contained in a series of books that parents buy, read and apply themselves with their children there can be a “messiness” to the application of the practice as opposed to the uniformity of a model. Frost and Bailey-Rodriguez wrote about the value of messiness in research:

Gabb (2009) puts forward the notion of ‘messiness’ of research in analysis and representations of phenomena, rather than the tidying away of experiential loose ends that illustrate lived lives. The retention of messiness in the representation of findings does not indicate that analytical rigour is at risk. Rather, it reflects the complexity of experiences that may otherwise be lost; loose ends do not mean frayed ends. (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2020, p. 141)

The parents who engage with my 15-Minute Parenting practice frequently interact with me via social media. I have included samples of this engagement in a combination of text within the body of this thesis and some screen-grabs captured from social media platforms in the appendices. I acknowledge that these social media quotes may appear visually or narratively “messy” but I have chosen to retain some of that messiness within the appendices as a true representation of how a playful parenting practice in a digital age really works. Frost and Bailey-Rodriguez also write of the multi-dimensionality of experience and how qualitative pluralism “recognises that different perspectives produce distinct pictures of meaning-making, and the layering of different approaches creates a tapestry of insights of the same phenomenon” (2020, p. 141). Play is a subjective experience. It is relational of course but it is also subjective. How each parent or professional engages with and makes meaning of my 15-Minute Parenting practice embodies their own unique experience of their lives. Writing this thesis has

brought the beauty and strength of these “experiential loose ends” to the fore for me (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2020, p. 141). The “messiness” is the essence of human experience and I have chosen to use a case study to further explore my 15-Minute Parenting practice:

A case study allows for in-depth investigation by focusing on one participant, group or setting... The adoption of a single case study in pluralistic research not only provides the opportunity to show how the focus of the research unfolds in an insightful and detailed manner, but also enables the ability to work in a justified way that aims to access as much meaning as possible in the data. (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2020, p. 149)

Due to the nature of 15-Minute parenting being a practice rather than a model, I do not have access to many clinical case studies to illustrate the effectiveness of the practice aside from brief anecdotal feedback via social media (detailed later in this document at 3.5.2 and Appendix 1(e)). This case study is based on my engagement with a particular parent and family who were invited to put 15-Minute Parenting into daily practice in their busy family life for 10 days and to feed back on the impact it made, if any, to a national UK magazine. I cite it here as I believe it illustrates my various strands of methodology in action. The invitation to put the practice into practice and feedback on its impact is part of the hermeneutic element to how 15-Minute Parenting is ever-evolving based upon the filtering of parents’ feedback. In addition, I see it as an example of qualitative pluralism in action, particularly how understanding is dependent on experience (the experience with the practice deepened this parent’s understanding of her children’s experiences). Further it serves as a good example of phenomenology in action in terms of how this parent uses the present moment awareness that using my 15-Minute Parenting practice created to make meaning of her children’s behaviour. It is also an example of my use of anecdotal analysis within the field of narrative inquiry

whereby this family learns to use play as a means of interweaving their (held but largely unspoken) experiences with narrative helping them to make sense of what has happened. My 15-Minute Parenting practice is contextual and can be used in many ways. This case study is an example of how the practice can be used.

15-Minute Parenting Practice – Case Study

B is a 42-year-old mother of 3 teenage children living in the UK. A leading UK magazine invited B to try my 15-Minute Parenting practice for 10 consecutive days and report back on her experience with it.

B has twins in their mid-teens, one female and the other identifies as non-binary. She also has a pre-adolescent son. Prior to trying 15-Minute Parenting I spoke with B to gain some more understanding of their family life. In capturing some background history of the family, B shared details of a very traumatic time and was noticeably upset speaking about it. Her relationship with the twins' father ended soon after this traumatic experience and she is now in a relationship with her partner for over a decade. B also lives with persistent physical pain owing to a complex medical diagnosis.

B detailed how the last few years had been very stressful within their family due to animosity emerging between the twins, her non-binary child clashing with their step-father who struggled with the non-binary identity and associated name and pronoun change. She said that he did not seem to understand teenagers very well and this complicated things further. Her son spent many hours per day on his games console with minimal engagement with the rest of the family.

When I asked her what she hoped to get out of this 10-days play experiment, she said that she wanted to rediscover the fun in parenting and bring them closer together. As she was using the practice for just 10 consecutive days before providing feedback, I made some recommendations from sections of my third book, *The Teenage Years* (Fortune, 2020c).

This was the feedback B provided having used the 15-Minute Parenting practice for 10 days with her teenage children at home.

We had fun and connected. After one week spending 15 minutes of quality time together daily, things improved so much. The twins have been giggling together for the first time in years. When P and I were having quality time, we did Joanna's storytelling game which helped her learn to read body language and facial expressions and develop empathy. When Z and I talk, it can quickly escalate, as I'll tell Z, who is non-binary, they are opinionated and Z then loses their temper and the conversation disintegrates quickly. This week, Z had been up all night arguing with transphobic people online. We used another of Joanna's suggested techniques in the book and had a conversation about looking at things from the other perspective even if you don't agree. Through this daily practice, we found a way to enjoy each other's company. L took part in our attempt at a family laughter puddle, which was a wonderful shambles and much laughter ensued. I was just so happy to get him off his computer and connected with the rest of us. After one week, the twins can see I do understand their lives and I can see them as more than bolshie brats. We had fun and connected. There's a different atmosphere in the house. It is safe to say that this practice has changed our lives for the better.

This family had experienced layers of trauma in the past, some of which was actively playing out within their dynamic. At a glance, this did not seem like an “ideal” family with which to showcase 15-Minute Parenting practice in action, I feared there were too many complexities to observe impact within just 10 days.

- I focused on what could be achieved in this designated time frame by flagging sections on adolescent development for Step-Dad to read to gain a deeper understanding into what are typical teenage developmental challenges.
- I also flagged sections on creative communication to Mum as well as suggesting she aim for a blend of 1-to-1 time with each child during the week and daily 15 minutes of playful engagement with whomever was home.
- I checked in on Mum at the halfway mark to see if she needed some further support with the practice, she did not need it.

15-Minute Parenting practice is not going to resolve every issue that this family were experiencing but it did bring them some much needed and valuable play-based connection each day and that, in and of itself, was something this parent felt “changed our lives”.

2.3: Critique of methodology used

In reflecting on the mixed methodology I relied upon in developing my 15-Minute Parenting practice I found the three fundamental questions related to social research (Bryman, 2008; Corbetta, 2003) very helpful.

1. Does the proposed social reality exist? (Ontology) –When I reflect on whether there was a need for my 15-Minute Parenting practice I consider the cohort of busy, time-poor parents with non-clinical level struggles in their parent-child relationship who I was seeing present over time at my clinic but was also meeting in the context of my lunch and learn seminars within corporate and community settings.
2. Is it knowable? (Epistemology) – I believe that I have outlined my use of the 4 main epistemological methods I used as mentioned in section 2.2. I also rely heavily on my own anecdotal hypothesis drawn from my 20+ years clinical practice
3. How can we acquire knowledge about it? (Method) – I was gathering knowledge through my clinical practice, my engagement with parents in the community/public sphere and through my media platforms

I would add to these three a fourth question

4. Can 15-Minute Parenting adequately meet the identified need? – I believe so as my 15 Minute-Parenting practice promotes inter-subjectivity in viewing play as an act of co-creation and relationality in upholding the therapeutic power of “good enough” relationships.

Once I could answer these questions of and for myself within the context of my body of work, I felt that the methodological basis of 15-Minute Parenting was robust enough. What I think unifies my methodology are capacities for observation, self-awareness and

self-reflectivity. I believe that I possess strong capacities in these regards and moreover that I honed these capacities over the course of my psychoanalytic training. Starting with psychoanalysis as a methodology, it grounds my overall work and practice (and myself) and is central to my core formulations and interventions. Also, in my training I was immersed in infant observation as a methodology because it specifically emphasises and nurtures the observer's capacity for observation, self-awareness and self-reflectivity.

Observational research is a very important part of my work and underpins my use of anecdotal hypothesis specifically but is evident across the methodologies I have cited above in 2.2. Perhaps this is why 15-Minute Parenting as a practice is underpinned by these methodologies rather than some others that could be deemed also applicable to the context of my work such as Grounded Theory.

I can see strengths and limitations in using grounded theory as the methodology for the development of 15-Minute Parenting as a practice. 15-Minute Parenting is a practice, the application of which is led by the parent in question. It is not a model. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is rooted *in* the data, in other words, the analysis happens *after* the data has been gathered. While grounded theory also relies upon a feedback loop between data collection and data analysis, I found that hermeneutics was more applicable to the ongoing and ever-active evolution and development of 15-Minute Parenting. That said, I can accept the criticism that had I applied grounded theory I would have had an evaluation framework around the work. I will explore this later in section 4.1.1

Part 3: The Public Works

3.1: Overview of Public Works

Table 2

Public Works: 15-Minute Parenting – Publications

15-Minute Parenting (Gill Books) 2018	15-Minute Parenting 0-7 Years (Thread Books) 2020	15-Minute Parenting 8-12 Years (Thread Books) 2020	15-Minute Parenting the Teenage Years (Thread Books) 2020
227 Pages	211 Pages	226 Pages	284 Pages
Top 10 National Bestseller's List (7)	Grazia Magazine Top 21 Parenting Books 2020; Amazon Bestseller #1; Charted in: Child Psychology; Parenting; Discipline; Family Activities; Neuropsychology	Grazia Magazine Top 21 Parenting Books 2020; Amazon Bestseller #1; Charted in: Children's Studies; Child Psychology; Family Activities; Discipline; Neuropsychology	Listed in Amazon Hot New Releases; Child Psychology Chart #1; Amazon Bestseller #1; Charted in: Child Psychology; Parenting; Neuropsychology
Print/E-Book	Print/E-Book/Audio	Print/E-Book/Audio	Print/E-Book/Audio
Second print run	Print-On-Demand In-Store with new covers 2022	Print-On-Demand In-Store with new covers 2022	Print-On-Demand In-Store with new covers 2022
English	English Chinese/Russian/Slovakian	English Chinese/Russian/Slovakian	English Chinese/Russian/Slovakian

Note: I retained ownership of translation rights to my books with a view to selling them on to the international market. All international book fairs had been on hold since March 2020 (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) but since reopening in 2022 the rights to 15-Minute Parenting have been sold into China, Russia and Slovakia with negotiations ongoing across other territories.

My 15-Minute Parenting book series is a practice of accessible psycho-education for people who do not have cause, means or inclination to attend at the psychotherapy clinic but for whom a small change would make a big difference in their everyday parenting

challenges. My first book was published as a single volume in 2018 in Ireland by an Irish publisher (Gill books) and soon after was picked up by a UK publishing house (Thread books, part of the Hachette Publisher). They commissioned a 3-book series for international publication. (See Appendix 1(a) for detailed samples of each book.)

In June 2020 when the first two books in my 3-book series were published across the UK and internationally I started my own weekly podcast of the same name, 15-Minute Parenting. Each weekly episode takes an everyday parenting challenge as submitted by a listener and I break it down using accessible theory and address it through my 15-Minute Parenting practice. Each episode is 15 minutes long and in 19 months (at the time of submission) I have approximately 100,000 downloads (see Appendix 2(a) for sample episode transcript). I will discuss the evolution of the 15-Minute Parenting practice before describing the books in depth, which in turn will be followed by discussions of other, related public works.

3.2: The 15-Minute Parenting practice

In essence, my 15-Minute Parenting practice has been evolving throughout my studies and career. I am fortunate to have enjoyed a broad and varied career that has seen me work in a variety of social areas and within care systems in Ireland and overseas. What I found is that regardless of the area I was working in, be that children's rights, politics, child abuse/child protection, domestic violence or overseas orphanages, my playful state of mind was my greatest therapeutic tool. Whether I was standing in a domestic violence shelter packed with families, or sitting with a family in the trailer they lived in or even in orphanages located in forests in rural Russia you do not have access to a clinic room filled with therapeutic toys and props. I found that I did not need the props but that I needed to create connections.

15-Minute Parenting is, first and foremost, a self-directed therapeutic and play-based parenting practice. In developing the 15-Minute Parenting practice my conscious goal was to create a practice that was theoretically rigorous, yet easily accessible and would be a practice that parents could read/listen to and immediately integrate its philosophy so they could quickly implement it in their parent-child relationships (with their own children but as the practice has evolved I am also developing it as an application for the

adult children of aged parents or just for adults within their lives and adult relationships) in a self-directed way. In this regard my 15-Minute Parenting practice was created for a large mainstream population, who may well have struggles and challenges in their parent-child relationship but might never meet the clinical threshold for referral to a psychotherapist nor a state-run 10-week (behaviour modification) parenting programme. I also wanted to create something that, while theoretically rigorous, was rooted in play as a language between parents and children because so many parenting programmes tend towards a more behaviour modification model. Over the years I have collected data from numerous sources, what has emerged from my data analysis is a set of themes that parents identify with the 15-Minute Parenting practice:

- Accessible
- Relatable
- Practical
- Real-life parenting for real people
- This really works!
- This helps me to understand my child's behaviour
- This has shown me that I need to take time to look at my own triggers
- This daily practice has made me more playful

In Figure 2 I provide an extract from *15-Minute Parenting 0-7 Years* (Fortune, 2020a) to demonstrate what I mean by “accessible theory” and “practical play”.

Figure 2

Extract Demonstrating “Accessible Theory” and “Practical Play” (Fortune 2020a)

right brain and the maturing limbic system contained therein. The limbic system is fundamentally associated with housing all our emotional functions. The purpose of developing a positive healthy attachment relationship with our children is that it ultimately supports them to develop that all-important capacity to self-regulate their own emotions.

INNER WORKING MODEL

The best parenting outcome is that we raise secure, healthy, kind and independent children who grow up to be able to separate from and live in the world independently of us. We introduce our children to the world and how to be in the world by how we relate to them and model ways for them to relate not only to themselves but also to others. The parent–child relationship is central in supporting children to develop what we call a positive inner working model (IWM) and healthy sense of self.

IWM is simply a term for how you view yourself, others and the world around you. A positive IWM looks something like this:

Self – I view myself as lovable, inherently good and deserving of good things.

Others – I view others as safe and trustworthy.

World – I view the world as a (generally) positive place where good things happen and it is safe for me to be out there.

A negative IWM will look more like this:

Self – I view myself as bad (not that I do bad things but that I am inherently bad as a person), unlovable and deserving of bad things.

Others – I view others as unsafe, untrustworthy and a threat to me.

World – I view the world as a scary and unsafe place where bad things happen.

An IWM is not something you can just present your child with; it is something that evolves gradually through calm, clear, consistent and predictable parenting responses, and its development begins in infancy.

It is worth reflecting on your own IWM because it is very difficult to grow a positive sense of self in a child if you are starting from a negative IWM in yourself. It is possible to move from a negative IWM to a positive one, but this takes specialised clinical support and you should consult a suitably qualified mental-health professional if you feel you would like to discuss this.

STAGES OF ATTACHMENT

Forming a healthy attachment relationship is something that starts gradually and builds and strengthens as you and your child grow together in your relationship and knowledge of each other. It comes from that sense of *feeling felt* by another person, of *getting got* by someone else. This starts with our mother, includes our other parent and extended family circle and then others whom we bring into our lives as we grow and seek to repeat this sense of feeling felt and getting got by others.

We start this process in how we interact with, touch and meet the needs of our infants. Then, as we get to know each other more and more and fall more in love with our children, this attachment strengthens. From your child's perspective, this allows them to learn that their relationship with you can withstand those times when you might be angry with them because they know that you love

On-the-go kit

Take 15 minutes to create an on-the-go kit. Sometimes you're delayed in a waiting room, have to wait for someone in a café longer than expected or have to hang around waiting to pick someone up. I have a Ziploc freezer bag that I carry with me that contains enough items to keep children engaged, stimulated and occupied without having to resort to a screen-based device. This play-on-the-go kit fits easily into a coat pocket or handbag or the glove box in your car.

The kit should contain items such as:

- 1 double sheet of newspaper (this allows you to play newspaper punch and basketball)
- 1 small party-bag-size bottle of bubbles (for playing bubble pop, bubble tennis)
- 2 finger puppets (you can tell a story to your child, have them interact with you or give them to them to play at their own story)
- 1 feather
- 2 straws
- 3 cotton balls (you can play cotton ball/feather guessing game, cotton ball touch, cotton ball face massage, feather blow, cotton ball hockey on a coffee table)
- 1 sheet tinfoil folded up (unfold it and make some body-part moulds of your child – fist, hand, foot, nose, etc.)
- 1 generous strip of toilet paper (play toilet paper bust out, karate chop, even snowball fight with the squares rolled up)
- Lotion (for hand massage, slippery thumb wrestle, to care for adventure marks)
- 2 strawberry laces or a fruit winder pack (use these to measure parts of your child, like their listening ears or their wiggly fingers, then feed the piece to them)

- Stickers (for sticker match)
- Temporary tattoo (you can keep a child very engaged while doing nice nurture-based touch applying the tattoo).

Having these items on hand will allow you to play almost all of the games mentioned in this book. This will all fit into a freezer bag, but you could also have a smaller kit.

Car journeys

These are simple and effective games that you can play while driving the car. They will keep your children engaged and calm without distracting the driver. These games require no props, so once you familiarise yourself with them you are good to go.

Jelly & ice cream: This is a great game to co-regulate your child passengers when you are on the move. Every time you say 'jelly' they must respond with 'ice cream'. But they must say it in the same tone you do, so when you whisper *jelly* they must whisper *ice cream* and when you yell JELLY! they must yell ICE CREAM! If you use a croaky voice or an up/down voice they must copy it. It doesn't really matter if they say jelly instead of ice cream – accuracy isn't the aim of the activity; engagement and co-regulation are. You want them to engage with you so they do not fight with each other (or do not get agitated by being alone in the back seat) and you are using your voice to co-regulate them, so if they are heightened you start loud and bring it down quietly.

Alphabet names: Take your child's name and use each letter to say something positive about them, e.g. CARA = Cool Adventurous Responsible Adorable. If your child is old enough, have them do one for MUM, DAD, GRAN, etc.

Seated Simon says: You call out the actions and they do them in their car seats. This means keeping it to small movements they

In its earliest formation I developed a printable sheet that parents could access via my website. This would contain play tips that they could stick up in their house and have access to at a quick glance. I called this early formation “Fridge Notes”.

Figure 3

Fridge Notes Sample



I knew that Fridge Notes was not enough; it was not quite where I was aiming to be. I created on-the-go play packs for the parents I was working with that enabled them to have quick, accessible play at relational flashpoints e.g., activities to play while waiting, activities to play in the car, activities to play standing in a queue, activities to play on an airplane, activities to play with your face or body (when you have no props to hand). Parents loved the Fridge Note ideas and loved the practical play packs and activities that went with them. While giving them these things I started wondering with parents what activities they used most and why and when and how they knew that these were the right activities in these specific moments. I wanted the play to be *selected not collected* and I wanted it to be considered and mindful play. I wanted to support parents to think about play as a shared language, moment of meeting and opportunity for shared

joy between them and their child. I wanted them to enjoy playing but at this stage I still saw parents' enjoyment as being in their child's interests rather than something we adults benefit from ourselves. This would change later on.

Following on from Fridge Notes I further developed 15-Minute Parenting as a fuller and more robust practice, integrating what parents had fed back to me about Fridge Notes and interweaving a theoretical framework.

15-Minute Parenting is a three-stage practice. Each stage is contained in a separate volume of the book series and these are categorised as:

- 15-Minute Parenting 0-7 years (Fortune, 2020a)
- 15-Minute Parenting 8-12 years (Fortune, 2020b)
- 15-Minute Parenting the Teenage years (Fortune, 2020c)

Each book contains all a parent needs to know about my 15-Minute Parenting practice as it applies to that specific stage of development. The practice starts with introspection for the parent to ensure that they are growing their parenting up in line with each stage of development by repeating their parental self-audit and reflecting on what this stage of development was like for them as a child. Then there is an introduction to the developmental theory of this stage of development before addressing the most common behavioural “challenges” that arise in this stage of development. Throughout each book I provide practical playful activities as a means of problem solving these challenges at home while strengthening the relationship. While explaining what are typical developmental behaviours, I also highlight how to recognise what is in the range of typical development and what is “over and above” and requires professional intervention. The ideal is that a parent starts at Book 1 (0-7 years) and follows the practice the whole way up as their child grows and develops but I am cognisant that some parents will simply pick up the practice at the stage they are at or moreover the stage when they start to experience challenges in their relationship with their child.

The essence of the 15-Minute Parenting practice centres on 7 key concepts, regardless of the stage of development they join at. These are:

- 1) **Play is the language of children** – as I continue to refine the practice, I am exploring how to work play as a language for all of us, regardless of age but I

will discuss this point further in my critical analysis of my practice. By “Play” I mean those moments-of-meeting (connection) and opportunities for shared joy in a relationship between two people.

- 2) **Just as children develop and grow up, so too must our parenting** – the 15-Minute Parenting practice highlights that often when problems emerge in the parent-child relationship parents will find that it is their parenting that needs to develop and grow up in line with where their child is now at developmentally and that the parental strategies that may well have been successful at an earlier stage are no longer effective nor meeting the child’s developmental needs.
- 3) **Our children are not seeking to be difficult; they are seeking to communicate that they are having a difficulty** – the practice highlights that overt behaviour, what children do and say, is underpinned by an emotional and physical state and emphasises that we must become more curious about those underpinning states and less certain about the overt behaviour itself.
- 4) **Connection over correction = less tears and more laughter** – this follows on from the above point but goes a step further in moving a parent from tantrums to low self-esteem to mental health challenges. For a child (a person really) to develop a capacity to enjoy others and enjoy life, they must experience being enjoyed by others, especially their significant others i.e., their attachment figures. My 15-Minute Parenting practice promotes a ring-fenced time each day to spotlight connection, to share a moment of meeting with our child and to embrace this as an opportunity to experience shared joy within that connection.
- 5) **Normalise, don’t psychopathologise** – my practice shares developmental theory (amongst other theories) in an accessible way to establish a base line for what is normal, albeit unpleasant for parents, behaviour in children and teenagers, the latter particularly. My 15-Minute Parenting practice focuses on giving parents a playful roadmap with which to playfully navigate these “normal yet challenging” stages while emphasising that there is nothing “wrong” with how the child is behaving. I believe that by emphasising this, it gives parents a developmental baseline and empowers them to identify what falls within that baseline and what, indeed, is what I call “over and above” and requires referral to a suitably qualified mental health professional.
- 6) **The science of play** – my 15-Minute Parenting practice seeks to deepen parents’ knowledge and awareness of play and its important function in our lives. My

practice is rooted in developmental play theory enabling parents to better understand and then select, rather than collect, toys and games while embracing their relationship with their children as the play space itself. My practice introduces the stages of developmental play and differentiates between the how and the why of child-led play versus adult led but child-focused play. By following my 15-Minute Parenting practice parents are better able to recognise escalating behaviour patterns in their children and quickly identify an appropriate play-based response to trouble shoot the behaviour within the safety and security of a playful relationship. Play should never be seen as mere frivolity because there is a very serious and scientific basis both for play and moreover, for our need to play.

- 7) **Play is not a box of toys, it is a state of mind and a way of being** – this point aims to emphasise to parents that play is not just something nice for children to do, it is developmentally essential and is more than sitting to complete a jigsaw or board game together. Beyond the ring-fenced 15 minutes each day, my practice helps to create and sustain a playful mindset in parents who can identify and embrace opportunities to playfully connect while out for a walk, standing in a queue, sitting in traffic and even during household chores/duties. This playful mindset must begin in the mind of the adult to nurture it in the mind of the child. Our children ask to play with us as a way of asking to connect with us. Our adult minds have lost what it means to be in a child's state of mind, a playful state of mind and my 15-Minute Parenting practice was created in large part to re-establish a playful state of mind as the cheapest, most effective and instantly accessible parenting tool any of us will ever need.

The evolution of the practice has always been guided by these 7 core principles.

3.3: My 15-Minute Parenting practice is underpinned by psychological theory and practice

My 15-Minute Parenting practice is theoretically grounded because I am theoretically grounded, in my practice and in my writing. I do not believe that being theoretically rigorous should mean being inaccessible to those who are not trained in those theories. By interweaving a solid theoretical basis throughout my 15-Minute Parenting practice

I can ensure that play is selected in a careful, considered and mindful way rather than just collected. This means that, through my practice, parents can deepen their understanding of the science of play and why some activities raise energy and some lower it and how to read when one type of activity is called for over another.

My practice is broken down into 3 separate books, each one dedicated to a separate stage of childhood development. The idea that there are 3 stages of childhood development is supported by developmental theorists such as Piaget and Erikson but are also supported and defined culturally by social institutions, practices, beliefs that form the basis of a society. The stages are broad and inter-culturally they are flexible and adaptable within the customs of a given culture. This is also why I emphasise developmental age over chronological age. These stages are intended to guide but not restrict us in understanding our children's development. I use early childhood (0-7 years), middle childhood (8-12 years) and adolescence (13-19/the teenage years) but if your 9-year-old is emotionally 6 years old I would direct you to also read Book 1 (0-7 years) to support you in parenting your child in a more connected way.

My 15-Minute Parenting practice is underpinned by:

• **Attachment Theory** – the broad and extensive body of work of researchers and theorist such as **Bowlby, Ainsworth, Main, Fonagy** Attachment theory is crucial in underpinning my 15-Minute Parenting practice and I draw on early attachment theorists and specific models of therapy that bring this theory to life such as Theraplay and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, bringing in the work of Marianne Marshak (1960), Ann Jernberg, Phyllis Booth and Dan Hughes as well as infant observation theorists like Esther Bick and Dilys Daws. I specifically include and breakdown early attachment formation in Book 1 (0-7 years) (Fortune, 2020a).

• **Affect Regulation Theory** – **Schore (2003a & b), Tronick and Beeghly (2011)** I use this to refer to the process of modulating the range of the child's emotional experiences so that they contribute to his/her growing sense of self as a person and do not disrupt too much this developing sense of self. I also draw specifically on Tronick and Beeghly's (2011) still-face experiments to emphasise the importance and even pro-social benefit of relational rupture so long as it is swiftly followed by relational repair, emphasising that this repair is always the responsibility of the parent as it shows the

child that the parent values the relationship more than the conflict. Tronick and Beeghly (2011, pp. 107-119) also highlight dyadic meaning-making and reparation between parent and child saying, “the infant-adult meaning-making system is a dyadic, mutually regulated communicative system in which there is an exchange of each individual’s meanings, intentions, and relational goals – what we call the mutual regulation model” (Tronick & Beeghly, 2011, p. 111). In my 15-Minute Parenting practice I stress the pro-social value of moments-of-meeting and shared joy between parents and children and using playful narrative activities to create a shared meaning together. In this same (2011) paper he is also critical of the work of William James (1890 who asserted infants existed in a state of overwhelm and confusion in their early life), Sigmund Freud (1923 specifically Freud’s assertion that the infant oscillated between states of tension seeking and tension relieving) and John B. Watson (1928 the behaviourist who encouraged parents to raise their children as though they were young adults, advised against hugging and kissing them and asserted that the idea of an infant even having mental health was a fantasy of what he called mindless adults). For Tronick and Beeghly:

Infants have a stunning array of bio psychosocial competencies. Even young infants have rudimentary intentions and organised and motivating emotions and are able to react to the meanings of others’ intentions and emotions...infants make meaning about their relation to their world of people and things and about themselves. Of course, their meaning-making is non-symbolic and radically different from the representational meaning made by older children and adults, but is meaning nonetheless. (Tronick & Beeghly, 2011, p. 107)

The infant’s life, and later the child and teenager’s life, is made up of moment-to-moment connections and disconnections between the child and those who are with them. This is usually their parents and family members but can also be child minders or teachers. The process of emotional regulation is an ongoing one with mutual regulation of mental/affective states between child and parent. They can and will each regulate each other’s mental states as they move through an emotional regulatory rollercoaster of waves of highs and lows (in synch, out-of-synch and getting back into synch) throughout the day together. These moments of disconnection are not harmful; in fact, they bring significant pro-social gains for the child and the relationship between

child and parent so long as they are followed promptly by re-connection. This emotional regulatory rollercoaster helps to expand the window of tolerance for both child and parent, that is the state of optimal arousal, where we feel calm, confident and regulated. This is why my 15-Minute Parenting practice includes specific reference to playful activities that bring energy up and then back down.

•Polyvagal Theory – Porges (2017), Porges and Dana (2018), Dana (2018, 2020) I draw on this in terms of the transformative power of feeling safe in our relationships to others and placing a high emotional value on emotional connection over behavioural correction. I highlight play activities that promote face-to-face social engagement (central to Porges' Polyvagal theory) to draw on facial expression, physical gestures and prosodic vocalisations for emotional co-regulation. Polyvagal theory tells us that it is the orbital muscle around the eye that we first look at for connectivity, not even the gaze, the actual orbital muscle itself and as such I include lots of activities that encourage and promote eye contact, close physical proximity so when I say in my books that *play fuels connection*, I have specific play in mind and a theoretical basis for asserting such.

I interpret play as a polyvagal experience. Play and playfulness is a lovely combination of ventral safety and regulation and sympathetic activation/mobilising energy with a lovely overlap between the two states. Within polyvagal theory, Dana writes of glimmers (Dana, 2018, p. 68) describing them as micro moments of ventral energy. Polyvagal theory draws a parallel between bringing awareness to our triggers but also our glimmers because glimmers, when savoured (achieved by holding that glimmer energy in mind and body for 30-60 seconds), can become anchors in our lives and within our autonomic nervous system. This will serve us well in general but most especially at times of uncertainty. 15-Minute Parenting as a daily practice is a series of daily micro-moments of shared joy and connection i.e., glimmers.

We require ventral energy to connect with others. Without this we are travelling pathways of protection rather than connection. Play calls for sympathovagal balance, which is a blending of both ventral and sympathetic pathways. Polyvagal theory supports a playful state of mind in how playfulness enables us to increase our capacity for vagally mediated Heart Rate Variability (HRV), that is the more variance between

the beat/between beats the greater our degree of flexibility. HRV may serve as a global index of flexibility and adaptability to stressors. My 15-Minute Parenting practice, as a daily investment in ventral energy, fuels flexibility, adaptability with the aim of supporting lower levels of stress for children and parents.

•**Interpersonal Neurobiology – Siegel (2012)** In particular his triangle of human experience but in general this theory, developed in the 1990s by Siegel to bring together a wide range of disciplines to highlight how the mind, brain and our interpersonal relationships combine, influence and moreover, change each other. This interdisciplinary framework is very applicable to the parent child relationship.

•**Neuroaffective Developmental Psychotherapy – Hart (2017)** This is the blending of neuroscience and developmental psychology. Hart writes that children:

Need to experience and internalise that their parents perceive them as loveable and unique and enjoy being with them. It is the precision of the interaction and the liveliness of the interactive process that drive sense of engaged pleasure. Moments with communicative exchanges in connection with play activities contribute to the child's ability to develop and maintain emotional ties while developing the capacity for self-regulation, which ultimately leads to the development of a mentalising capacity. (Hart, 2017, p. 4)

I integrate the ethos of this into my 15-Minute Parenting practice when I talk about sequences of play activities that facilitate moments-of-meeting (connection) and opportunities for shared joy (engagement) that enable the child to co-regulate their emotional arousal with their available caregiver.

•**Neurosequential Development of the Brain – Perry (2016, 2008)** advocates that human beings make sense of the world through core templates we have formed, including core templates about people. He also emphasises the value of how we are connected to family and community because if we have high relational health, we are more emotionally resilient and will do better in life. His model highlights (in addition to there being more than one pathway out of trauma) that relationships matter,

relationships protect and relationships heal. Perry asserts that the most regulating, reorganising thing for the brain is positive relational experiences. My 15-Minute Parenting practice is about creating a predictable and consistent i.e., reliable space (15 minutes) each day for such positive relational experiences (Perry, 2016, 2008).

•**Development of Emotional Circuits – Panksepp (1998)** (a researcher on the genetics of play) carved out seven primary emotional systems we all have. He called these SEEKING, CARE, PLAY, and LUST on the positive side, whereas FEAR, SADNESS, and ANGER belong to the negative affects. In interviews he has often said that *joy changes the brain in positive ways and counteracts negative emotions*. This is something I strongly believe in and why I advocate play as a daily part of all of our lives and also why I tell parents that their daily play should never be used to incentivise behaviour because it is on those really difficult days that we need to play most of all.

•**Intersubjectivity – Trevarthen, Hughes (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy)** Colwyn Trevarthen has been saying, since the 1970s, that children, even very young infants, are competent and engaged partners in social interaction. This would mean that even very young children have a capacity to understand that there is a self and an Other. They can differentiate people from objects and that people are like them. This is experienced through imitation or mirroring (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). Mirroring is something that I include and speak about in great detail within my 15-Minute Parenting practice along with advocating that even young infants are capable of playful connection and engagement (I cover the topic of playing with an infant in my 15-Minute Parenting Podcast too). Similarly, Dan Hughes' Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy model, which I am fully trained in, talks about a particularly playful approach to parenting at all ages. He teaches of PACE (Playful-Acceptance-Curiosity-Empathy) approach to parenting (Golding & Hughes, 2012). I advocate this very strongly in advising parents *go to A&E*, acceptance and empathy, while *staying out of certainty and in a place of curiosity* so that they can be open to being surprised by their child and always seek to better understand them.

Outside of these theoretical frameworks (all of which fit within the attachment and trauma landscape) I have been interested in Dr Christiane Sanderson's work on the intergenerational transmission of trauma and attended a webinar with her when she

spoke on this. In speaking of cultural transmission of trauma, she cited Alice Miller's writing when she said "early childhood trauma is a powerful force in adults who seek to triumph over trauma...parents can be so shut down themselves by trauma that they don't even see their child's distress or struggle [because] in a state of constant survival there's no down time to reflect and this prevents the processing of the trauma" (Sanderson, 2019). I would add that such feelings, that were overwhelming in the absence of an available parental regulator, remain dormant and unprocessed, can be easily triggered and activated, even by one's own child. Inner-State felt-safety or constancy cannot be established when there is no predictable, reliable and consistent security/safety in either close physical proximity to another or even in distance from them. Secure attachment inoculates us against this kind of stressful arousal. This is where I see my parental self-audit, seeking to engage one's own reflective functioning in how we can learn to recall things from our past, be they positive or negative, from a position of fresh thinking and new perspective on the matter can create a pathway forward and out of our own traumatic or dysregulated past. By interweaving such mnemonic memory traces (in Lacanian psychoanalysis this refers to a 'remembering' rather than a specific 'memory') with narrative we bring them to conscious awareness and can move forward informed rather than impeded by memories of how we were or were not parented ourselves. I am reminded of the Hungarian psychoanalyst Sandor Ferenczi who said that children who experience being unwelcome by their parent are more likely to develop psychopathology (Ferenczi, 1929). Raising parents own capacity to healthily mentalise their child's experiences (both their overt behavioural experiences and their internal emotional experiences) is the best defence we have in preventing such psychopathology from developing in the child. This is why I advocate daily play between parents and their children. Short, predictable, reliable bursts of play that ensure there is a felt connection benefits both parent and child. Ferenczi (1949) also spoke of a *confusion of tongues* that I find very applicable here. Adults and children seek to communicate and connect in conflicting languages. We adults 'speak' our communication whereas our children 'do' their communication. 15-Minute Parenting seeks to close that gap between the minds of parents and children by bringing parents back to that space of shared language, play. In Book 1 (0-7 years), chapter 2 is entitled "Child-Proofing your relationship" and contains a sub-heading within it, "rediscovering play", that aims to encourage parents to bring playfulness back into their own adult lives (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Extract Relating to Rediscovering Play (Fortune, 2020a)

children for inspiration. Children can literally make a game out of anything (a nine-month-old with a cardboard box will show you that) and they find delight and pleasure in all things magical and creative. Children are also very wise; they are great at identifying who in their world is playful, and they will quickly seek out these people to engage with. They can transition seamlessly from seriousness to playfulness and in this regard, we have a lot to (re) learn from our children. I say relearn as we have all been children once and I believe the capacity to be playful exists within all of us; we may just have to dig deep to find it if we have gone rusty. If you read this and think, *Gosh, it's been twenty or thirty years since I've really played*, it is entirely possible to start playing now and to use it as a means to have more fun in your relationship with your partner and your children, resulting in fewer tears and more laughter for everyone in the family. Let's make a commitment to find ways to prioritise playfulness and make play an essential part of your family life.

But first, let's look at some practical ways to bring play and playfulness back into your adult relationships. A good place to start is to spend time just watching your children play. Because play is not just an activity but a state of mind, you will immediately see their unabashed, uninhibited enthusiasm, so take inspiration from that and approach playfulness in your own relationship with the same positive and open outlook.

If you feel that this does not describe where you currently are in your relationship, but perhaps you once were and would like to try to get back to that place or even somewhere like it, be assured that you can learn this way of being and it starts with giving some of the games a go. We can make a conscious choice to be more attentive, responsive and attuned partners and become more mindful of each other's needs and desires. Breaking old habits is not simple or straightforward, but it is possible to consciously rewire our ingrained neural pathways and develop new ways of

being and relating with each other. Sometimes this requires the help of a suitably qualified and accredited professional, but it can start with getting back to basics and getting back to play. If we can play with each other, we can play with our children and teach them that playfulness is truly a state of mind.

15-minute practice: Rediscovering play

Stay with me on this one. I appreciate it takes a leap of faith to do some of it without feeling entirely silly, but then again, the benefits of being entirely silly are a bedrock of this book and you don't have to use all these ideas – even one is a start.

Turn chores into games. So you have to wash the dishes – not all that exciting, right? But if one of you washes while the other dries you can role-play being movie characters or interviewer/interviewee or sports commentators... think along the lines of 'Tom takes the bowl, still dripping wet, and passes it to Ann, who wraps it in a tea towel before stacking it on the sideboard', or 'So tell me, Tom, how did you prepare for this role of Cinderella? Had you done much housework previously?' You're doing the dishes anyway – why not have a laugh in the process?

Challenge each other to come up with **one joke each day** and see who can make the other laugh hardest.

Try a version of **hide and seek** to bring some more affection and nurture into it. Leave your partner a surprise note telling them one thing you love about them or a memory you thought of from your dating days that made you smile, and/or a chocolate or sweet by their pillow for them to find.

If you are driving or travelling on a train or bus together, play a game of '**I went on a picnic and I brought...**' (If you're not familiar with this, each person adds one item to the list

of things brought and when it is your turn you must recite the entire list before adding a new item to the end of it.)

Choose a favourite passage from a book you love, or your favourite children's book from your own childhood, or some poetry, and **read to each other**, perhaps sharing what you love so much about this particular piece or narrative.

We might talk all the time, especially when we have children and we are using cognitive connection and verbal instructions and planning, but we rarely touch. And I mean **touch without an agenda**. Touch has healing and soothing powers; it lowers blood pressure and reduces anxiety, so it is very helpful in busy households and relationships where you can feel like ships passing in the night. Try a hug, playfully grabbing each other, tickling, playful (and gentle) wrestling or even just holding hands while sitting or lying side by side.

A study conducted by James Coan, a neuroscientist at the University of Virginia, found that the reassuring touch of someone you truly love and feel loved by can affect your physiological experience of pain.¹ His study found that if you're in a healthy relationship, holding your partner's hand is enough to reduce your blood pressure, ease your response to stress, improve your health and soften physical pain. A touch from a loved one can and does alter one's physiological and neural functions.

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN

When an adult relationship breaks down it is often difficult and stressful for the adults involved, who need time and space to grieve the loss of the relationship and process what the end of the relationship means to them. This is further complicated when you have children together because even though you have decided you

In addition, my clinical thinking and reflexivity is influenced by the theory of psychoanalysis in particular the work of Donald Winnicott (Winnicott, 1971, 1977) especially his idea that it is only by being actively involved in the play with the child that the adult's conscious communication, typically verbal intervention, can connect with the unconscious of the child. He emphasised the need to understand the child together with understanding the parent and this is why I emphasise the necessity of parent-child play. Melanie Klein (1986) writes on the central role of fantasy in the lives of children, even infants. Catherine Mathelin's important book was one of the first to put Lacanian analysis of children in writing and in it she shares a wealth of clinical case studies (Mathelin, 1999). She also draws heavily on the work of Dolto when she refers to Dolto's 1982 work: "what parents are unable to express is expressed through their child. Thus, the child may not suffer even when the realities of his life seem to us to be distressing: what hurts is in another register" (Mathelin, 1999, p. 5), which itself brings to mind the famous Jung quote, widely quoted and most often attributed to his 1954 work, *On the Development of Personality*:

Children are educated by what the grown-up is and not by his talk. Nothing has a stronger influence psychologically on their environment and especially on their children than the unlived life of the parent. If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves. (Jung, 1954/2014)

This is why I feel so strongly about framing my 15-Minute Parenting practice with a parental self-audit, encouraging an inter-generational reflection and working dyadically with the relationship between parent and child as the focal point of the work. Further, it is why I believe that adults also need to play, not *should* or *could* benefit from play but actually *need* to play.

My interest in the inner psychic experiences of parents was nurtured on my MA clinical placement in Ireland's National Maternity Hospital and the writing of Joan Raphael-Leff (1993) on the subjective experience of women in pregnancy and how essential it is that we let go of our fantasy baby to accept and love the real baby we deliver. I was further informed by Claude-Noelle Pickmann (Pickmann et al., 1999), specifically her writing on working with adolescents, and Bice Benvenuto who wrote:

one can speak to their separate existence, to their forming unconscious, thanks to the fact that all children, even toddlers and babies who hardly utter comprehensible words, play. What appears as playing to adults is in fact children's life activity, their way of living and communicating. (Benvenuto, 2017, pp. 58-59)

I advocate that play is not just something nice for children to do; it is essential for them so that they can grow, develop and thrive. I have created a self-directed therapeutic parenting practice that enshrines play as the language of children and moreover, a practical and accessible roadmap that equips parents with that same language.

3.4: Other public works that support and amplify my 15-Minute Parenting practice

For ease of reading, I have split these into 15-Minute Parenting media and then other public works that support and amplify the 15-Minute Parenting concept. The other public works take the form of academic papers/chapters, educational broadcasting, and conference talks.

Table 3

Other Public Works: 15-Minute Parenting – Media

Radio Show	Podcast	TEDx Talk	Conferences
2017-Present	2020 – ongoing	2017	2010-Present
The Parenting slot is a 30-minute weekly segment on the multi-award-winning Sean Moncrieff Show on Newstalk FM	Weekly 15-Minute episodes taking themes from the books and questions from parents and answering those through my 15-Minute Practice	“Social Media, the ultimate shame game?” TEDx Ha’Penny Bridge Dublin Event June 2017	I am an in-demand key note speaker and speak at many National events (e.g., Barnardos, Irish After Care Network, Social Care Ireland, Irish Council of Psychotherapy); Ulster University Cross Border Event of Empathy and Culture 2021;

			Cultural Literacy Everywhere (CLE UK) – Global Play Symposium 2021
220,000+ listeners	100,000 downloads	Approx. 7,500 hits	NGOs, Universities, Corporates, Schools, Community Organisations

3.4.1: 15-Minute Parenting – Media

Newstalk FM Sean Moncrieff Show – I have hosted the weekly parenting slot on this award-winning national talk radio show every Wednesday afternoon (a 30-minute slot) since 2017. Each week listeners submit their parenting questions and I answer them, using the lens of my 15-Minute Parenting practice. This platform helps to give my practice its impact in terms of how it enables me to reach such a wide audience each week. Weekly live listenership is approximately 125,000 and the numbers who access the segment afterwards via the radio stations app and highlights function bring the total figure to approximately 220,000 weekly. The slot is one of the stations most popular and attracts its own sponsor.

15-Minute Parenting Podcast – I decided to start a weekly podcast as a way of further spreading the 15-Minute Parenting practice during the pandemic lockdown period in June 2020. In 2 years, this podcast has earned approximately 100,000 downloads. Each episode is 15 minutes in duration and takes a common parenting question that comes up via my radio show or my social media pages and answers it using my 15-Minute Parenting practice and framed within ACT:

Acknowledge the question

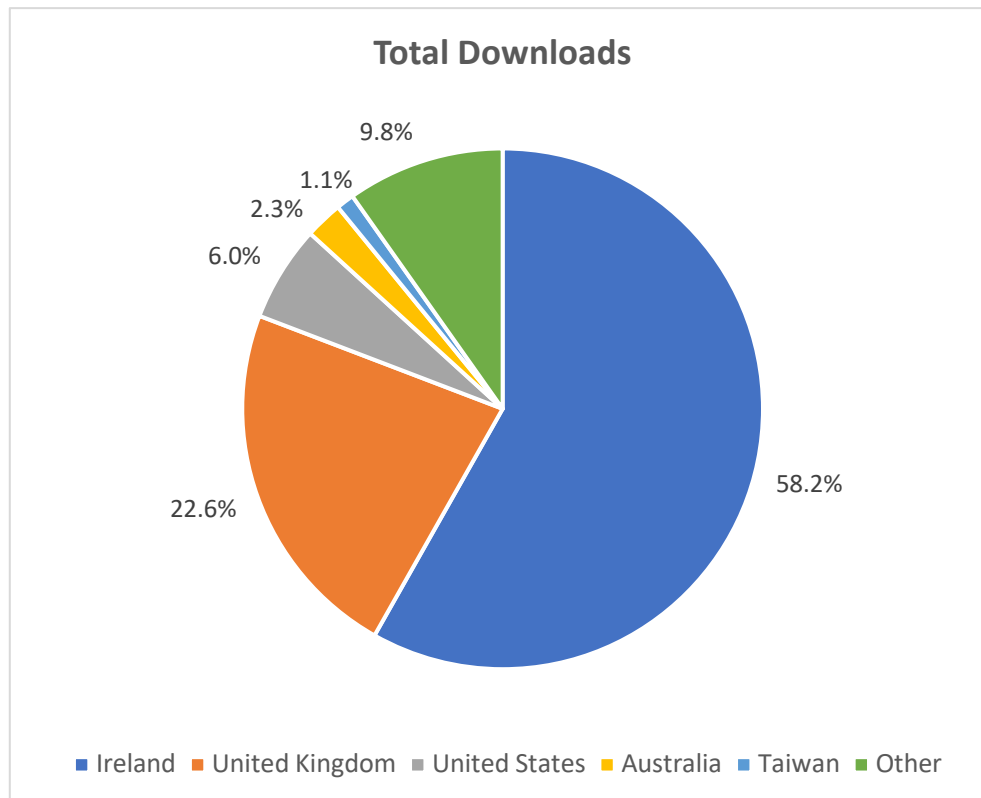
Communicate the theory

Target a playful solution

The podcast attracts a global audience as reflected in this breakdown (percentages over 2-year period ending November 2022).

Figure 5

A Breakdown of the 113 Countries 15-Minute Parenting Podcast is Accessed From – 2020 to 2022



*Other encapsulates data from over 100 Countries

In addition to my own podcast, I am a regular guest on other podcasts, many of which draw very significant audiences e.g., Zoe Blaskey’s *Motherkind* podcast has in excess of 1 million downloads and I was a guest on this with my episode being re-featured due to popular demand. Similarly, Madeleine Shaw’s *Get your Glow Back* podcast and Stefanie Preissner’s *What’s the Story with...* podcast attract very large audiences.

Social media is another media platform that I have found especially useful in speaking about 15-Minute Parenting. I have detailed how this has worked below in section 3.5.2

To date, I have found that my media presence has been the most effective way to dissipate the 15-Minute Parenting practice to a broad audience both in Ireland and also in the UK and further afield on Australian Breakfast TV show, “Studio 10”.

3.4.2: Other public works that support and amplify the 15-Minute Parenting concept

Lacanian psychoanalysis with babies, infants and adolescents – Further notes on the child (Fortune, 2017a) - I contributed a chapter to this book about the impact of smart/digital technology on what Lacan called the iMirror stage of development. I also included specific reference to the role of parent-child play in offsetting this impact. This book brings together some of the most prominent clinicians in the field of Lacanian Child Psychoanalysis and I was honoured to be invited to contribute.

TEDx talk (Ha’Penny Bridge event in Dublin, June 2017, Fortune, 2017b) – I was invited to deliver a talk as part of the TEDx event in Dublin 2017 and was honoured to stand on that famous red spot on the stage. I spoke about our collective relationship to shame via our engagement in social media and moreover the ubiquitous nature of social media in all of our lives rendering us a shame society.

Figure 6

Joanna Fortune at TEDx Talk (2017)



Conferences: I am an in-demand conference speaker, known for my playful approach that typically sees attendees engaging in a group head-shoulders-knees-toes and/or a vigorous (and quickly competitive) balloon relay and/or cotton-ball snowball fight. I have been a keynote speaker for national organisations such as **Breaking Through** (national After Care group for children-in-care), **Barnardos** (their 2021 Digital Wellbeing conference where I spoke about play), **Ulster University** (cross-border event entitled *cultivating empathy through creativity* which sold out in 36 hours and I spoke about play in all of our lives, adults and children) and **CLE – Cultural Literacy Everywhere** (a London based organisation hosting an annual Play Symposium where I delivered a presentation on the importance of play in all of our lives on their Play as Education panel especially 15-Minute Parenting based playfulness as well as acting as a rapporteur for another panel on Play within the Arts). I have presented at numerous other conferences for **Social Care Ireland** and **Aware** (a national mental health charity) and for **Ironmill College UK** at their annual conference 2016 and a public lecture for them in 2021. I have delivered academic webinars for the online education/professional development body **NScience UK**.

Community Engagement: I regularly deliver playful parenting talks using my 15-Minute Parenting practice for community groups, schools and corporate groups under a *lunch and learn* 1-hour format. Since 2018 I have also delivered many of these talks on social media platforms such as Instagram Live and the newer platform, Clubhouse, which is an audio only panel-based format. On these platforms I have been invited by many UK, USA and Australian organisations to deliver talks on my 15-Minute Parenting practice. Social Media is a medium I am growing my engagement on, as it is also a very effective tool for sharing 15-Minute Parenting to very wide audiences

3.5: The impact of the public works and how this is influencing the ongoing development of my 15-Minute Parenting practice as a body of knowledge

“The choice of research topic often has personal significance for the researcher, whether conscious or unconscious” (Etherington, 2004, p. 110). For me, it was both

conscious and unconscious. I had a conscious goal in developing my body of public work and how I structured them reflects that. However, I underestimated the unconscious motivations that were underpinning this more conscious goal and it was through the process of reflexive auditing of the Context Statement that this came into sharper focus for me. My 15-Minute Parenting practice is the culmination of more than 20 years clinical work, more than 20 years of shared meaning-making with the families I have been privileged to work with and the children who have taught me far more than I could ever teach them. As I reflexively audit my body of public works, I can see clearly that my 15-Minute Parenting practice is a mindfully constructed scaffolding that is interwoven and underpinned by these clinical narratives. “As we reach deeply inside ourselves, we can connect with creativity and originality and discover aspects of our experiences that are not yet verbalised, but rather known at a tacit level” (Etherington, 2004, p. 123).

3.5.1: Standing up for ‘play’

One of the unexpected things that have arisen from my public works since I started writing the books in 2017 is a growing narrative around how all of this applies to the lives of adults. I have always spoken about the benefits of play for adults but I have seen a shift, particularly during the global Covid-19 pandemic period (2020-2021), in journalists contacting me to speak about play in adulthood, corporate organisations seeking to book me for talks to their staff about how they can become more playful and directly from parents asking me to cover this topic on my weekly podcast. As Van Fleet and Feeney (2015) write:

Surprisingly, however, research on play and playfulness in human adults is scarce. Despite the paucity of empirical attention devoted to play in adulthood, adults often describe the most enjoyable element of their romantic relationships as interactions in which they play with their partner (Betcher, 1981; Lauer & Lauer, 2002). When a sample of married couples were asked what they would miss most if their relationship were to dissolve, couples most often reported their inside jokes and games (Betcher, 1981). Along similar lines, Lauer and

Lauer (2002) found that highly satisfied couples described play as an essential feature of their relationship – even more important than sex or shared humour. Why, then, have researchers, particularly social psychologists, not further explored this phenomenon? (Van Fleet & Feeney, 2015, p. 630)

Without exception, the most controversial aspect of my 15-Minute Parenting practice is detailed in Book 1 (0-7 years) (Fortune, 2020a, pp. 21-30) when I write about child-proofing your relationship and specifically the section on ‘rediscovering play’ (see also Figure 4). I emphasise that *if we can play with each other, we can play with our children and teach them that playfulness is truly a state of mind* and include a list of playful activities that parents can start with to bring more play into their adult lives and adult relationships. It is simultaneously the part of my 15-Minute Parenting practice that intrigues and terrifies parents. They feed back to me that they “get it” cognitively but the idea of actually doing it feels awkward and uncomfortable. I can accept this and empathise with the unfamiliarity of play in our adult lives that lead to this awkwardness *but* as with any overt resistance I see it as an expected phase of treatment/the process and while being accepting and empathetic, I will still gently yet firmly challenge the resistance by finding something small that they can start with and use that as a point to build from. Adulthood, and specifically how adulthood prioritises responsibility and being serious (of course we have responsibilities as adults, I do not mean to infer otherwise) should not be at the cost of play and playfulness in our adult lives. Not being able to play or to access our playful state of mind is precisely what can render us feeling stuck or blocked in our lives. Play is the way out of and beyond that stuckness and 15-Minute Parenting has been created as an accessible roadmap towards play.

Our concept of play in the West is often bound up with the idea that play is inseparably connected to childhood, while adulthood is connected to seriousness and responsibility. Yes, we change as we grow older and develop – but all this means is that how we play should change and develop with us. In

fact, I believe that play is key to helping us develop and reach our full potential.
(Rosen, 2019, p. 21)

Consistent with Rosen's words and also my own experience of promoting play and playfulness in adult lives/relationships, Van Fleet and Feeney (2015) found that:

Adults are expected to be productive – whether at work or at home. If play is not viewed as a productive means to spend one's time, then play among adults may be perceived as frivolous, over-indulgent, or irresponsible (Sutton-Smith, 2008). Consistent with this claim, Betcher (1981) found that while couples reported thoroughly enjoying play in their relationship, they also reported embarrassment and concern over appearing childish when describing their play to others outside the relationship. A second explanation, and arguably the greatest difficulty for play research, has been the development of satisfying definitions of play and playfulness. Existing definitions differ substantially in their conceptualizations of the terms. Defining play may be challenging in part because there are many forms that play can take, and it may occur in a wide variety of settings (Berlyne, 1969). (Van Fleet & Feeney, 2015, pp. 630-631)

I refer back to Winnicott's differentiating the content of the play (overt behaviour or activity) from the act of playing (disposition or state of mind). He also said that he wanted to

Draw attention away from the sequence psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, play material, playing and to set this up again the other way round. In other words, *it is play that is universal*, and that belongs to health: playing facilitates growth and therefore health; playing leads into group relationships; playing can be a form of communication in psychotherapy; and lastly, psychoanalysis has been developed as a highly specialized form of playing in the service of

communication with oneself and others. (Winnicott, 1971, p. 41) [Emphasis in original]

My first book was written in 2017, published (original version) 2018, republished with new branding in the UK/internationally in 2020. Between writing and re-publishing this book, the response to playfulness in the lives of adults has shifted. It is no longer something parents/media queries baulk or cringe at when I discuss it. Now it is likely to be something that is said to me with curiosity and openness. For example, Radio Show Host and Musician Tom Dunne while hosting the Sean Moncrieff show on 31st March 2021 said “I am struck that no matter what the question is, the answer is always play.” I agreed and referenced the ages we had spoken about that day saying, “Yes, be it 15 months or 15 years old” and Tom Dunne added, “I would say 50 years old” and we briefly talked about the importance of play in adult lives, which was then picked up on Twitter.

@APlayfulCity [aplayfulcity.com] (2021, March 31st). *Grown ups! Get playing. Really enjoyed @ImJoannaFortune’s advice on the centrality of play in all our lives.* [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/APlayfulCity/status/1377268946450186246>

On primetime afternoon national talk radio, we casually spoke about the importance of play in adult lives and the interviewer initiated it. For me, this was a noticeable shift in the play landscape, both in terms of how play was understood and spoken about.

Add to this that my publisher approached me about writing a 4th book, which will be about the role of play and playfulness in our adult lives. This book was published September 2022. The appetite for play has changed and my inference is this is part of the impact of my 15-Minute Parenting series (that is, how the books have centred me in this conversation about play in adult lives, not to infer that my books alone sparked a focus on play for adults). I first wrote it 3 years ago, I have spoken and written about it and on social media, radio, TV, print media, talks and presentations. Now I am asked about it rather than being the one to bring it up. Reflective of such a change in attitude, Etherington writes:

Ferguson, in the introduction to a revised version of Gendlin’s work ‘Focusing’ (1981) describes focusing as moving ‘inward, drawing on information from the

deeper, wiser self’ that is held in a ‘felt sense’ within the body that involves ‘whole brain knowing’, connecting our left and right hemispheres and leading to a sense of release that accompanies a new understanding of something that was previously unclear. (Etherington, 2004, pp. 123-124)

I was not wrong to push the importance of play in adult lives in 2017 but, within my 15-Minute Parenting practice, it was too premature to land. As I have built a following, engaged a wider audience and strengthened my voice on such matters, this is the time for this 4th book.

3.5.2: Reception and ongoing development of the 15-Minute Parenting practice:

Both reaction and engagement by parents and professionals has been overwhelmingly positive at this point.

Paul Gilligan is a clinical psychologist and is the CEO of St. Patrick’s Mental Health Service as well as adjunct professor in Trinity College Dublin. Of my work he has said, *“Joanna Fortune is an exceptional professional who has dedicated her career to working with children and parents. She takes a children’s rights, child-centred approach to her work. She is a superb therapist who is driven by a commitment to her clients and to meeting their needs. Her books are an invaluable resource to parents and she supports those resources through a strong website and presence on social media. She is a superb communicator and is comfortable with any form of media.”*

Debbie Deegan is founder and CEO of To Children With Love, a charity working in Ireland and Russia with children in need and in Russian orphanages. She has been the recipient of numerous humanitarian awards. Of my work she has said, *“when Joanna left us [the charity To Children With Love] in 2010, she expanded upon her playful parenting platform through the media and the talks and conferences she speaks at. This extended her 15-Minute Parenting model, which is accessible, fun and effective and this is what sets it apart from any other parenting model. We all see and hear Joanna*

on a regular basis on radio and television. I think Joanna has contributed to and will continue to contribute to the national discourse on parenting in a meaningful way.”

Dr Cara Augustenborg is an Environmental policy fellow at University College Dublin as well as being an honorary member of the President of Ireland’s Council of State and a media broadcaster. Of my work she has said, *“Ms. Fortune is one of Ireland’s most well-known experts in child and adolescent psychotherapy, and I have drawn on her expertise both personally and professionally in the years I have known her. Professionally, I have found her expertise and accessible communication style particularly helpful in improving my own communication on the climate crisis to youth audiences. Personally, she has provided extremely useful professional guidance to my family in coping with our own child’s challenges. I have found her books incredibly helpful in my role as parent. I regularly seek out Joanna’s expert advice and have collaborated to effectively support the youth climate movement in Ireland.”*

Dr Jennifer Carroll-MacNeill is an elected TD (member of the Irish Parliament) and is spokesperson for equality for her political party. Further she is a qualified Barrister of Law and holds a PhD from University College Dublin. We met in a professional capacity in 2012 when she was political advisor to the then Minister for Children and I was volunteering time to lobby for a yes vote in the Children’s Rights Referendum in Ireland. Of my work she has said, *“Joanna has a unique skill of being able to make complex theory and concepts very accessible to a mainstream audience. She is an excellent communicator and a very engaging presenter. She is a respected and recognised expert in her field and her 15-Minute Parenting practice is widely known and highly thought of as an accessible, practical and playful therapeutic parenting practice. Joanna has managed to take what she knows and use her knowledge and expertise to make therapeutic parenting a mainstream parenting practice. She approaches this work with kindness and good humour and her genuine passion for the well-being and development of children, and their parents, shines through in every interaction I have had with her.”*

Lydia Smyth is a Family Support Worker at a busy Family Resource Centre in Dublin 5. She is also the parent of two young children. Of my work she has said, *“As a parent of two young children, I really appreciate the tone in the books. Joanna does not speak*

down to parents, she is non-judgemental, realistic and acknowledges the challenges as well as the rewards in parenting. There is an important focus in what you as a parent are bringing to your parenting and a really clear "parenting self-audit" which I use on a regular basis. I also appreciate the focus on recognising what triggers you and the recommendation to "tap out" if you know you are dysregulated when engaging in a challenging situation with your child. It really resonated with me and I feel like it gives me the freedom to acknowledge that sometimes as a parent, you cannot help your child if you are feeling overwhelmed. I personally feel like understanding the 15 Minute Parenting model makes a difference to how I parent on a daily basis, regardless of whether I am doing it in fifteen minutes or using an activity from the books. I find myself more readily available to "check out" of adulting, and jump into playing regularly throughout the day, whether it is with my children or my husband. I have become more serious as I have gotten older but reading these books and remembering how to be fun has really reignited that playful part of my personality, I thought I grew out of."

I receive many messages from parents who use the model and have had positive experiences with it on social media. I have struggled with the ethics of including retrievable social media quotes in this thesis. I reflected on my obligations as a researcher to appropriately reference social media posts if I used them alongside the intent of the people who posted comments to me about 15-Minute Parenting practice publicly. I decided that I was not comfortable using publicly retrievable social media posts as part of this thesis because while a publicly retrievable message is in the public domain, I believe to do so in this context would be beyond the scope of what the author of these messages intended. However, from the direct feedback I receive from parents I can see how they use my 15-Minute Parenting practice as a process of becoming. That is a process of becoming a more playfully engaged parent. One anonymised example to illustrate this point is:

[Parent]. (2020, August). This eBook has become my bible. So many amazing ideas to get the little ones involved in and engaged. Everyone has 15 minutes out of their day to put their phones away and really be present with their child. This isn't just any old parenting book but an investment in a positive relationship between you and your child whilst setting boundaries and having lots of laughs and silliness along the way. I would

highly recommend this book to anyone with young children and will be reading the next book aimed at 8–12-year-olds in the next year or two. Thank you so much. [Instagram]

I have included some of the 30+ personal/professional statements I received in support of my work and these are attached as Appendix 1 (f).

I think the global Covid-19 pandemic has helped to create a space for this next phase in the practice:

One argument for play, then, is that it teaches a flexibility to face up to and deal with the things on that list [a list of changes within our lives] – or, at the very least, helps us to live with change, to enjoy it and use it, to have an overall more fulfilling experience. Being in play, being in the state of mind that says, ‘I wonder what might happen if I tried this’ and then not worrying or being afraid of the outcome, is a state of mind that can cope with the unexpected. It can also teach us that we can change the rules. (Rosen, 2019, p. 20)

This global pandemic (2020-2021) has thrown what we recognised as social norms and rules up into the air and tossed them out of the window. The opportunity to stop running, to stand still and stop being so busy ‘doing’ and allow ourselves to emotionally exhale and simply ‘be’ has shown us that when we have to change the rules, we most certainly can change the rules and adapt to a new set of expectations, move to a new rhythm. If we can do it when we “have to” then we know we can do it when we want/need to as well. We have had to change how we live over this last year and part of how we have coped with these changes is play. If baking banana bread every which way it can be baked, growing sourdough starter, cross-stitching, knitting, learning an instrument, painting, buying adult Lego sets, making 1000+ piece jigsaw puzzles is not playing, then what is it? We have returned to play.

I am going to make an inference as to why and how this state of play emerged in a state of emergency. Boredom. Good, old-fashioned boredom. In our increasingly digitised, switched on, fast-paced lives we got so busy ‘doing’ that we forgot how to simply ‘be’. We sabotaged any opportunity for boredom with distraction, mindlessly scrolling, gazing down into devices held on our laps, we stopped daydreaming while gazing out windows or making eye contact and connecting with new people who might share a

story with us. Boredom is vital. It is that free-floating state of reverie, mind-wandering out of which desire will emerge. If we sit in a state of nothing, we will discover something. That is, we will discover something to do, something to feel, a memory to recall. Psychoanalyst, Adam Phillips, writes that:

The capacity to be bored can be a developmental milestone...the bored child quickly becomes preoccupied by his lack of preoccupation...is it not, indeed revealing, what the child's boredom evokes in the adults?... It is one of the most oppressive demands of adults that the child should be interested, rather than take time to find what interests him. Boredom is integral to the process of taking one's time. (Phillips, 1993, pp. 72-73)

Michael Rosen adds to this idea with "Boredom breeds inspiration – and 'inspiration', literally, means to breathe in. So, take a moment and breathe in the world around you and think of the world as something that you can play with" (Rosen, 2019, p. 16).

I was invited to speak at the Annual Conference for the Irish Council of Psychotherapy in 2018, entitled "Borders, Boundaries and Mental Health", and during the conference panel discussion the MC for the event asked what I thought was the biggest crisis facing childhood in today's society. I answered that the biggest crisis facing society in general was our collective inability to be bored, which after a pause to consider it he remarked, "that may be the most important thing said today." We forget how much we need boredom in our lives; we need to be reminded of this in a world that is always switched on. I write about the value of boredom and embracing boredom and above anything, avoiding sabotaging our children's boredom with distraction in my 15-Minute Parenting books. We are not our children's entertainers and engaging with them playfully does not equate with entertaining them. Engaging with them playfully is about connection and that moment-of-meeting that sparks a shared joy is what is pleasurable. It has to be pleasurable and fun, otherwise we will not do it. When play is not fun, it is a duty, an obligation, something we feel we "have" to do and then it feels performative, inauthentic and in this instance, I would say, stop, this is not play, you are not playing because you are not in a playful state of mind, you are in fact bored. So be bored and out of that state will emerge desire that makes play possible again.

Perhaps this is why we, adults, are more amenable to embracing play and a playful state of mind now more than even just a few years ago. This pandemic has brought us back to boredom and in doing so we have re-engaged with our desire. This is something that I explore in detail in my forthcoming 4th book (September, 2022).

I published my books during the Covid-19 global pandemic, which means I have been speaking about play, writing about play and promoting play-based solutions to the challenges in all of our lives throughout the pandemic. So yes, publishing my public works has had an impact on me personally and professionally as it has on the ongoing evolution of my 15-Minute Parenting practice but I can see that my practice and how I seek to share it with parents has also had an impact on parenting, family life and contributed to a societal shift in how we view play. All three of my books have earned the Amazon bestseller ribbon and held the number 1 position in multiple charts and two featured in a national magazine (*Grazia Magazine* UK 2020 Ref Appendix 1 (d)) *Top 21 Parenting Books*). I was invited onto Australian breakfast television soon after my books were launched there and have appeared on Irish television and UK print media and multimedia many times. Parents are engaging with my back to basics, accessible therapeutic parenting practice.

When I look at the rising figures listening to my podcast and radio show during this time period along with the increase in numbers seeking and attending online parenting seminars with me where I discuss the 15-Minute Parenting practice, I believe the boredom of the pandemic has enabled us to get closer to a more playful mindset.

Part 4: Conclusion

4.1 Critical evaluation

There are a number of aspects of my 15-Minute Parenting practice that I can critically analyse and I have done this as a matter of course over the years as the 15-Minute Parenting practice has evolved. This analysis has informed the writing of my 4th book, has encouraged me in developing my podcast and is driving me in the ongoing development of the 15-Minute Parenting practice.

From the outset I wanted to create a theoretically rigorous, accessible playful therapeutic parenting practice that provided parents with therapeutic techniques they did not need to be “in therapy” to benefit from. I wanted it to be self-directed as opposed to creating another CBT/behaviour modification style of 10-session parenting programme format, which tends to dominate the parenting programme field. This is why the 15-Minute Parenting practice itself is contained within books that are widely available and competitively priced.

When I reflect on the effectiveness of this and respond to the number of questions and contacts, I receive from parents who have read the book(s) and/or listened to me on radio and podcast I recognise that within the body of parents embracing my 15-Minute Parenting practice are a percentage who want and need a bit more. This does not mean they need psychotherapy or a referral to the clinic per se, but need more structured direction within the 15-Minute Parenting practice. I believe I could have developed a series of webinars that would have brought some of the concepts in my books to life for this cohort of parents. In response to this critique of my 15-Minute Parenting practice, I am planning a series of webinars that parents can access via a membership hub on my website. I hope to grow this community and further extend my accessibility by offering a once a month 60-minute live Q&A session for members of the 15-Minute Parenting community.

Another critique could be the term 15-Minute Parenting and how it may imply that all a child needs is 15 minutes of parenting each day. Of course, I explicitly address this in each of my books but it is something that is levied against me from time to time, that

I may be over-simplifying something that in truth is complex and challenging. I can accept this critique. In the body of this document, I have explained that 15-Minute Parenting as a title emerged from within my clinical work with busy working parents but also the title was embraced by my editors and publishers who liked the sound of it and inferred from it that parents would immediately know that this parenting practice was attainable for them. It was also a media friendly title and drew a high degree of interest from the outset, which in turn supported and amplified the book series. I am clear that I am not asserting children are parented in 15 minutes a day but rather that parents aim to ring-fence at least 15 minutes per day when they can be fully, mindfully, playfully present and attuned to their children's experiences uninterrupted and distraction free. This is why the term *practice* suits best. 15-Minute Parenting is a daily play-based practice, not unlike the concept of a daily 15-minute meditation or mindfulness practice. A designated, protected time and space to be fully present and available, attuned, interested and engaged with our children in their world and language of play. This is why it is 15-Minute Parenting.

At the start of this Doctoral programme, I was referring to 15-Minute Parenting as a model. The process of writing this thesis has been a journey that has had a transformative effect on the work. In feedback on my justification statement, the examiners said that I would need to make it very clear that the 15-Minute Parenting practice was more than “pop psychology”. I hope that I have addressed this by highlighting the theory and methodology that underpins my work. Further, during my registration panel formative assessment process, the examiners robustly challenged 15-Minute Parenting as a model and this gave me cause to pause and reflect on what it was that I have and continue to create within 15-Minute Parenting. Out of this feedback and ensuing reflection, my academic advisor and I discussed the description of 15-Minute Parenting as a daily practice of considered, purposeful, present play between parents and children. Practice felt like a much better term to describe what 15-Minute Parenting was about. The journey from 15-Minute Parenting “model” to “practice” has occurred within the doctoral process as I have integrated the feedback from each examiner along each step of the process.

Another critique I have reflected on is that this approach is suitable for children and families who are doing mostly well and for whom small changes can and do make big

differences and that it would not apply to children and families where trauma is present. I believe this one arises because I have clinical specialisation in trauma recovery and repair of ruptured attachment work with children and families living through and beyond trauma. Perhaps people assume I intend this to be a recovery model for children who experience trauma because I do so much work in that area. I am not presenting 15-Minute Parenting as a treatment model for any cohort of children. 15-Minute Parenting is about shining a light on the need for increased playfulness and relational connectivity between parents and children/teenagers in an increasingly digital age. All children can and do benefit from this. A child who has experienced trauma will benefit from the emotional safety and security that a reliably, consistently-available and attuned caregiver can offer them. Turning up and (emotionally) tuning in to such children each day is a benefit though of course it is not, in and of itself, a cure.

In this, I recognise that there are limits to the efficacy of my 15-Minute Parenting practice within trauma experiences. It is not a clinical treatment model. It is focused on strengthening and enhancing the parent-child relationship using theoretically rigorous, clinically informed play-based interaction designed to fit easily into busy families in a digital age. While *all* parent-child relationships can benefit from this there are often other variables to be considered in more trauma-based relationships that may inhibit the dyad from availing of what this practice makes available. 15-Minute Parenting is limited in this regard and I would always advocate specialist trauma interventions before supporting the dyad towards 15-Minute Parenting practice as they move away from the clinic with greater capacity for such a self-directed practice. Play will always have a role in recovery from trauma and the repair of ruptured attachment.

In general, I developed 15-Minute Parenting practice for more mainstream families who are doing mostly well, most of the time but may well experience those average, every day parenting challenges that if not responded to could percolate and escalate into more overt behavioural challenges underpinned by dysregulated emotional states. My 15-Minute Parenting approach is an accessible and self-directed toolkit to deepen understanding of what our children's overt behaviour is seeking to communicate to us and what emotional states are underpinning that overt behaviour. This is to steer such families towards emotional connection over behavioural correction, resulting in a strengthening and enhancing of relationships. 15-Minute Parenting is about little and

often, consistency, predictability and reliability to invest in stronger parent-child relationships.

One of the most effective aspects of my 15-Minute Parenting practice that has resonated strongest with readers is the use of the parental self-audit. So many parents have reached out to me asking for more support and direction around what this brings up for them. I believe that I could have developed a forum for this cohort of people who want and need to delve deeper into their parental self-audit and examine more closely their own triggers and lived experiences of being parented. In response to this critique, I am creating a short *parental self-audit – parenting myself* programme. This will likely be webinar based with subscribers also gaining access to a private, limited number of live interactive sessions with me at the end of the webinars.

Much feedback has been from parents sharing the impact that daily play practice has gifted them, quite apart from the impact on their relationship with their children but more reflecting on the personal impact and impact on their intimate partner relationship. I find this an exciting development and am exploring options of a 4-session web-based couples (intimate partner, adult child with aged parent, friends, adult siblings) play programme where the play will be exactly as it is detailed in my 15-Minute Parenting practice but the presentation and application will be within adult relationships. I am excited to pursue this aspect in line with writing my 4th book in the 15-Minute Parenting series.

In speaking about the 15-Minute Parenting practice and the importance of play within corporate settings I have also been asked about the possibility of play-sessions for staff members. I love the idea of a structured integration of the 15 minutes of play in the workplace and am excited to pursue this programme.

My biggest critique of my work and 15-Minute Parenting practice is that I initially thought that the book-series would be enough to bring the 15-Minute Parenting practice to my target audience. I had an idea that parents would see it, buy it and implement it. I have learned that this was somewhat naïve. While the books encase the 15-Minute Parenting practice, it is the multi-media engagement that supports the practice and brings it to life for parents. If I were starting over, I would have been quicker to develop

the web-based materials to support the 15-Minute Parenting practice and those who wish to engage fully with it. When I reflect critically, I wonder if the benefit of learning in action is that I could not have known that this would emerge until it was out there and emerged organically via the audience I was seeking to engage with.

Another area I critique is my fit within the world of parenting books, and it is a world of books on parenting because there are so many of them. I believe that my parenting book series, that is my parenting practice, offers something fresh and new in terms of the material that is already in this genre. Parenting books written by mental health professionals tend to retain a degree of theoretical jargon that can render them accessible only to parents who are already very informed and high functioning. Parenting books written by parents who do not possess a mental health qualification, i.e., the celebrity who writes a parenting book once they become a parent, can tend to draw solely from the individual's experience of being parented and parenting their own child or children, in other words a very small, limited and highly subjective frame of reference. I wanted to fit somewhere in between these two pillars. I include the theory without the jargon and write with both my professional and personal frame of reference. I wanted to create books that went beyond being "interesting" to read to being something "practical" to do. I wanted to bring parents back to their own childhood in a self-controlled and managed way to identify the echoes of the past in the present to create a more playful future together. In this way my books fit better alongside the books of Philippa Perry or Dr Nicole LePerra (aka The Holistic Psychologist).

I can see a clear path to strengthen and enhance the practice and solidify 15-Minute Parenting as a default playful parenting practice. My initial goal of creating a therapeutic play-based parenting practice that bridges the gap between the psychotherapy clinic and the family home remains the same as I drive the 15-Minute Parenting practice forward. I can see that not developing the multimedia-based support materials earlier could be considered a weakness of my 15-Minute Parenting practice or a short-sightedness on my part that has weakened the potential impact of the practice. I can accept this criticism; it is a self-criticism also. However, I would add an "as yet" to those areas of weakness because I can see the solution in a tangible step-by-step way and will address this within the 15-Minute Parenting practice. Maybe an unexpected outcome will be to normalise play in the life of adults, just as it is in the life of children.

What I have observed and shown here is that parents have responded positively to my 15-Minute Parenting practice. They understand it quickly and describe it as relatable and accessible leaving them feeling competent and more playful with their children. The daily practice my series of books presents offers a structure, gentle yet firm, one that bends without breaking, to ensure a broad demographic can engage with it.

4.1.1: Evaluation Framework

The apparent lack of an evaluation framework is a significant critique of my work and one I would like to tease out and explore now in this sub-section of my overall critical evaluation of my work.

As my 15-Minute Parenting practice has continued to evolve and develop over the years I have faced the question of an evaluation framework that would establish “success” and “short-comings” in the practice. In engaging with these questions, I have asked myself could I perhaps have utilised a method of more specific data collection as part of strengthening my 15-Minute Parenting practice. I could have built, for example, a mechanism for people to register on a website, invite feedback via questionnaires or even hosted focus groups either in-person or online whereby I could have captured quantified data and extracted themes using a methodology such as thematic analysis. Alternatively, I could have tracked patterns and concepts across social media engagement and utilised a methodology such as grounded theory to theorise patterns of behaviour or social phenomena.

I didn’t do this at the time because I wanted 15-Minute Parenting practice to be a step away from the clinic, handing 15-Minute Parenting as a practice *to* the parent. I was not thinking about data collation during development, though I certainly reflect on that now.

This is a Doctorate by Public Works and all public works are post work events. My 15-Minute Parenting Practice, as contained in the 3-book series and associated media, was not written as research from the outset. By its nature, this is a retrospective work and while the detailed methodology in the section above was always implied and is

interwoven throughout the development of the practice, the retrospective nature of the work has been a challenge I have faced in terms of positioning it within a specific evaluation framework. That said, there are evaluation frameworks that could be applied and I will now explore what I could have used, why I have not done so and why I chose the evaluation framework I did instead.

Social Media as research data within the social sciences

A lot of the feedback I have gathered on the application of my practice was via social media and research on social media *as* a research methodology in and of itself is still quite sparse. I was considering social media engagement and feedback as, perhaps, a potential secondary data source but was also aware that those who follow me on social media or buy my books and then engage with me online are already inclined towards my practice, my ideas and as such could be considered a biased “source”. But increasingly, social media as a source of research data is something researchers in the field of social sciences must consider.

In his recently published book, Professor Steven Lloyd Wilson in the opening abstract states, “Social media has put mass communication in the hands of normal people on an unprecedented scale, and has also given social scientists the tools necessary to listen to the voices of everyday people around the world.” (Wilson, 2022, p.9) The voices I was listening to everyday, the same voices who were essential to the development and ongoing evolution of 15-Minute Parenting as a practice, were the voices in my clinic certainly but also the voices engaging with me on radio, TV, print media and of course, social media.

Social media platforms have in-built data analytics whereby you can access and see where exactly your followers are based. For example, from a 90-second Reel¹ I posted on Instagram on September 2nd 2022, which has 18,811 views I can see that a total of 18,650 accounts were reached with that post (meaning some accounts viewed the video more than once). I can see that of that 18,650 accounts only 3,481 were existing

¹ Instagram describe their “Reels” function as immersive videos where you can creatively express your brand story, educate your audience, and get discovered by people who may love your business.

followers of mine with 15,169 views coming from non-followers. When it comes to measuring engagement with the Reel i.e., accounts who not only watched the Reel video but left a comment/like/saved it the numbers drop dramatically. I can see on this single post that of the 18,811 views only 181 accounts actually engaged with it i.e., approximately 1% clicked the like button, or saved it to their own accounts or left a comment under it. This 1-2% level of active engagement on videos with a range of 2,000-19,000 views (views dependent on days and times of days they were posted to capture peak social media traffic) is a pattern across most of the Reel videos I have posted in the last 12 months, when Instagram changed their own algorithms to preference Reels over static posts.

The analytics available to users on social media were never designed with social science research in mind, they are designed as a marketing/advertising tool to help users understand peak times that their followers are online and how to tailor posts to appeal to user engagement to drive more traffic to one's page. In part, this speaks to the limitations of using social media as a research source. Holding this in mind, I cannot categorically state that the Reel I have referenced above *only* elicited direct engagement from the 181 accounts the analytics tell me about because social media does not allow me to measure the impact it had on those who saw it and did not specifically like/save/share/comment under the video. I cannot know if viewing that video led to a user looking me up, buying my books, listening to my podcast or radio show or simply replicating what they saw in that video within their own lives. The analytics on my social media platforms give me certain sources of useful data, inform what I post and when I choose to post it to maximise the platforms peak user traffic but this data does not afford me a way of knowing the impact my work has on those tens of thousands of accounts who do not explicitly engage with the post on the platform. Therefore, I have turned more to phenomenological data as a more tangible way of gathering feedback and insights as to how people are applying and experiencing 15-Minute Parenting practice in their lives and within their relationship with their children in preference to intuiting from social media analytics. I have found that focusing on phenomenological data is more in keeping with the ontological stance detailed earlier on in this chapter.

I do not wish this to read as dismissive of the potential for social media as a data source within social science research. I think there is certainly significant emerging evidence

that it can be applied in a more empirical way than I have outlined above. As I reflect further on this and critique what I may have overlooked in terms of making more tangible use of social media data I consider how an active audience on social media platforms is not the same as an engaged social media audience, a fact that must be borne in mind when using social media as a data source in the field of social sciences. There is so much information constantly available on social media that much of the audience is scrolling without actively engaging in what they are viewing.

More information is published by more people today than at any time in human history. The era of mass consumption of media has given way to an era of mass production. Numbers confound easy comprehension, and give way to colorful illustration: The amount of text posted to Twitter every day is the equivalent of some 8000 copies of *War and Peace*, more photos are uploaded to Facebook every day than exist in all of human history prior to 1990[...]Internet communications, recorded in an infinite proliferation of magnetic bits, are enshrining the low background noise of human society: the diaries, snippets of conversation, personal letters, and oral histories that once faded from records, but are now archived away digitally. This is the key challenge of social media as “big data”: it is not just that it represents *more* data than we have ever had to deal with before, but that it represents *different* data than we have had access to.

(Wilson, 2022, p. 2)

Thus far social media, when it has featured in research, has tended to focus on “social media usage and content not as an independent or dependent variable itself, but as a new method for measurement alongside surveys, interviews, and other tried and true methods” (Wilson, 2022, p. 6). While there are a number of large scale research projects underway exploring the validity of using social media as a data source in research (many of these are cited in Wilson’s book) its usage has brought up a number of methodological challenges and Wilson states “there has yet to be a general text that

pulls together the methodologies of social media research into a cohesive framework" (Wilson, 2022, p. 7).

I think that there are exciting developments within this field of social science research in terms of the usage of social media as a research data source and while acknowledging that the ongoing and active evolution of this usage is developing in line with the development of the technology we rely upon to access that data source I think it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the scope of applying an evaluation framework to my 15-Minute Parenting practice that could be drawn from social media. As my 15-Minute Parenting series of books has now been sold into and will soon be available across China, Russia and Slovakia with other territories pending, I have an opportunity to measure what, if any, impact this change has upon how 15-Minute Parenting is practiced across cultures by using social media as a data source.

4.2: Leadership qualities

I believe that I can assert that my 15-Minute Parenting practice has afforded me a voice of leadership within the mental health and parenting community, primarily within Ireland where I am based but also in the UK (I have featured in numerous magazines, newspapers, podcasts and blogs), USA (I was approached to lead a significant parenting TV show in the US, have presented at conferences and written for publications and corporates have asked me to deliver staff talks on 15-Minute Parenting practice), Australia (I was invited to speak about my 15-Minute Parenting practice on *The Today Show* on Channel 10 with an audience of millions). The selection of personal statements I have included (Appendix 1(f)) is further evidence of this. I am an in-demand media spokesperson on such issues and hold a recognised name and professional brand in my field. Other mental health professionals have said that they frequently refer to my 15-Minute Parenting practice within their work with parents. I regularly hear from play therapists, psychotherapists, clinical and educational psychologists, psychiatrists (particularly with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services CAMHS) who reflect how they use my 15-Minute Parenting practice either to prescribe play to parents in between their sessions or they suggest a parent read the books and/or listen to the podcast on a particular issue. This has been really positive result of publishing 15-Minute Parenting practice. Of course, the downside is seeing

content from my 15-Minute Parenting practice re-produced on a social media graphic on another professional's page, not always with the content being attributed back to my 15-Minute Parenting practice and me. I accept that this is part of the territory once you make something public and I try to take the positive from this, i.e., that my content is being embraced and engaged with so openly.

4.3 Summary

I set out to create a therapeutic, playful daily parenting practice that was built on established theory and research that took clinical techniques and theory and packaged them in such a way that parents could integrate them into family life at home. My target audience was “most parents” who are “getting it mostly right, most of the time” but for whom a “small change could make a big difference” resulting in “less tears and more laughter” (these phrases are taglines within my 15-Minute Parenting practice). I wanted to create a therapeutic parenting practice to bridge the gap between the clinic and the family home for the majority of parents and children who will not reach clinical threshold for a state parenting course or a psychotherapy referral but who would, nonetheless, benefit from strengthening and enhancing their relationship with their children by connecting through play. The apparent simplicity of all of this is its complexity. This is play with purpose. This is mindful play. My 15-Minute Parenting practice teaches the theory of different kinds of play to effect different kinds of desired outcomes. By telling the story of play I sought to share the language of play with parents.

My 15-Minute Parenting practice is about moving away from guilt-based parenting, away from thinking of all of the things we are not doing with our children and spotlighting small but meaningful moments of connection. It is a psycho-educational practice that teaches about the science and theory of play, in a playful way. By following my 15-Minute Parenting practice parents know about the stages of developmental play, they know what child-led/free-play is and why it matters and they also know what child-focused but adult-led play is and why it also matters. They know what types of playful activities will affect the felt-safety of structure, the emotional co-regulation of engagement, the self-efficacy and esteem of challenge and the self-esteem and sense of being valued and deserving of care that nurture activities bring. And moreover, they will know what specific kind of playful response fits the behavioural dysregulation in a given moment. And they will know this without need to present at the psychotherapy clinic.

As society continues to evolve and change at breakneck speed, we need to strengthen the qualities that play affords us in our lives. That is flexible thinking, adaptability,

creative solution focused thinking, resilience, innovation and the capacity to critically analyse systems and rules and rewrite those as required. I believe the impact my 15-Minute Parenting practice is having and can continue to have is to centre the narrative of play. We can work to ensure that play is spoken about in a meaningful and tangible way in the media, within political spaces, town planning, education so that we normalise having a conversation with our adult friends about play, with our teachers about where play fits into our children's education curriculum. If we centre play in the public psyche, we create space, physically and emotionally, for play in all of our lives. Play does not need to be taught, per se. Children are, generally speaking, experts in play and parents can learn so much by observing and following their cues and lead in play. But play does need to be appreciated, valued and understood. My 15-Minute Parenting practice can bring that into the parent-child relationship, igniting fresh thinking and new perspective on prioritising play in our relationships and lives with each other.

The (ongoing) development of my 15-Minute Parenting practice is the result of:

valuing narrative ways of knowing, working collaboratively with research participants, seeking 'local' stories that would offer me opportunities to share in the 'lived experiences' of others that I could place alongside my own life in ways that would inform myself and others. (Etherington, 2004, p. 74)

When embraced fully, a playful state of mind is the constant throughout our lives. It will not eliminate the challenges of life nor will it protect us against the pain and stress that life can bring our way. But it can prepare us for these inevitable and unavoidable experiences. There is darkness in play and it holds just as much value as the lighter side of play does because there are dark and light sides to life too. Being able to play and nurturing a playful state of mind equips us with the requisite skills and armour to negotiate a fully lived life. We have to play to live.

[Words: 26,303]

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Schedule of Appendices

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Schedule of Appendices

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2	Media	A: Transcript of Podcast Episode
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Appendix 1: Public Works and Reception

Appendix 1(a): Public Works

1(a).1: 15-Minute Parenting – Contents pages, 0-7 Years

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Appendix 1(b): Parental Self-Audit: 15-Minute Parenting 0-7 years pp. 17-20

CHAPTER 1

Preparing for Parenting

History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes. *How* we experienced being parented in our own childhoods will directly influence and inform the kind of parents we become to our own children. Our own early childhood experiences can leave us with a psychological scotoma, or mental blind spot, making us oblivious to what our own children need from us, particularly in the emotional areas of their lives.

We cannot nurture others if we feel un-nurtured ourselves. Insecurity in our own early attachments may contribute to a current sense of unfulfilment or disappointment. It is important that you value yourself enough to know that you must respond to this and take care of yourself so that you can take care of your child and respond to their needs in an attuned, securely attached way. I believe that there is no better way of realising that you have unresolved issues from your own childhood than to become a parent. Becoming a parent and facing the daily demands and needs of a young child will bring unresolved issues bubbling to the surface, and if we do not address these they will most certainly impact upon and influence the kind of parent we are to our own children. So parenting starts with introspection – looking inwards so that we can focus outwards beyond ourselves.

In these pages, I will be discussing the importance of raising our children to get them to a place where they can self-regulate their emotions, accepting that it is quite typical for this to take the first seven years of their lives; for children with added emotional and developmental needs it will take even longer. Self-regulation and the capacity to self-soothe are cornerstones of developing a capacity for intimacy and emotional closeness in relationships as we grow. However, this capacity is not an innate one. It is acquired, developed and nurtured within us through relationships we have with loving and caring others, primarily our own parents and then our extended attachment network (grandparents, relatives, childcare provider, a teacher, etc.). And so we must assume the role of imparting these essential life skills to our own children.

But how do we give what we didn't get ourselves? If you find it hard to welcome and embrace your child's emotional struggles, or if it's an effort to encourage and allow your child to separate from you so that they can explore their world while you observe from a distance and support their learning, there is a reason for this. Let's take a look at why.

PARENTAL SELF-AUDIT

Start by asking yourself some questions. The important thing is to answer as fully and honestly as you can, noting if there is something you feel requires further reflection or support to deepen your understanding. For some of us, this further reflection will be a personal contemplative process; for others, we may benefit from meeting with a suitably qualified professional who can support us in working through these blocks. It is important that your reflective process leads to practical actions you can take to address any blocks you might be experiencing. The play techniques detailed throughout this book will help you with this part of your process.

These questions might include:

- What was growing up like for you?
- In what ways was your relationship with your mother similar to/different from your relationship with your father?
- How were you disciplined as a child and how did this make you feel at the time? How do you feel about it now?
- Who played with you as a child? Do you have memories of your parents playing with and/or singing to you? Can you recall a specific time this happened? What was the game/song? How did it feel when they played with/sang to you? Or if they didn't, how does that feel to you now, and how might it have felt to you when you were young?
- Did you lose someone important to you through death or moving away? Who was this person and what was their role in your life?
- How were your successes celebrated in your family when you were a child?
- How were your disappointments managed in your family when you were a child?
- Did you have important adults in your life outside your immediate family? Who were they? In what ways were they important to you?
- Did you ever feel unloved or unwanted by your parents? What impact did/does this have on you?
- Do you remember the first time you had to separate from your parents (for at least one day and one night)? How did this feel for you at the time? What was it like when you returned to your parents?
- What would happen when you were sick (so sick you had to stay off school, for example)?
- What would happen when you were hurt (such as falling and cutting your knee)?

- When you think of someone who provided you with comfort and nurture, who comes to mind?
- Did you feel loved as a child? By whom?
- What is your saddest memory from your own early childhood?
- What is your happiest memory from your own childhood?
- When did you realise that you loved your own child? Do you still love them?
- Name three things that you want your child to grow up believing above anything else.

Now write a list of five things that bring you pleasure. These should be things that are about *you*, not about your child or how they might bring you pleasure. Your list might include things like:

- Swimming
- Running
- Football
- Golf
- Painting/art and crafts
- Dinner with friends
- A hot stone massage/blow-dry/facial/nail treatment/hair-cut/hot-towel shave, etc.
- A night away alone with your partner.

Now ask yourself when was the last time you got to do each of the things that bring you pleasure. Can you build time into your week to ensure that you do at least one of these things each week? If you can't, ask yourself what needs to change/shift in order for you to be able to.


Next, consider how you are currently parenting your child(ren) (if you have more than one child you will have to repeat this for each child – every child is different and how you parent each

of them will also be at least slightly different). Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I find opportunities each day to tell my child that I love them and that I am proud of them?
- Do I give my child opportunities to practise independence? Am I developing these opportunities in line with their development?
- Am I able to be firm yet gentle with my child when necessary?
- Am I safe, predictable, calm and consistent in how I interact with and respond to my child?
- Do I follow my child's lead where possible but take charge when necessary?
- Do I have the opportunity to laugh at least once a day with my child? Does my child feel that I enjoy them?
- Do I seek to know the best bit of my child's day and what bit of their day they would like to change?
- Do I encourage my child to try new things and to take (appropriate) risks?
- Do I praise their efforts over any outcomes?
- Do I show empathy when my child seeks my help/support/protection and comes to me for hugs/kisses?
- Did I experience repair/recovery following a rupture with my child today (perhaps not every day)?
- Do I play with my child for 15 minutes each day?
- Do I ensure we have a bedtime story together each night no matter what else has/hasn't happened?

A parental self-audit is not a one-time reflection. This is an exercise that you can and should repeat as your child grows up.

Appendix 1(c): Sample Fridge Notes


Children's Nightmares - how to address them

Nightmares and/or recurring bad dreams can be a traumatic experience for a child and will affect their sleep pattern and routine. Your child may be reluctant to go to bed, say they're not tired, wake themselves up in the early hours and need reassurance during the night. So here is a tried and tested technique to address children's nightmares or bad dreams that ALWAYS works!

If your child experiences a nightmare or recurring bad dreams, set aside a block of time the next day to sit with them. Ensure that you have uninterrupted time, even 30 minutes to give this your full attention. You will need: paper (2 sheets), markers or crayons/pencils.

- Sit down with your child and tell them that you know a way of stopping bad dreams that ALWAYS works.
- Invite them to think about the bad dream and to draw the bit of the dream that scares them most. Reflect on what you see in this drawing without projecting your own thoughts, in other words "I see this Black bit here, I wonder what that is"
- NOTE: The use of "wondering" can facilitate your child to go deeper into the dream but doesn't put pressure on them if they don't want to, in the way direct questions can put pressure on them to produce an answer.*
- Tell them that dreams are exactly like movies and that they are the director of their dream so can decide to yell "cut" and change the scene.
- Now, have them look at the scary drawing, yell "cut" and now invite them to think about how they would like the dream to go, what would they like to happen instead of this scary bit that would make it a happier dream. Have them visualise the happier change, what does it look like, how does it feel etc.
- When your child has the new 'scene' in mind, have them draw this new scene for the dream. Again, reflect on what you see, use "wondering" to encourage them to talk about this happier scene.
- Once done, tell your child that they can tear up the scary part and throw it away and go with them as they bring the new happy dream scene into their bedroom and they can either pin it to the wall by their bed so that they see it every night or place it under their pillow, whichever they prefer.
- Again, reiterate that this ALWAYS works so the bad dream won't come back again.

By sounding supremely confident you validate this technique as working and empower your child to control the dream. The dream itself is important, it is your child's way of unconsciously processing thoughts during the night so it is equally important that you spend some time during this process reflecting and wondering with them about the bad or scary parts of the dream. This enables them to put words and feelings onto what is happening and to bring it from their unconscious to their conscious thinking, they can thereby process it and let it go. The happier drawing empowers them to change the dream and take control of it and change the ending, ultimately reaffirming that when something is scary, they can 'dismiss' it with you, think about it, talk about changing the scary thing and then let it go of it. It also allows you and your child to enjoy a restful sleep again.




This technique doesn't mean your child will never have another bad dream but it can be used again and again where necessary. It is particularly effective where a child is experiencing a recurring dream. If there is a pattern of recurring and/or frequent bad dreams it may indicate an underlying anxiety, in which case you might want to consider seeking professional advice/support from a child psychotherapist/ play therapist /psychologist.

Top Therapist Tip


The key to this technique is that you must be supremely confident in it working and be able to sell that in how you present it to your child for it to be effective.

F



Joanna Fortune

For further information about this or other child development/behavioural challenges contact
Solamh - Parent Child Relationship Clinic on 01-6976568 www.solamh.com
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Supermarket saviour!

Supermarkets are not easy places for children to be, they're not allowed to touch everything, might not like being in the trolley, want to leave, distract you while you're looking for items... Sometimes you have no choice but to bring young children with you to the supermarket and in these situations it can help to plan ahead and include a way to involve them in the exercise.

To make life easier, start by making a site visit to your local supermarket to familiarise yourself with each aisle. Select a couple of items that are at your child's reach level i.e. top shelf if child in trolley, bottom shelf if they are walking around.

Before your next shopping trip, make a special list for your child with a sheet of coloured paper, some markers and pictures of food items. Your child can be given responsibility for this special shopping list each time you go shopping together and have fun ticking off each item as you shop.




sample list

Top Tips

Include a counting item such as 4 tomatoes. So that you can offer additional praise for their great counting skills.

Give your child their own shopping bag so they can carry their items out of the shop and unpack when you get home.

F



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Appendix 1(d): Sales, Amazon Ratings, Reviews




Best-sellers charts places across a variety of different charts

Amazon Best Sellers

Our most popular products based on sales. Updated hourly.

Best Sellers in Child Discipline

Top 100 Paid Top 100 Free



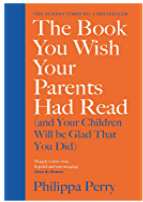
<div>#1</div> <div></div> <div>15-Minute Parenting 0-7 Years: Quick and easy... › Joanna Fortune ★★★★★ 46 Kindle Edition</div>	<div>#2</div> <div></div> <div>Cool That Volcano: How to Help Children Stay... › Peter Black ★★★★☆ 41 Kindle Edition</div>	<div>#3</div> <div></div> <div>Betray Her: An absolutely gripping psychological... › Caroline England ★★★★☆ 143 Kindle Edition</div>
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Amazon Best Sellers

Our most popular products based on sales. Updated hourly.

Best Sellers in Child Psychology

Top 100 Paid Top 100 Free

<div>#1</div> <div></div> <div>15-Minute Parenting 0-7 Years: Quick and easy... › Joanna Fortune ★★★★★ 54 Kindle Edition 1 offer from £0.99</div>	<div>#2</div> <div></div> <div>A Terrible Secret: The next gripping story from... › Cathy Glass ★★★★★ 772 Kindle Edition £5.44</div>	<div>#3</div> <div></div> <div>The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read (and... › Philippa Perry ★★★★★ 2,012 Kindle Edition £8.67</div>
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Best Sellers

in Child Psychology

Amazon Hot New Releases

Our best-selling new and future releases. Updated hourly.

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#1	#2	#3
		
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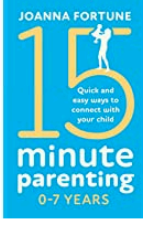

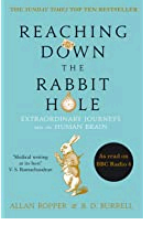
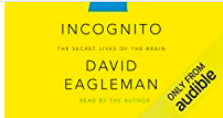

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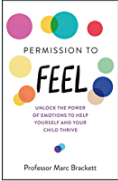
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Child Psychology charts

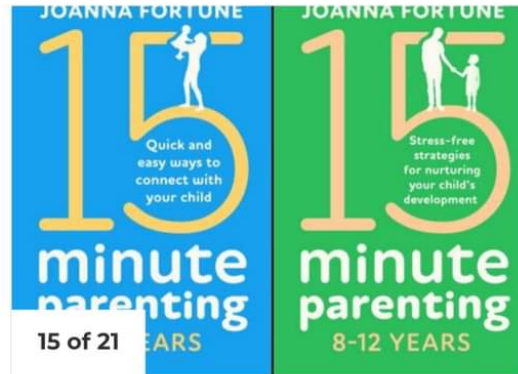
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GRAZIA

GRAZIA

For Every Child, From Tiny Babies And Toddlers To Teens In 2020

Including parenting manuals, poetry and
the source text for movie Mean Girls.

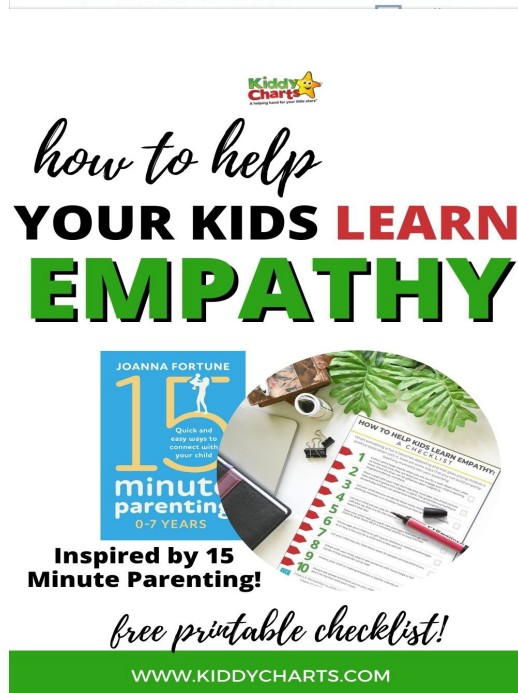
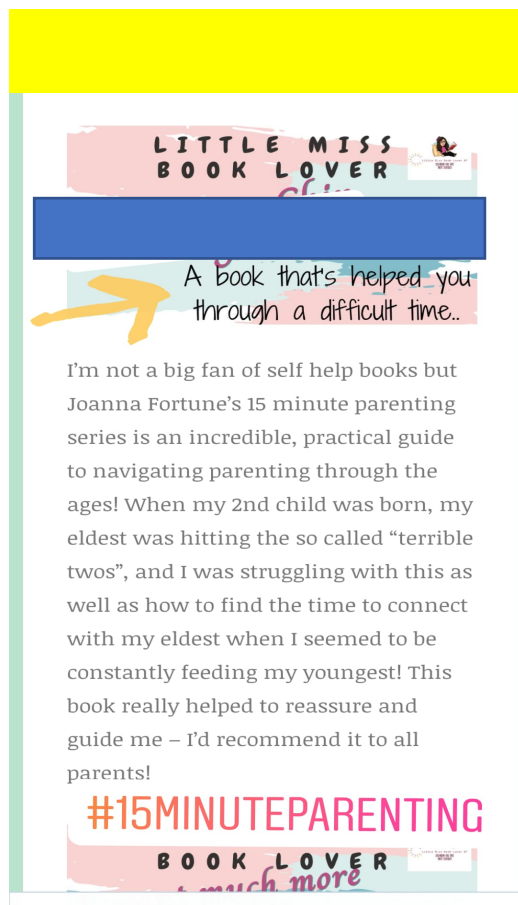


CREDIT: 15-MINUTE PARENTING 0-7 YEARS: QUICK AND EASY
WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR CHILD, JOANNA FORTUNE

**15-Minute Parenting 0-7 Years:
Quick and easy ways to connect
with your child, Joanna Fortune**

This also comes in a version for 8-12-year-olds and posits that just 15 minutes of mindful playtime each day in you and your child's routine could change behaviour. Created with busy parents in mind, psychotherapist and parenting expert Joanna Fortune has devised

Appendix 1(e): Feedback from those who have read/listened to 15-Minute Parenting



This is the limited series podcast of Irish Council of Psychotherapy (ICP) and I was one of 6 psychotherapists in Ireland asked to contribute to it

Sample of feedback from professionals who know and use 15-Minute Parenting within their work

"I am a Public Health Nurse working in a socially deprived area and many of the families that I am working with are from marginalised communities. I have found that the 15-Minute Parenting practice created by Joanna has made a huge difference to these families that I work with. I came to know Joanna's work after I attended a talk that had been organised by Danone/Cow and Gate for health care professionals, and I read her books afterwards. I have found that the books are an amazing tool to share developmental play activities, and the 15-Minute parenting practice also assists me in the promotion of the importance of parent-child play with my families. I cannot recommend her books enough and I have found them to be hugely beneficial to the work that I do with children and families." **Aine Slater, Midwife and Public Health Nurse**

"Joanna Fortune has the knowledge and expertise to tap into many different professions, whether you work with children, young people or adults with disabilities, you can apply her teachings on the importance of play. Her knowledge of applying theory to practice is phenomenal. People who have attended Joanna's course wish they did it years ago, very informative. Feedback from participants that attended a Joanna Fortune workshop through Social Care Ireland said they learnt how to recognise and hear the unspoken word through play, how to introduce fun into the workplace and the ability to express oneself. Joanna articulates extremely well how play can underpin and support relationship building, which is a fundamental competency for a social care worker" **Charlotte Burke CPD Manager Social Care Ireland**

"Joanna has started work with our team recently (Children's Residential). Her training and consultation has already started to broaden our perspective and deepen our understanding of attachment and trauma and how we apply this on a daily basis. Joanna has a unique and personable approach to playfully engage a group of professionals, ensuring every individual takes practical learning home. This training will impact on the lives of all the young people we work with. Thank you Joanna." **Karla Hall, Manager Home Again Residential Care services**

"A unique presenter. Engaging, entertaining, informative, inspiring and a natural. Joanna's presentation at our Annual Conference was like being at a live TED Talk thanks to her playful, interactive presentation style and her dynamic speaking ability. The evaluation results for Joanna's presentation were exceptional."

The Irish Aftercare Network

"Joanna has presented for us at seminars for Health Care Professionals over a number of years now. Joanna is always very professional and easy to communicate with in run up to the events. Her presentations are very playful, practical and well thought out. Her ability to deliver in a playful and engaging manner is really unique. Some feedback quotes from our seminars are – 'Best talk of the day' and 'Excellent, Well presented, informative – would love to hear her again'. " **Geraldine Bolton Medical Manager (Infant Nutrition) Danone/Cow & Gate**

"Joanna is probably the best trainer I have experienced in a long time. Her knowledge of attachment through a trauma lens and the role of play in recovery is uplifting for our

social care teams. She is also our Therapeutic Consultant and brings a breath of fresh air through our organisation" **David Power, Director Smilies Residential Care Services**

"I regularly recommend your books to the parents of children and teens I work with. I don't include parents actively in the therapy I practice but I find when they read your books, they are more contained and understand what is going on much better." **Play Therapist via personal communication on social media**

"I am a fan of your books and podcast at a personal and also professional level. Your podcast episodes on self-harm, body image and eating disordered thinking have been a great resource for me as a child and adolescent psychiatrist. I have recommended the podcast and your books to most of the parents I am meeting." **CAMHS Psychiatrist via personal communication on social media**

"Your book on teenagers and the podcast episodes talking about teenagers have been essential reading/listening for our residential care teams. You have helped us to make sense of the behaviour we are seeing, to stay curious about what might be going on behind it and to find ways to be playful in our work with the teenagers we care for. Thank you." **Residential Care manager via personal communication on social media**

"I am still getting so many messages from members of our parenting group talking about how they are successfully implementing your 15-Minute Parenting practice strategies." **Catherine Hallissy Clinical psychologist who runs a parenting membership group I delivered a talk to**

Appendix 1 (f) Personal Statements (a selection from approximately 30 received)



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17 July 2020

Dear Selection Committee

I am writing in support of Joanna Fortune's application for the DPsych Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works at Metanoia Institute.

I came to know Ms Fortune in 2013 as a psychoanalytic colleague and have worked with her on a number of clinical, academic and public initiatives since then. She has spoken with me about her interest in pursuing a doctorate, and I believe she would be a strong candidate for your programme for a number of reasons.

Firstly, Ms Fortune has the knowledge and research skills required by researchers at doctoral level. She already has a body of published work in the public domain. She has written three books on her "15-Minute Parenting" model, two of which are published and have been well received and reviewed. She has also published clinical research pieces in three international publications: *The Letter* (Association for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in Ireland, 2005), *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* (Routledge, 2015), and *Lacanian Psychoanalysis with Babies, Children and Adolescents* (Karnac, 2017).

Secondly, Ms Fortune has developed notable presentation skills needed by researchers, in order to disseminate their research and show the impact of their work outside the academic sphere. She has given a number of presentations on her work in clinical, academic and public settings, including at University College Dublin and Science Gallery Dublin, as well as at a TEDx event in Dublin. She is a respected commentator at a national level in Ireland on mental health, particularly with regards to issues relating to parenting and child development. She has a weekly parenting slot on "The Seán Moncrieff Show", which is a national radio show on Newstalk FM. She also contributes to the national media, with guest appearances on television and radio more broadly, as well as writing for newspapers and magazines. She collaborated, furthermore, with a clinical colleague Janet Healy on a series of videos, "Playful Parenting in a Pandemic", sponsored by Tusla, Ireland's national child and family agency. Ms Fortune has a particular skill at being able to communicate complex ideas and research findings to a public audience in an accessible and engaging way.

Thirdly, Ms Fortune has a significant amount of teaching experience as a trainer in clinical settings in national and international contexts, including in the UK and the USA. She is also an

accomplished clinician, supervisor and the director of Solamh, a parent-child relationship clinic in Dublin. Her written and media work integrates her experience in the clinic, together with her knowledge of the research literature, in a nuanced way.

Fourthly, Ms Fortune is one of the most highly-motivated people I have met. She displays a curiosity in learning new things, which is evidenced by her continuing to undertake new CPD courses, as well as the recent launch of her podcast series, "15-Minute Parenting". I am confident that she would commit to your programme, engage with the requirements, and complete the doctorate in a timely manner.

In my work with Ms Fortune since 2013 (two events, one clinical committee, one international publication, one clinical reading group), I have found her to be professional, collegial, collaborative and thoughtful. She is someone who can give and use feedback. She is a multi-tasker who completes things to deadline and to a consistently high quality. From my experience of engaging with her as a colleague in a range of settings and on a variety of projects, she has impressed me with the fluency, versatility, creativity and reflectiveness of her thinking.

I believe Ms Fortune would bring much to your programme, while I think your programme would provide her with valuable space and a formal frame to reflect on her significant achievements and extend her thinking on her "15-Minute Parenting" model.

I recommend Ms Fortune highly and without reservation. Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Dr Noreen Giffney

Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist MIFPP, MICP, MNIHR, MCPJA, MUKCP
Founding Scholar, British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC)
Lecturer in Counselling, Ulster University



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✉ cathal.mcauliffe@threesteps.ie

09/02/2021

Re: Joanna Fortune – Personal Statement

To whom it may concern,

I have known Joanna for over five years in a professional capacity as trainer, psychotherapist, author, and we have participated in client consultations. I am aware that Joanna has also provided supervision to other professionals I have worked collaboratively with on complex attachment and developmental trauma cases. Their feedback of Joanna has always been excellent. Joanna has always impressed as a very knowledgeable and experienced practitioner. Her ability to communicate complex information in a manner that is received by wide audiences of varying experience and ability has been extremely impressive.

Joanna's enthusiasm and drive to impart knowledge and skills to enhance child-parent relationships has been extraordinary. Joanna has completed her work in a very diligent and humble manner yet manages to communicate to wide audiences through her books, radio interviews, and trainings. Joanna has always adhered to clear and structured boundaries in all aspects of her work. This attribute has led her to encourage those who she has supervised to remain within their areas of competencies whilst also bringing about positive change to the cases they work with.

Joanna's ability and energy to introduce play as a mode of communication and recovery for many children and families has been exemplary and to that end, I would have no hesitation in recommending her for further studies in the field. My only hope is that she remains in professional contact with myself, my peers, and colleagues as she furthers her career and continues to impart her valuable innate skills and acquired knowledge.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Cathal P. McAuliffe'.

Dr. Cathal P. McAuliffe
Principal Specialist Clinical Neuropsychologist/Chair of the Board, Three Steps
BSc. (Hons.), MSc., D. Psych. Sc. Clin. Psychol., Pg. Dip. Clin. Neuropsychol., C. Neuro. Psychol.,
Ps.S.I.

15/11/20

To whom it may concern:

I have known Joanna Fortune since our days of psychoanalytic training on the M.Sc. in Psychotherapy at University College Dublin/St. Vincent's University Hospital (2000-2002). I knew that her area of clinical interest was always in parent-child work and over the passing years I have observed her grow and extend both her knowledge and expertise in this area but also her public profile as a recognised expert in this field. She has contributed significantly to the field of psychotherapy through her work as represented in her 3 book series 15-Minute parenting and accompanying podcast of the same name. She has an ability to take complex clinical concepts and make them accessible to a mainstream audience. It is great to have someone from the psychoanalytic professional community representing the work on a national stage and I think many families have benefitted from her 15-Minute Parenting model as a result of how accessible and interactive she has made it.

Joanna was a founding member of the Child Psychoanalytic Clinic group (2006) - a group of Lacanian psychoanalysts that met monthly under the supervision of various members of Espace Analytique Paris to reflect on Lacanian work with children and adolescents. As a result of her standing in the area of child and adolescent work I approached her to contribute a chapter to a book I was editing along with my colleague Stephanie Farrelly-Quinn (Lacanian Psychoanalysis with Babies, Children and Adolescents, Routledge, 2017). I was delighted that Joanna agreed and her chapter on "the iMirror stage" re-examines Lacan's mirror stage of development through the lens of smart technology and impact on young child development. She included a number of play-based activities in this, not typical of Lacanian psychoanalysis but quite reflective of how Joanna has blended modalities in how she works with parents, children and adolescents in her work.

Joanna uses her knowledge of therapeutic play to bridge the gap between the clinic and the home, using a particular mode of play as a shared language to achieve this.

The field of psychoanalysis is often seen as inaccessible to the general public and Joanna has made significant progress in countering this perception in finding a way to use her voice, her model of working, her books and media work to bring something of our field of work right into the heart of the family.

I have no hesitation in supporting Joanna's application for this Doctorate award.

Yours sincerely,

Carol Owens, PhD

Reg.Pract. APPI; Accredited member ICP; Chart. Psych. PSI

Practice address: Arduna, 54 Clontarf Road, Dublin 3

16th November 2020

Email: tracey.monson@docharity.ie

Professional Testimony - Joanna Fortune - Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist

I have worked with Joanna over the past 15 years in different professional capacities and within different organisations.

I first worked with Joanna as a Regional Manager colleague for Child and Family Therapeutic Services within the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC). I have also referred children to *Solamh*, Joanna's clinic in the past and feedback from families on her work and her encouraging supportive approach has been very positive.

My most recent work with Joanna was through my current role as Director of the Daughters of Charity Child and Family Services, an organisation that provides a range of services for children and families most at risk and in need, including early years, domestic violence services, therapeutic child and family centres and social work assessment centres.

We engaged Joanna to provide training to our therapeutic child and family workers on the areas of trauma work and supporting children that have experienced domestic abuse. She devised a tailor made 3 day training programme for over 30 staff. Staff that attended the training continue to reference it and use it in their practice and it has had a real impact on their day to day work with children and families.

Joanna's deep understanding of the child within the context of the wide social ecological systems of the family, school and wider environment brings a unique perspective to her approach which is rare in this work. She effortlessly builds rapport with parents, children and professionals alike through her empathic style of engagement.

While Joanna has a deep knowledge of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy, she has a wonderful ability to translate difficult concepts into practical and accessible ways for parents and practitioners to apply in their parenting role and in their work. She has worked with children that have experienced profound trauma in a range of areas and she always brings a strengths and resilience based focus to her work which is so refreshing in a working environment that often focuses on 'blame'. It is evident that Joanna has translated her years of experience and knowledge in this area to interventions that are accessible, engaging and workable to parents, as evidenced in her 15 minute parenting approach, her podcasts, her books and her media outputs.

I would have no hesitation in commending Joanna's work and look forward to continued engagement with her in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Tracey A Monson - Director of Services

D Child, MSc (Equality) MA (Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy) BA (Psychoanalytic Studies)

Directors: Sr. Goretti Butler, Michael Cleary, Carol Fawsitt, John Furey, Sr. Justine O'Brien, Ciaran Roche, Sr. Sheila Ryan, John Tuffy.
The Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service, Registered Office: Swords Road, Santry, Dublin 9, D09 VF9F.
The Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital, registered in Dublin.
CRO Number: 431293. CRA Number: 20064730. CHY Number: 17418.

To whom it may concern,

I write in support of the application of Joanna Fortune for completion of her PhD in your department. I have known Ms. Fortune from her early career in “To Russia with Love” to the present day. Ms. Fortune is an exceptional clinician, successfully establishing, running and developing her own clinic and, in doing so providing services to children and families on a nationwide level. Ms. Fortune is a skilled evidenced-based practitioner and an astute researcher and communicator, as evidenced by her acclaimed “Fifteen Minute Parenting” book series. She is adept in communication to differing audiences, including children and families, fellow clinicians and researchers and a broader public audience. This is reflected in her clinical practice, her established readership and her frequent contribution to print, radio and television media, where Ms. Fortune is recognised as a “go to” expert in her field. I myself have called upon Ms. Fortune’s expertise, as in my role as Clinical Director of a nationwide organisation for persons with depression and Bipolar disorder, I approached Ms. Fortune to provide talks at a national conference on the impact of parental depression on children and she did so to great response.

In summary, Ms. Fortune is an established clinician and expert in her field, recognised at the highest level both in Ireland and abroad. She is sought after in Ireland and abroad within the media to provide her expert opinion on a range of topics. She is clinically astute and a critical scientist-practitioner who has evidenced her ability to succeed in numerous domains, including private practice, as a best-selling author and in the provision of her expertise to wider audiences. She is ambitious, driven and exceptionally able to succeed at anything for which she strives. Ms. Fortune would be an excellent addition to your department and will, as per her achievements in all other areas, produce research of high quality, which will significantly contribute to her area of study and the knowledge-base of the field.

I have no hesitation in fully supporting Ms. Fortune’s PhD dissertation application; if you require any further information, please contact me on the email below.

Regards,

Dr. Andrea Higgins
Consultant Clinical Psychologist
Andrea.higgins@cica.gov.uk

12/11/20

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been delighted to share and recommend Joanna Fortune's 15 Minute Parenting model/Podcasts with our Foster Carers and Social Workers across Health & Social Care Fostering & Adoption Services. The topics and content are informative and educational, answering the questions foster carers often ask particularly pertaining to adolescence; development and parenting. The information not only reminds them what 'normal' adolescence behaviour and development looks like, it gently encourages them to reflect on their own behaviour and responses during the everyday encounters with a young person pushing the boundaries and seeking independence. I believe this information will help foster carers understand the young person better, critically reminding them that some of the behaviour they are experiencing with their young person is normal and the techniques Joanna provides will help them maintain their relationship during stressful times.

Foster Carers lead very busy lives at times juggling, work, family and their role as a foster carer. The format of using Podcasts as a training resource is new to us as a service but we can already see the benefits of the convenience they offer and how easy it is to consume 15 minutes of content for foster carers. The social workers who support the foster carers will then use the content to engage the carer to talk more specifically about the young person they care for.

Finally, I would like to say that the style, engagement and intimacy of the 15 Minute Parenting Podcasts are extremely effective, you do really feel like Joanna is in the room delivering the information directly to you.

Congratulations on a fabulous resource that I am more than happy to recommend, I will definitely be keeping it in my toolbox of resources for foster carers and social workers.

We have put a link to the podcasts on our Regional website <https://adoptionandfostercare.hscni.net/trainingandsupport/online-training/>

Best Regards
Patricia Mulholland

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Email: Patricia.Mulholland2@setrust.hscni.net

Web: <https://adoptionandfostercare.hscni.net/>
12th November 2020

Appendix 2: Media

Appendix 2(a): Transcript of 15-Minute Parenting Podcast Episode

Episode: 16/04/21 Keeping imaginative play alive through middle childhood (and beyond)

I'm Joanna Fortune, Psychotherapist and author of the 15 Minute Parenting series of books. Welcome to my 15 Minute Parenting podcast where I take a common parenting struggle and break it down with practical playful solutions. Let's get going.

I did an Instagram live parenting Q&A on middle childhood as a topic, as a stage of development and a number of developmental and of course social, emotional and behavioural aspects to that stage of development. In the course of the Q&A I talked very briefly about how important but also how entirely possible imaginative play is between eight and twelve years old. Of course I have past episodes on this age group in my podcast archives and around middle childhood and various aspects of that. I have an entire book dedicated to this age. As you will have heard me say before, I believe that this age, eight to twelve years old, middle childhood is one of, if not the most under discussed stages of childhood. Yet, it is a time that so much happens developmentally in terms of what they have maybe had enough of, or not enough of in early childhood, but also how the ground work is being laid and how smooth or bumpy that ground work for the adolescent phase that's coming ahead.

In this Q&A when I casually spoke about imaginative play at this age I then was inundated with DMs into my social media as to how, how is this possible? I'm going to talk about this today. Just a note about DMs though because I know a number of you send them to me, just to flag I'm so sorry that I cannot answer everybody's specific parenting questions on social media. You can always email my office, info@solamh.com or ask me to discuss a theme or topic on this podcast for example. You can definitely do that. My apologies I can't answer all questions. What I did get was a flurry of questions going, oh you mentioned about imaginative play for this age group, my child's nine or ten and there's no way they'll do that, so what exactly do I do, or how do I do it or why is it important? I got so many I decided, look, I'm just going to talk about it here.

As I get into it, a quick developmental recap first. Middle childhood is a stage of significant growth and development across cognitive, social, emotional and physical faculties, huge amount going on. Their brains are in a constant state of flux and actually it is their daily experiences that are the fodder for this development. Their environment, physical and emotional environment I mean is very, very important. You're going to see that gradually they're capable of greater degrees of logic. You can reason with them a bit more, but their prefrontal cortex, that part of the brain for executive function and rational reasoning thought is still very immature at this stage of development. As such you're going to see flashes of temper and emotional volatility, meltdowns, they're still commonplace. You might think, okay, I had this conversation on this day and we had lots of really good, strong reasoning here. They really get it, and all of a sudden you get this really immature, emotionally volatile meltdown and you're going, no, they're suddenly five years old again.

That is entirely normal and that's part of middle childhood development. The function of play is what I want to emphasise. Play isn't just something nice for children at this age, it's not just something nice at any age, and it's something that is developmentally essential. Again, even in this middle childhood stage play is the very means to creating

the types of daily experiences your child needs to enable these important brain changes. It is actually through play that they're going to learn that they have a desire of their own, free will all of their own which is going to help strengthen and enhance the emotional resilience that they have been building throughout early childhood up to this stage and that will continue to evolve and develop as they grow into adolescence. It's not like emotional resilience is a box we tick, oh yes, got that, and that's that done now. I don't need to think about it, it's constantly evolving and developing, just as your child is.

Middle childhood is also a stage of peak question asking time, am I right? I mean is there anyone better than a child at this age to make you feel that you're being interrogated on a given matter? In early childhood it might be those days when our children believe, early childhood is under sevens, that's what I'm talking about. They believed that parents knew it all. We held the answer to all of their questions and they brought those questions to us. Sometimes in a seemingly endless series of, but why, but why, and we thought it would never end. They trusted us to have the answer. Now, in middle childhood they're still going to bring their questions to us but now they have cause to question, second-guess and doubt our responses. They ask us a question, whatever it might be and then they're maybe even cynically question you again, question the answer you've given, suggest that they check it with someone else, be that Google, the other parent or their teachers. It's like, are you sure about that, should we just double check that, how do you know that's true and you get questioned about your answers. It can feel like they're definitely trying to catch us out with all of their questioning.

Sometimes how they start asking about something innocuous enough, they ask about something, oh, by the bye, but gradually they're leading us into something bigger, using our earlier answers to seemingly seek to elicit a favourable response from us on a bigger thing. They're good at it, so all of a sudden you're embroiled in a conversation going how did we get here, weren't we talking about something unrelated, but they're saying that you were saying a minute ago that, and how does that relate now to this topic that is completely unrelated. They're really good at this. This is also an age when so called pester power comes into sharp focus again. It's something that they persist at because it works. Pester power is effective because it works. We get worn down, or simply worn out by questions and we give in only to make it stop. Actually, what's happening is they're not trying to catch us out; they are instead trying to gather enough information to begin to draw their own conclusions about what they are learning.

That's really important. This stage of development makes the beginning of a new learning pattern for them and questions and wonderings are to be encouraged. This is how they understand information as it resonates with them and makes sense to them. This is easier to do if you can creatively and indeed imaginatively play with it. You can say, what a great question. I don't know the answer but how about we think together and work it out. Or, I can see you've been putting a lot of thought into this, what else could you find out about it. I wonder what you think the cause or answer to this is and put it back to them. Then you can do something that brings the level of imagination involved up a notch. You could say, wow what an interesting thought process you have on this topic whatever it might be, and you say imagine you were in charge of this issue, what would you do to solve the problem and how. As soon as you have them imagine themselves being in charge, they are doing imaginative play. Just because their questioning increasing doesn't mean we parents have to suddenly be a mastermind master on all topics of interesting to our children we can say I don't know because we don't know and this also shows our children that they don't have to have all of the

answers either, but they can discover information in a creative, playful and collaborative way and that's really good modelling for them.

The imaginative play is a part of the questioning phase but also it's important beyond the questioning part of this developmental stage. Play patterns definitely change at this age. It is less about the rich deeply immersive imaginative play that you've seen in early childhood. Play becomes more to do with things, activities like bikes, rounders, scooters, skates and indeed online gaming. Regardless, and this is important piece, play continues to serve an important role and when afforded the opportunity and indeed encouraged by their parents to engage in physical and imaginative play 8-12 year olds will gravitate towards it as much as they do towards screen based play. In fact, research shows that not being able to engage in this kind of play is associated with more negative emotions, including anxiety based symptoms. This is definitely worth doing.

Often at this stage while their play patterns change, what also tends to change is how we parents play with or bid to playfully engage with our children at this stage. This is the time when we are likely to stop playing in an imaginative, creative way with our children because we deem them to have outgrown it. Oh, they don't want to do that anymore, so we don't make imaginative play possible. We don't make it inviting. I'm asking you now to just take a step back and challenge yourself to bring more of that, what if, and let's wonder, and let's imagine and that creative imaginative play back into your relationship with your child. I'm not just going to leave you on that, don't worry. I'll give you a couple of suggestions as to how you might do that. Remember this isn't directed because hopefully when you're listening to these it'll spark something in you and you'll go, oh yeah, we could also do, go with it, stretch this as far as you can.

It's also at this middle childhood stage by the way, in a previous episode I did about lying, I flagged this, but they're refining their capacity to tell a lie and get away with it, to tell a convincing lie. You might remember when I spoke about lies in that earlier episode I talked about how I believe learning how to tell a lie is as developmentally important as learning how to tell the truth. This is a good time to play with that a little bit, and bring in some imagination too. Play a game of two truths, one lie, so you tell your child three pieces of information, two of them are true and one is a lie and they have to spot the lie, and then they get to do the same. You shouldn't make it really obviously but be playful with it. You could also play 20 questions. Again, playfully engaging with the fact that this is peak question asking time, so play a game of 20 question, play a game of who am I, where you just write down the name of a person with a post-it note, and stick it to your foreheads and you have to guess who you are, without seeing who's on your forehead by asking a set number, or sequence of questions. You can do anything like that.

You could also play the game, if I were President of the world what three things would I change first and why, how and what would the outcome be. Why is that important to me and you can take that one deeper and deeper as you go. It's also because of the doubt that comes in when they're second guessing us and questioning our answers and all of that, and that's developmentally normal, by the way. It's no harm to again put in a little bit of play here that will strengthen and enhance the trust in our relationships. Put a few non-dangerous obviously obstacles around the floor, things like cushions or scarves or blankets, just little things around the floor, blindfold them and they have to move around the floor, avoiding the obstacles just trusting your voice to guide them, that's a good one to do. You could go back and play the director game, pick a book that they've been reading or a TV show that they like to watch and tell them they're the director, they get to say cut, what scene will they delete, what character would they

delete, what new character would they introduce if they were writing an episode of show or a YouTube thing they like to watch, what would it be.

Get them to really imagine and creatively approach that. You could do story stemming with them, where you tell them the beginning of the story and then you pause and you say to them, now you tell me what happens next, and how does the story end. They pick up your thread and they add in their own piece to it. Just accept whatever they do with that, don't judge it and say, really? That doesn't sound realistic; just go with it because it's about the imagination. You could do something like make a thumb ball. You can look that up and you'll see a thumb ball is a little ball, a soft ball that you toss between you and when you catch it, wherever your right thumb lands there's an instruction on it. Usually around social skills or activities you know, do five jumping jacks or give the person on your right a compliment. It's something I do a lot when I'm working with families as a group, or group activities in schools.

You can make one by just getting a soft ball and using a sharpie felt tip pen that you actually write a sequence of things around it and as you toss the ball, wherever your right thumb lands you do that action. If it's something you want to be about making up a story, it could just be a word and they have to put that word into a sentence or into a story or tell me a time when, and they finish the sentence. There are lots of ways of doing that as well, so there are endless ways of increasing imaginative play and as I said my book on middle childhood has a lot more of those, but also I just really want to get you going on seeing the value of re-introducing, amplifying imaginative play at this age because the benefits are huge for our eight to twelve year olds, and they just don't get enough of it. Have fun with it.

Thank you for listening. I'd love if you could leave a positive review, share this with a friend or a few friends, or even subscribe to the podcast. It really helps others to find it and helps with visibility online. You can also follow me on Instagram, @joannafortune, or on Twitter @Imjoannafortune. Tune in next time for more 15 Minute Parenting.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

Appendix 2(b): Radio show transcript from Parenting on Newstalk FM's Sean Moncrieff Show

Key:

I = Interviewer

JF = Respondent

Unclear: [unclear + timestamp]

Talking over each other: [over talking]

Date: 03/02/21

00:00:24-

I: Five, Three, One, Oh, Six is our text number that will cost you 30 cent or you can follow us on Facebook or Twitter, it is time for Parenting once again and Joanna Fortune is with us, afternoon Joanna.

JF: Hi, Sean, how are you?

I: **Not too bad, first one is a disgusting question; I just want to warn you all listening. I've a dog who does this too... I've been toilet training my three-year-old son for the past few weeks. I figured, as we're going nowhere and at home all the time, it's possibly the best time to do it, however he's fascinated by his pooh, as he never usually sees it in the nappy. I'm now wondering should I have shown him what it looks like as we went along. Now he goes in the potty, turns around and picks it up. He thinks it's a game or something. I say things like yucky and try my best to dispose of it as fast as I can and wash his hands, however, the other day he managed to stick his hand directly into his gob after handling it. I completely over-reacted, made him rinse his mouth out, which was a job in itself and I scrubbed his hands. Thankfully he wasn't sick and I think we escaped a very bad situation, Please tell me how I can get him to stop seeing potty as a game, and see his pooh as a toy, says an exhausted mummy as they all are.**

JF: Oh my gosh, exhausted and anxious about all of that but I think that was handled really well and of course if your child did ingest a significant amount and was unwell you'd go straight to a doctor, just say that from the outset, but a small amount and him not being unwell and you've got him to rinse and wash and all of that afterwards sounds like the absolute appropriate response. In a weird way I'm going to start at the end of this and work backwards because you want him to stop him seeing potty as a game and actually I think you need to inject a bit of playfulness into this. I always think, and we get so many questions about poop on this slot that it's just another great example of children not being disgusted by what disgusts us adults. They're like, this isn't disgusting, and it's super interesting. I think as well when it comes to potty training that when our children successfully go in the potty or whatever it is, we heap the praise on, we're super excited, we're like, yay, you did it, everybody look, show so and so, show mummy, show daddy, you're great, you're fantastic, so naturally we're telling them what's in there is brilliant. They're obviously interested in what we're heaping praise on.

I'm wondering if the game, the playfulness you do about this is that you would make him an active part of... I'm picking up you're using a potty here, that he would carry the potty with you obviously because it'll end up all over the floor to the toilet and tip it in and then he gets to flush it away. You could move away

from the potty at some point, directly to him sitting on the toilet on the little child-sized seat or insert, or one of those ladder seat things on the toilet itself and that way his poop is going directly to source. He then doesn't have the opportunity to pick it out in between. Develop a little story around it, like the poop goes into the toilet and then we say bye, bye to it and we do the flusher and it goes to poop-land and it's all gone away and you make it an interesting narrative. You're communicating to him the boundaries, don't touch it, let it go, it goes down the toilet, but in a really nice playful way.

You could also come up with a song, make up your own words, borrow one from a TV show or a book or one of those musical toilet training books. There are so many props out there for this. Sing a little toilet song for him as well, then you're reinforcing the message but in his language. I always recommend the book, *Everyone Poops*, when it's anything to do with poop because it's a great book. It's quite literal, it's very visual and it does explain exactly that well everyone poops, if you eat your poop, that's animals and people and what it looks like and smells like, and all of that stuff is in it. It's very clear that the humans in this story, their poop goes into the toilet. That's a very clear message that we poop in a special place and that's where it goes and it introduces wiping and flushing. It's a lovely book, it's by Taro Gomi, *Everyone Poops* and I think that's something, and kids love it because it is so visual.

I also think though increasing the sensory play here because he is so tactile, curious and of course he is, he's the right age for that. I think I've mentioned this before, but to flag it again, getting a deflated balloon and a funnel and filling it with wet sand so it's quite full and having him squeeze that out onto a tray, a breakfast tray or into a bowl and then he can fill it up and repeat that. That's going to give him a lovely experience of understanding that sensation of squeeze, release that he's getting when he's pooping. It's a nice way to safely play with it. You could also make playdoh, make slime, do a lot of messy play with him. He's clearly tactile exploring at the moment and tactile curious. Rather than don't, stop, not, try to say here's what you can do instead and redirect him towards safe sensory play.

Of course, exactly what you're doing, a gentle, yet firm no. You don't want to shame him. I do notice there was a panicked overreaction which I think is understandable when your child has just ingested their faeces, but a gentle firm no, that's not where poop goes, poop goes in the toilet, and again, you reframe with where you want it to go, rather than where you don't want it to go. Make the hand washing fun, have another little song about that or, get some nice child friendly looking hand soap, so that washing our hands is an integral part of the process, but it's also a fun part of the process. I think doing some stuff like that will actually help.

I: Right okay and best of luck with that, at the same time.

[00:06:01]

[00:24:28]

I: My daughter is 14 and has a strong personality. She's opinionated and not afraid to use her voice, which I'll be honest leads to a lot of arguments and mainly with me, as we are cut from exactly the same cloth. We both let things get heated and can both lose our temper with one another and all very quickly. We shout at one another, we slam things to relieve tension. My husband and my youngest daughter, 8, are both quieter and less argumentative. I know it makes them uncomfortable but in that moment we

can't seem to stop ourselves. As you can imagine lockdown has helped our relationship, I need to fix this. I fear I'll say something I'll regret or go too far and I don't want my daughter growing up always on the cusp of bubbling over either. I love her, but now feel like I can't tell her, as our bond is bruised. I'm wondering if Joanna has advice for both of us to calm down in these moments?

JF: Oh goodness, yes, and it brings to mind in terms of typical, not pleasant but typical adolescent development conflict is one of the five adjustments we always look at that our children go through, our teenagers do, but also as parents we have to adjust to it. Within this adjustment of conflict and this is basically to say that conflict is a normal, healthy part of the parent/teen relationship. It's how we negotiate it and what we do with it that can become problematic. This is where your teenager is going to become more abrasive, let's say, in the process of opposition. They're aiming to liberate themselves from parental rules, parental requirements, they're leaving that time of do as you're told and they're entering that time of let's talk about it, let's negotiate. This is also that they can claim independence, which is a crucial milestone of adolescence. But, it frequently leads to increased rows because as parents we see that our children are more testy, they're pushing limits, and they're defying us. In this instance in particular, but certainly not exclusively here, it maybe is activating something in us, pushing our buttons.

I suppose that's about taking a step back, you're naming it; we're cut from the same cloth. Something in you knows this feeling in her, you've been there, and you've walked this walk. It's to stop and ask an answer of the question of yourself, how did you experience this as a teenager, what was it like for you. How did your parents respond you to, what was that like and how do you wish you had been responded to and start from that point. Start from the place of how you wish you had been responded to instead. When it comes to making repair following these ruptures and explosive conflicts, repair, emotional repair is always the responsibility of the adult, always. I really feel strongly about that because if we can take responsibility for the repair, it communicates clearly that the relationship we have with our kids is more important than the conflict at hand.

It says, in a really doing way, you might fight with me sometimes but you'll fight for me, always. That's really important. When things are calmer, you want to come back together and it maybe you saying I didn't mean to shout and roar at you. I really lost my temper when that was going on. Here's what I wish I had said, can I get a do over, this is what I'd like to do now and you do it differently the second time. I'm also wondering because you have a calmer other parent in the house, a more conflict averse parent, say, that could dad step in, insert himself and his calmer energy in here. When you can feel yourself escalating in response to your daughter that you tag each other in and he handles it from that point, so that you're not getting pulled into the conflict with her, but you're saying I'm getting escalated, I'm taking responsibility and I'm removing myself from this and dad can take over, because that's going to be a much better dynamic in that particular situation.

I also think you could invest in some positive expressions of anger. Anger is not a problem, it's a very healthy human emotion but again it's about how we express it. Having something like a frustration tool kit, you can have foam bricks, you can get Dam-It dolls, you can make those, anything that's out there, you can basically replicate at home, at no cost or very little cost. Taking a ball, I like to

take a ball, it's not a foam ball, but it's not a really hard leather ball, something in the middle but it takes a bit of oomph to give it a kick. Take it outside and kick it, kick it against a wall, kick it up the garden and back down. Something that allows you to physically release the tension. You might make an anger playlist on your music list wherever you store your music and lots of, everybody's going to have something pop into their head now, but some kind of anger releasing song that you could listen to, change your environment, get moving, get fresh air, go walking, go running just get outside and get some distance from each other.

Try and exercise and you could teach your daughter to do this too, a visualisation piece where you go to a quiet space, it might be your bedroom or wherever. It might be the toilet, the bathroom, close the door, put the seat down and just stand facing the toilet and treat it like a chair. Imagine the other person sitting in that chair and say what you wish you could say, get it out of your system, but in a healthier way than directly to the person, which is then getting pulled into the conflict.

I: Much that I hate the word, it sounds a bit like you're saying that perhaps mammy is triggered when she has encounters with her teenage daughter because of when she was a teenager.

JF: I am wondering about that and I think this parent is too and she certainly wouldn't be the first one. The best way to discover our own unresolved issues as parents is to become a parent. Everything that we've been holding onto our whole lives will come screaming to the surface when you're faced with your child who is, of you. She may well be activating and triggering something in you. I wouldn't say that that's her conscious intention, that may be a secondary piece to this, but if she's activating you, when you end up shouting at her, it's not because of what she's doing and saying, it's because of what got activated in you. Try to switch it that she's not being difficult, she's having a difficulty expressing what's going on for her in a healthier way.

I: Indeed, so if mammy is in the back garden playing Death Metal and kicking a football, leave her alone for a while. Joanna Fortune, great wisdom as always, thanks a million, Joanna Fortune, there you are, listening to the Moncrieff Show on Newstalk, and we're going to take a break...

00:30:49 [END OF TRANSCRIPT]

Appendix 2(c): Media articles written about/by me through the lens of 15-Minute Parenting

4 | LIVING

Sunday Independent 24 May 2020

BIG READ

TRYING to launch a book when no launch is permitted in the traditional sense is actually quite terrifying," says Joanna Fortune, clinical psychotherapist, attachment specialist, parenting consultant on *Newstalk's Morning Show*, and TEDx speaker. "And yet I did feel in my gut that the timing for this second book is really quite good. Because as parents work from home, without our usual network around us, we do need that little bit of support in structured creativity, and a bit of reassurance that doing a little, but doing it in a committed, consistent way, is good enough."

It's this doing a little that is so heartening when it comes to Joanna's take on the brier patch that is parenting – particularly right now, when we are teachers, minders and sports coaches, along with mothers, fathers, employees and housekeepers. Because Joanna's position – and the subject of her second book, *15-Minute Parenting 0-7 Years* – is that 15 minutes a day of proper, structured, immersive play with our kids is enough. Enough for them; enough for us. Enough to stay connected, to help them process the many strange things happening these days, as well as manage this stage of their lives, and prepare for the next: the minefield that is adolescence.

There is a lot of guilt and frustration around right now for parents. "The reality is, we're trying to do everything we were always doing, plus now all of this new stuff, and all at the one time. It's pressure. I know myself, I'm trying to work from home, so is my husband, and we have a very young child – Maisie, just turned three (celebrated with a Zoom birthday party). She is at the stage where she will pester round and play, but only in very short bursts. She very much wants to be in with her. And that's lovely and normal, but I feel the guilt when I'm in my home office, knowing she's down there, and she could really do with more input from me, but I'm trying to get this done. So I get it first-hand. The guilt is huge."

As well as guilt and frustration, there is apprehension. Through her parenting slot on the *Moncrieff Show*, Joanna has seen "hemera" emerging that parents are really stressed about – "how do I make sure my kids have enough when it's just me?" we've been fighting with each other, there are tensions at home. I think there's parental fatigue," she says. "Maybe we peaked too early? We did the baking, Play-Doh-making, and now we're depleted."

"It's a marathon, not a sprint," she says.

The parents and adults are locked into a fear state. We're highly anxious, consumed with what if...? and that keeps us in a heightened state of emotional arousal that I call anticipatory arousal. It's like being an emotional neocortex – you're looking for proof that you're right to feel the way we do. We forget that the little people in our lives take their emotional cues from us."

The answer to this anxious back-and-forth isn't, she says, to sit and talk it out, it's to play it out. In play, we're doing it rather than speaking it, and when we're 'doing' communication, it activates a different part of our brain. When we're in the heightened emotional state, that part of our brain responsible for logic and reasoning and keeping us steady is unavailable to us. But by doing the communication, playing it out, we're using sensory, touch-based, and visual, and that is very regulating for emotional arousal. Play has that therapeutic impact, as well as being fun. It takes us out of our heads for those moments, it gives us a reprieve. And it's a double win, we're not just doing it for the child. It's an opportunity for shared joy."

The book is full of suggestions for games, involving everything from water, to beach balls, baking and board games. But does she really think that 15 minutes, between Zoom meetings, or at the end of a fraught working day, is enough?

"It is enough, because it's good enough. And because it's predictable. When it comes to parenting, what makes children feel safe is what is calm, consistent and predictable. I firmly believe that if you play little and often, that is much better than front-loading your week and being Pan Parent on a Monday for four hours, and then nothing for the rest of

the week. If you can do 30 minutes, do 30 minutes. But if you do a pocket of 15 minutes every single day, that matters."

"It's an emotional connection, it's also neurological co-regulation. An anxious, worrying little brain is met by a calmer, more mature brain. Their emotional right brain is reaching out to your emotional right brain, meeting through play, and co-regulating back into their window of tolerance."

So what is this window of tolerance? It's "where we are all at our best," Joanna says. The calm, clear-headed, rational place where we make good decisions and function productively. It's a place adults can regulate themselves – by going for a walk when we feel overwhelmed, getting some air, meditating. Children can't do this, not by themselves. Not yet."

"The job of childhood is to grow that window of tolerance," Joanna explains. "Tensions, anxiety, trauma, upset – they all actively shrink that window. What play does is it extends that window of tolerance. It helps the child to be co-regulated by a calmer, more consistent, available adult. And that's why it really matters."

The phase covered in this book, from age eight to 12, is known as 'middle childhood' and is, Joanna says, "an important one for me, because this is the most overlooked phase of childhood. We focus on the very important early years,

and we focus on the teenage years, and we catapult over middle childhood, and actually it's a crucial stage. It's a time of immense change – physically and neurologically."

It is, she says, a time when children develop "increased focus on justice and fairness – but of course from their point of view and on their terms. They start to show passionate interests outside the family, to do with wider society. There is an increase in focus on and prioritising of friends. They have this push-pull dynamic: they pull away from you, but they still need you as a sounding board. They want to do it all themselves, but the reality is, they still need you. That's an uncomfortable place to be, and this is a time of both great self-confidence and doubt. It's extremely hard. As a parent, you can feel damned if you do, and damned if you don't. They want you to make yourself available, but when you do, they reject you. It's a constant mixed-message phase. That's part of the confusion of being a child of this age, and

'We need to realise that play' isn't a box of toys in the corner; play is a state of mind, a way of being'

of parenting a child of this age."

In middle childhood, play patterns change, she says. Developmentally, creative, imaginative play decreases, and things like team sports and challenge-based activities, like learning to rollerblade, increase. We need to find a way of playing with and being with them in this stage. The book is filled with ways of doing that and achieving that. And of strengthening their capacity to communicate and be heard."

As parents, this is the phase when we need to realise that 'play' isn't a box of toys in the corner; play is a state of mind, a way of being. We can be playful in how we speak to our kids, produce a meal with them, ask them to do something. "This is also a stage when magical beliefs change a lot, and I don't believe begins to creep in. There is no doubt some of the excitement goes out of the world, and the sense of possibility divides. It's a time to teach children that there are different kinds of magic. "Learning the truth doesn't and shouldn't put an end to magical traditions," Joanna says. "I think we have to continue celebrating by creating family traditions, and keeping magical experiences alive."

It is, she says, a time to learn to be supportive, but perhaps more in the background, to learn the "fine balance between being interested but not intrusive," and "to practice that, because you're going to need it in adolescence."

I was a fan of Joanna's first book, *15-Minute Parenting 0-7*, and luckily for me, her books have kept pace with my children's ages. Now I have two in this middle childhood period, a nine-year-old and a 12-year-old. From my vantage point, her analysis of their development is spot-on: the obsession with 'justice', the increased devotion to their friends, and the heartbreaking push-pull of their affections: the way they draw me close, only to lash out and push me away again.

I am not always patient. Some would say I am not even often patient. And I confess that I am not great at play. Or at least, I wasn't. I find that I enjoy this phase of play as Joanna defines it far more than the early years. We do a lot of ball games, skipping races, hopping races. And because our graphs of strength and ability are curving in opposite direction – theirs up, mine down – there's a proper edge to it. They can pretty much beat me at a lot of physical stuff now, and it's only a matter of time before I am routed entirely.

It's when I don't do the 15 minutes that I really notice it. There are days I'm too busy, too tired, too preoccupied to invest that quarter-of-an-hour, and those days can get ratty and self-righteous. In these Covid times, I am all day at the computer working, while they are about their business of home-schooling and hanging out. They come in and chat to me, and I am distracted, impatient. Our interactions

are sketchy and unsatisfactory. Come the evenings, if I make the effort, good things happen. Even if I start reluctantly – oh, God, not this... – within minutes, actual fun happens. We have a laugh, I learn things about them (I didn't know, they see me actually attending to them, rather than pretending to. The knock-on effect in terms of a harmonious household and a sense that we are all, somehow, getting on is vital).

Since having Maisie, Joanna has "tried to work more part-time, to have more work-life balance. I manage it some weeks, and other weeks I absolutely don't. I am not doing as much client work, although I'll never give that up entirely – and I'm doing a lot more writing, seminars, webinars."

After finishing *15-Minute Parenting 0-7*, Joanna "was approached to do a screen test for a really big American TV show on parenting." Later, she reveals it was *Supernanny*. "I was in LA, I met with a family, we did a little mini-episode. It was a whirlwind few days. That process was really interesting. I experienced so much, and I really enjoyed it. I got down to the final two, and in the end, I had to say 'this isn't for me' and withdrew."

Was that hard? "It was really hard. It was like pulling off a sticking plaster, I'm not going to lie. Because it could have been huge. But I had a really small child, I was in-between writing the second book. Sometimes what we need is the courage to know what's right for us, and what's not."

Would she consider it again, if the timing was better?

"It's not even just about timing, it's about the fit being right. I'm talking to some people around projects like that at the moment. Things are on hold now because of Covid-19, but there are a couple of exciting processes around a new chapter in my career – embracing ways of speaking to lots of people, in a way that one-to-one client work doesn't allow. So, a time of possibility despite the ongoing restrictions."

"Absolutely. I think there are positive signs of what I could come out of this. One of the huge benefits is that we've all had to slow down... and I don't want to make light of what has been hugely difficult, particularly for people who live alone... I think we need to be supportive and mindful of our collective mental health, but as people, we are innately creative, and I think creativity will emerge from this and we will find new ways of being and experiencing joy."

15-Minute Parenting by Joanna Fortune is out now, available on all online platforms. £9.99 for print version, also available in audio and Ebook versions

The 15-Minute Miracle

Now that we have to be teachers and coaches as well as parents – and feel guilty and overburdened – it's the perfect time for psychotherapist Joanna Fortune's new book. She tells **Emily Hourican** why 15 minutes of parenting can be enough

Picture: David

PICK YOUR BATTLES: Tips for parenting in middle childhood

■ A key parenting goal during middle childhood is to invest in your child's emotional resilience and capacity to withstand external influences.

■ This is a time when you can provide opportunities for independence-building, so increase the chores and expectation that they interact with other adults in public, such as shop assistants.

■ In spite of them asserting that they know far more than you at this age, you are still their greatest influence, so heap on the praise for their efforts and maintain those gentle yet firm boundaries... even while they roll their eyes at your efforts to do so.

■ Your middle-childhood-state child is capable of being reasoned with but don't confuse this with thinking they will be reasonable all – or even most – of the time.

■ This is an age when your child will show signs of pronounced emphasis on justice and fairness, as they see it, so focus on picking your battles.

■ Play is essential at this age because it underpins and supports the physical, emotional, social and neurological changes your child is experiencing while maintaining a parent-child connection.

■ We do not do our children a favour if we rush in to rescue them from every upset and disappointment. Rather stay with them in these moments and help them to process and cope with disappointment.

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Concentrate and preserve your interests. Avoid a messy situation and be vigilant. It is certainly time to keep your word on you. On the up side, there are positive surprises in the air. Watch out for a visit, message or opportunity from someone unexpected. These are lucky, happy times.
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The best of both worlds is yours for the taking. Being Libra you keep things in balance better than the rest of us. You can also magnify the principle and magnify your luck if you do choose. Turn on the positivity and life is a magnet you will attract what really matters.
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Scorpio 24 Oct to 23 Nov
The planets are low and almost or obligation, make sure that you take corrective action and rectify any outstanding misunderstandings. Where you have gone wrong, make sure the right thing happens. Do not fret about a difficult situation. You have a lot to offer.
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Sagittarius 23 Nov to 21 Dec
Steer clear of negative situations. You need to spend time with people who make you laugh and who appreciate you as you are. Be confident and happy and do not let anyone block your progress. In work situations think on the help you, your intention and play to win.
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Capricorn 22 Dec to 20 Jan
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Family values

Child psychotherapist Joanna Fortune's life was profoundly changed as a teenager when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. **Helen O'Callaghan** reports



IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS: From her grandmother, to aunt and mother, Joanna Fortune says she grew up with strong maternal influences.

FOR psychotherapist Joanna Fortune and her sister – a public health nurse who's soon to be married – the name has stuck: It's still the Bad News Café, the place where Joanna as a 16-year-old broke the news to her sister, younger by 12 years, that their mum had breast cancer. "It was a bad and never go to it. I wasn't particularly nice. I decided to go there because I didn't want to spoil any place we liked with bad news," says Joanna.

Altogether, she and her sister made three trips to the Bad News Café – their mother's breast cancer re-occurred, and 27 years on she's still fighting, winning against and living with the disease. But that bombshell diagnosis when Joanna was just midway through her teens primed her to take on early emotional responsibility and independence. "My mother might say I was always very independent and assertive. But it amplified, I became very self-sufficient. It probably comes out still, as in 'I'll do it, I'll do it'."

As a psychotherapist, Joanna knows that, developmentally, the mother/teen daughter relationship can sometimes feel like a battle-ground. "I certainly explored the boundaries of conflict – but my Mum getting sick brought me out of that way of relating with her. To see your mother vulnerable – this tower of strength you're really on to – I wanted to reassure and soothe her, not stress and worry her."

Her mum's illness marked a shift in the parent/teen relationship, with Joanna and her mother almost swapping care-giving roles. She recalls a "lovely public health nurse" visiting to change her mother's dressings when she was undergoing radiotherapy. "She saw my watching and holding my Mum's hand while she did it because it was painful. She asked if I wanted to be shown how to do so I could do it when she wasn't there. So I changed my Mum's dressings every other day. It made me feel practically useful. It helped my mother, and looking back I think it also helped me process what was happening in a very active way."

Joanna's relationship with her mother, Maureen, and her father, Michael, was very special in my life. She was a very strong maternal figure. I had my Mum and my Dad, and when I had Maureen and Auntie Anne, so I grew up with lots of maternal influence around me. When Mum got sick and spent time in hospital, having then next door made things a lot more manageable. It was a great support."

Growing up and sharing a bad garden with their grandmother meant when Joanna got up to mischief and into trouble, she could just hop over the wall and Granny Maureen would be there to help. "I was a bit of a troublemaker and Maureen was very strict. I'd say 'It's OK, pet, and feeling about worry.' So I always associate orange Marmite with her."

It's a great regret for Joanna, now aged 43 and a mother herself – that her

66 certainly explored the boundaries of conflict – but my Mum getting sick brought me out of that way of relating with her

grandmother never got to meet her daughter Maureen, who is three years old. They'd have been each other's biggest fans.

She always knew, if she had a girl, she'd name her after her beloved grandmother, and after her death it was a way of honouring her legacy in Joanna's life. "It gave me a beautiful reason to keep saying her name daily. A name is the first gift we give our children and I believe very meaningful and loaded with our hopes and wishes. Maureen's second name is Ann after my mother."

Mum, I named her after my mother. I've known, which was no accident – I admire strength and resilience and I think I may have wanted to bestow that on her too."

Maureen's love for her name-sake as 'the other Maureen', she's curious about her and Joanna loves talking about her and sharing her grandmother's life with her daughter. She can't say whether it's nature or nurture, but Maureen has quite a few of her great-grandmother's personality traits. "Like a love of being out, doors, a high pain threshold, never feeling the cold and an insistence on short sleeves regardless of the weather. Her wonderful distinctive laugh and finding joy in everyday things."

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS Joanna pinpoints exactly when she first got interested in psychology. Aged 16, she borrowed Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* from the library in Bray. "I didn't understand a word, but I have lived right next door to the family home in Kildare, Co Wicklow – where P.D. James was filmed – helped minimise somewhat the impact of her mum's cancer. "My grandmother was very special in my life. She was a very strong maternal figure. I had my Mum and my Dad, and when I had Maureen and Auntie Anne, so I grew up with lots of maternal influence around me. When Mum got sick and spent time in hospital, having then next door made things a lot more manageable. It was a great support."

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It's a great regret for Joanna, now aged 43 and a mother herself – that her

in the NGO sector – she worked with the ISPCC, ran a women's refuge and was on the board of directors of Women's Aid. She also worked with children's charity, To Children with Love – with children in orphanages in Russia – on programmes concerned with de-institutionalisation, psychological resilience and life-skills. "I loved being part of their mother and baby programme, a parent-mentoring programme where experienced mothers mentored young mothers – women who were leaving on their own and not knowing what to do. I was picky and would go to see her with her about not putting my stew. She said if I didn't, she'd send it to a child who'd be glad to eat it."

"One day when Maureen gave up their child for adoption, feeling they'd no choice."

RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN She credits the impact of her mother's illness with nudging her towards a career that involves looking at the emotional impact of life events on individuals and relationships. She has worked with children who've endured some of the most difficult challenges life throws up: abandonment, domestic violence, abuse.

She set up her psychotherapy clinic, Solom, in 2010 in the height of the recession and is the only trainer and supervisor for therapy practitioners in Ireland.

"I always struck by how resilient people can be, with so little, by the possibility of repair, even following terrible things. In my work, I've seen children who've been back into life when given the opportunity to have an attachment with a safe trusted adult."

Since the third trimester of her pregnancy, she has been looking after some of the direct trauma and attach-

Feelgood 13

ment work she had been doing. "So I wouldn't be carrying so much emotional stuff from others and I'd be more emotionally available to Maureen at a time when she really needs it. I consciously decided to evolve my practice into more training and writing and supervise other therapists who do the trauma and attachment work."

The transition into parenthood was massive, she says. "The emotional onslaught of constant demands and needs, especially when they're little. And I'm not Maureen's psychotherapist – I'm her parent. I'm as susceptible to good and bad parenting days as anyone."

She recalls being asked – pre-baby – if she had children. "I think behind that question was 'do you get how hard this job is, how complex, how easy to get wrong?' I honestly believe I did get it – but now I feel it."

There's no better way to discover your own issues/ triggers, she says, than to become a parent. "I see it in small everyday occurrences, especially around food."

Growing up, my Mum was strict about us eating what she'd prepared – eating all of it. I was picky and would go to see her with her about not putting my stew. She said if I didn't, she'd send it to a child who'd be glad to eat it."

"One day when Maureen gave up their child for adoption, feeling they'd no choice."

SELF-CARE Joanna knows she can only be the parent she's able to be if she takes care of herself. She loves the countryside, adult-to-adult conversation, catching up with friends – her female friendships are very important. A voracious reader and currently reading *Between* by N. Chirba. *A Ghost in the Forest*, she also really needs yoga in her life. "I do yoga before I regularly doing yoga." And, of course, there's Diarmuid, the Cork man she met in a Ranelagh pub. "I was with my friend and he was with his. We went on a date a few days later and that was it. Two years later we were married." That was five years ago. "I was married in her favourite place, Powerscourt, on the birthday of one of her favourite people, her grandmother, Maureen. She'd died a couple of months earlier – I'd been hoping she'd make it."

She loves Diarmuid's sense of calm, how reassuring he is, how deeply kind and caring. "He's very balancing for me. I tend to take on too much, to over-commit – he's great at flagging this pattern and putting me out of that spiral. We've a lot of similarities – both one of five siblings, we share a love of books, film, current affairs. But we're different. He's boundaried, structured, whereas I can at times be more hot-headed."

Joanna Fortune's third book in the parenting series – 15 Minute Parenting, The Teenage Years, Creative Ways to Stay Connected with your Teenager – is out next week, available from online stores (or bookshops will order it for you; €11.99 paperback, eBook €4.99).

My new boyfriend is fit but has performance anxiety in bed

I am 30 and have a new boyfriend who is 25. He is fit and physically confident in bed... until it comes to the moment of penetration when he regularly loses his erection. Then, he gets embarrassed and the whole thing ends. What can we do to get past this?

>>> The mystery of the disappearing erection is a perennial problem. I'm obliged to advise you to tell your boyfriend that erectile dysfunction (ED) in younger men can be an early warning sign of cardiovascular problems, so he should consider a chat with his GP. However, the fact that he can get an erection through foreplay means that the issue is much more likely to be caused by performance anxiety.

Men aged 25 never expect to lose an erection during sex, but it happens, often after they have had too much to drink. It is invariably awkward, and the next time the individual concerned has sex he can't help worrying that it might happen again. Feeling anxious speeds up his heart rate and increases the amount of adrenaline in his body. This causes vascular constriction, which decreases blood flow. The more often this happens, the more worried about it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

That is the simple explanation and, as with most things in life, performance anxiety is often a lot more complex. In some it is connected with physical health issues such as diabetes or mental health issues such as depression. It can also be an indication that the man is not comfortable in a relationship. It can happen, for example, if he is uncertain about his level of commitment, or is reluctant to become a parent when he knows that

Sex advice with Suzi Godson

66 If your boyfriend has not had many sexual partners, he may be feeling slightly intimidated about having one who is five years older than him

his partner desperately wants to get pregnant (or even if he just suspects this might be the case). Men who are cheating sometimes find it difficult to maintain an erection with their primary partner, too. It is a subconscious warped loyalty to the affair partner, but not uncommon. As I said, it's complicated.

Sexual dysfunction is not someone's fault. This might do the trick.

thing that we usually associate with 25-year-olds because it is so much more likely to affect older men. However, that may be changing. In the 1984 Massachusetts Male Aging Study, for example, only 5% of men under 40 suffered from ED, compared with 30% aged 70 to 80. But when Anna Kessler at King's College London conducted a global review of studies that examined the prevalence of erectile dysfunction in 2015, the picture was very different. In the studies she looked at, young men had an exceptionally high prevalence of ED, and in one study 55% of men aged 18 to 25 had experienced it. Kessler suggests that this might be caused by psychological factors, and one example she gives is anxiety related to sexual inexperience.

If your boyfriend has not had many sexual partners, he may be feeling slightly intimidated about having one who is five years older than him, and his repeated inability to perform won't be helping to calm that anxiety. He may also be worrying about you and what you want. Although it is not universally true, a lot of men – especially younger ones – misguidedly believe that once a woman has and becomes possessed by an intractable desire to have babies, it is nonsense, of course, but if you haven't discussed all the "big life stuff" with him, it might be time to get that misconception. I would say it is worth just having a straightforward conversation with each other about what a relationship means to you both. Clarity removes uncertainty, which decreases anxiety. This might do the trick.

Send your queries to suzi@mac.com

NATURAL HEALTH

I'm breastfeeding my six-month-old baby and feel tired most of the time. He has started to sleep through the night, but it's making little or no difference. What would you recommend?

>>> New babies can be equal parts joy and exhaustion. The lack of sleep often has a cumulative effect on energy levels and sense of wellbeing.

It is good to hear your baby is no longer waking during the night. Hopefully, you are managing to get some quality sleep, which is easier said than done when you are breastfeeding and/or out to make sure your boy is in fact sound asleep.

Pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding all require a lot of energy. It is worth having your ferritin levels checked via a blood test. Ferritin is a protein in the blood serum responsible for iron storage. The normal range for ferritin is between 20-200µg/l, with levels below 40 considered to be on the low side of normal. Low ferritin is linked with iron deficiency since the body will use up stored iron when the blood levels are low. If you do have lower (but not alarmingly low) levels of ferritin, then Floravit is an excellent tonic to consider. It is similar to the classic iron tonic *Floradine*, but without the brewer's yeast, gluten and honey – making it a safe alternative for people who suffer from allergies and sensitivities.

Floravit is made using African malva blossoms, chamomile flowers, ginseng, spinach, juice concentrates (apple, pear, black currant, cherry, blackberry, carrot), and rosehip extract. This tonic formula has an iron absorption rate of 25%, compared to the average absorption rate of iron tablets at 2-10%, but without the unwanted side effect of constipation. Take 1ml of Floravit twice daily until your ferritin levels are at least 200µg/l. Then take 1ml daily of Floravit until you feel you no longer need it (usually quite evident in your energy and mood levels) and have your blood tested to check your progress. Floravit is widely available in health stores and pharmacies.

NOTE: The information contained in this column is not a substitute for medical advice. Always consult a doctor.



Megan Sheppard

Do you have a question for Megan Sheppard? Email it to feelgood@examiner.ie or send a letter to: Feelgood, Irish Examiner, Linn Dubh, Ascription Road, Blackpool, Cork

Staying well hydrated is also essential, but this tends to be something that takes care of itself while breastfeeding since the body requires more water to make milk. Most breastfeeding mothers find their third levels increase significantly, and tend to have a bottle of water close to hand while feeding their little one.

You don't mention whether or not you have other children to care for as well, but this often compounds the feelings of fatigue – particularly if you are balancing the needs of a toddler and a baby while trying to look after yourself. It can be a challenge to find the time to prepare healthy balanced meals, so it is a good idea to have some healthy and quick snacks available such as raw vegetable sticks, fruit, dried fruits, seeds, and nuts. If you can manage to make a bowl of oatmeal or bircher muesli (with optional fruit and natural yogurt) at some point during the day, then this will help to soothe your nerves, supply nutrients, support healthy digestion, and keep your physical and mental energy levels up.

I've started to get tension headaches that can linger for hours. Other than drink lots of water, what else can I do?

>>> You are already taking the first important step in keeping your hydration levels in check. This could be a situation where an osteopath, a chiropractor, and/or an acupuncturist can help. You can choose a single modality or combine more than one for true complementary treatment. Frequent and lingering tension headaches are often linked with slight misalignments in the spine, which impact the central nervous system and impede blood flow to organs and muscles.

Chiropractic or osteopathy can help through subtle manipulation of bone and tissue to restore the flow of the circulatory and nervous systems. Acupuncture supports the balance of energy via pathways connected by thousands of key points.

LOCKDOWN GAMES

WHEN THERE IS ADVERSITY OR TRAUMA IN CHILDHOOD, PLAY BECOMES EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IN TERMS OF DEVELOPING SKILLS, REGULATING EMOTIONS AND MANAGING STRESS SAYS COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGIST AND FOUNDER OF ROSABEL'S ROOMS, DR. SUZANNE MCCLEAN

Ireland's favourite parenting guru Joanna Fortune, psychotherapist and author of the 15-Minute Parenting series, tells us that when we integrate 15 minutes of mindful play into our children's daily routines, we access a whole new way of understanding and responding to their needs.

But what exactly is mindful play? Does it work and could it really be this simple?

When I tried Joanna's approach during the first lockdown, I was both comforted and excited by how such a small change could have such a big impact. I was also pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed putting my phone away to be completely present and in the moment with my eight-year-old boy.

While play can of course include the entire family, for us the concept of 'mother and son' time felt very central to what we needed. Ruben delighted in the 1:1 attention, without his little sister perched on my hip, demanding her share of the lockdown limelight.

Designing and building our 'ideal village' with Lego, and some regular household items, represented far more than just an opportunity to have fun together. It involved sharing, planning, problem-solving, creating, prioritising and learning to manage disagreements.

Something inside me felt at ease knowing that whatever else might happen during the day, our 15 minutes of play would enable us to reconnect, and if necessary reset. I had every intention of continuing this workable new practice when the schools reopened, but life got in the way, and I dropped the ball. Literally.

It has taken a second lockdown and a looming six weeks of Level 5 restrictions to remind me once again, of the benefits of play.

This Covid thing is going nowhere fast and is weighing heavily upon family life in homes all around Ireland. Many families, including our own close friends, have suffered the devastating and untimely loss of loved ones due

"It has taken a second lockdown and a looming six weeks of Level 5 restrictions to remind me once again, of the benefits of play."



to Covid-19. Hearts are broken. Businesses and livelihoods are crumbling. The mental health of our nation is weakening. Many of us are experiencing symptoms of communal trauma as we relapse into another repetitive lockdown, while continuously trying to navigate this new normal. Though, in truth, Covid-19 no longer feels new and has never felt normal.

Last week my son was told that his friend's mum had tested positive for Covid-19. Did that mean his buddy was going to get it? What if his mum died? Would they ever be able to play together again? Would his pal be bullied, excluded or shamed in any way?

Such incredibly heavy worries for a kid to carry, and no



doubt even heavier for the child in question. Myself and Ruben returned to the playroom to play out his concerns and to prepare a 'cheer up' box to post to his pal in the hope that it might help reduce his sense of stigma and fear.

Where there is adversity or trauma in childhood, I believe play becomes even more important in terms of developing skills, regulating emotions and managing stress. Regarding Covid-19, there is no doubt that the serious business of play will help our children process their thoughts and emotions during such uncertain times. It might also be a means through which children are reminded of the importance of protecting themselves and staying safe.

Our 'ideal village' had hand sanitiser stations and mask dispensers beside park benches that memorialised loved ones who had died during the pandemic. Our health workers lived in houses made for heroes, with swimming pools where they could relax and recharge their energy, in order to keep being heroes. Our politicians kindly declined their pay rises and reduced their expenses, enabling them to invest more in the health care system so that contact tracing and other preventative measures were speedy and effective.

Play is the language of children, and this one will certainly take a lot of playing out. Oh, and speaking of language...just don't step on the Lego! 🐾

For more on mindful play pick up a copy of Joanna Fortune's 15-Minute Parenting, €15, Dubraybooks.ie

Living in Galway, Dr McClean is mum to Ruben, Rosabel and August Rose. She is also founder of Rosabel's Rooms, a child loss project in partnership with the Irish Hospice Foundation, hospicefoundation.ie

Health

Spending quality time with your kids every day is as good for you as it is for your children

The 15-MINUTE PARENT

With school closures causing children to feel frustrated, bored and isolated from their friends, this past year has been challenging for every family.

According to research by The Children's Society, the pandemic has led to over one million children feeling unhappy.

But the solution to improving their wellbeing could lie in devoting just 15 minutes a day to mindful moments spent

together.

Psychotherapist Joanna Fortune, who specialises in the parent-child relationship, believes small changes make a big difference.

She says: 'Parenting is a 24/7 job, making sure everyone is washed, fed and where they need to be. But studies show that children who grow up in families where spending time together is a regular practice, tend to display less challenging behaviours.'

'Find an opportunity for shared joy every day and you'll see positive changes in your children, with fewer tears and more laughter.'

Joanna encourages families to build quality time into every day, even when you don't have 'quantity' time.

'You can most definitely do enough in 15 uninterrupted minutes,' Joanna says. 'Find a daily window, then turn off your phone and be present. Children

don't want stuff from us, they want our time. Giving them this gift is like filling up the family love cup. Playful connection isn't only good for children. It's good for our own wellbeing too.'

Parenting: 0-7 years

Play is the language of children, so if you feel like you don't know how to play, follow their lead.

The rise of technology has led to more sedentary games, but creative and imaginative play helps develop strong physical and mental health. So encourage your child's curiosity.

Toddlers love sensory activities such as singing, dancing, painting and playing with Play-Doh. Some parents dread the mess, but it's important for children to experience these things.

Older children will be starting to enjoy stories that help them

to process life experiences, so make time to read together.

Children are sensitive to subtle messages, so when we are too busy or distracted to play, they feel disconnected from us, which can lead to acting-out behaviours. A simple smile tells them you're happy to spend time with them, no matter what else has happened in your day.

Parenting: 8-12 years

These years are a time for significant development as your child's brain matures. Play remains essential, yet this is often a time when we stop, presuming they've grown out of active play and would rather enjoy passive play, such as computer games.

Children this age need opportunities to assert their desires, so activities such as making jewellery or pizza give your child the freedom to express their individuality.

Safe risk-taking activities such as climbing trees, allow young bodies to thrive.

While older kids will be pulling away into adolescence, there's still plenty of shared joy to be found. Tweenagers are capable of critical thinking

and problem solving, so include them in conversations about world events, and try family board games such as Cranium to encourage teamwork.

Parenting: the teenage years

Communication can become more challenging, but even now, 15 minutes of playful, creative time can hold and strengthen your connection. When given the opportunity to engage in play, this age group shows more resilient mental health.

Remember, we're never too old for playfulness, despite what your teenager might tell you. Play is not a box of toys — it's a state of mind. Try collaborating on a project, such as upcycling the furniture for their bedroom. Or if you sing and dance together, you might even end up starring in one of their TikTok videos.

Be interested in your teenager's life without being intrusive. The teenage brain is overwhelmed by hormones and emotions, and a simple way to help them relax could be doodling together.

At this life stage conflict is inevitable, but a hug after an argument signals that, while we will fall out sometimes, we'll always love each other. Teenagers still need their parents.

Edited by Kim Willis

● Joanna Fortune's 15-Minute Parenting series is available in ebook, paperback and audio from Amazon, Apple Books, Google Play and Kobo.

READ it

From depression and anxiety to personality disorders, one in four of us experience mental health issues. In *No Such Thing As Normal*, journalist Bryony Gordon offers practical advice, covering subjects such as sleep,

addiction, worry, medication, self-image, boundary setting, therapy, mindfulness and the power of walking and talking. Available from Waterstones, priced £14.99.



Joanna Fortune

Photos: Freckled Photography/Getty, Shutterstock

Shop Spy

The YuYu hot water bottle will keep you cosy for up to six hours, and it takes less than a kettle to fill one up! Chronic pain sufferers with conditions like endometriosis, IBS and arthritis are all sharing their love for this long hot (and cold) water bottle. Available from yuyubottle.com, priced from £25.



You can email the health editor Zoe Pinks at zoe.pinks@takeabreakmedia.co.uk

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Samples of the weekly parenting column I wrote for The Irish Times Newspaper Weekend Edition

PARENTING

To parent in a creative way, we have to reflect inwards to connect outwards, writes Joanna Fortune

I believe that there is no better way to discover your own unresolved issues than to become a parent. Becoming a parent and facing the daily demands and needs of children will bring your unresolved issues bubbling to the surface. Our children are of us. We will see aspects of our own childhood experiences and ourselves when we are engaged with them. I would go so far as to say that by the time we snap and "lose it" with our children it is not because of what they have done/said but what has gotten triggered within us by them doing/saying it. To parent in a creative and playful way, we have to reflect inwards to connect outwards. This is therapeutic parenting.

Some time ago I answered a parenting question on the radio from a parent asking about how she might manage her own "parent tantrums" around and in response to her children. This offered me the opportunity to speak about therapeutic parenting. The response from listeners was unprecedented and even now, months later, I still get emails and messages asking me for more information about therapeutic parenting.

How we experienced being parented in our own childhoods will directly influence and inform the kind of parents we become to our own children. Our own early childhood experiences can leave us with a mental blind-spot, making it challenging to really see and feel what our own children need from us, particularly in the emotional area of their lives. Insecurity in our own early attachments may contribute

to a current sense of unfulfillment or disappointment. It is important that you value yourself enough to know that you must respond to this and take care of yourself so that you can take care of your child and respond to their needs in an attuned, securely attached way.

Before children can self-regulate their emotional states, they co-regulate in response to their important adults (parents, carers, teachers etc.). This presupposes that the adults in question have developed their capacity to emotionally self-regulate. But what if we didn't have access to a co-regulating adult in our lives growing up? How do we give what we did not get ourselves?

In my work with parents I always start with my own parental self-audit interview. The important thing is not just to ask your-

self the questions but to answer these as fully and honestly as you can, noting if there is something you feels requires further reflection or support. For some us, this is a personal contemplative process; for others, we may benefit meeting with a suitably qualified professional who can support us in working through these blocks.

My parental self-audit starts with reflective questions. These include:

"What was growing up like for you?"
"In what ways was your relationship with your mother similar to/different from your relationship with your father?"

"How were you disciplined as a child and how did this make you feel then/now?"
"Do you have memories of your parent's playing/singing with you? Can you recall a specific time this happened?"

Then I ask you to reflect on things that bring you pleasure in your life. These should be things that are about you, not about your child and how they might bring

■ To parent in a creative and playful way, we have to reflect inwards to connect outwards. This is therapeutic parenting. PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

you pleasure. Try to list 5 such things. When is the last time you got to do each/any of these? Can you build time into your week to ensure that you do at least one of these things each week?

The final stage is to reflect on how you are currently parenting your child(ren). Note that your relationship with each of your children is different so repeat this for each of your children individually. These questions include:

"Do I find opportunities each day to tell my child that I love them and am proud of them?"

"Am I able to be firm yet gentle with my child when necessary?"

"Do I have the opportunity to laugh at least once a day with my child? Does my child feel that I enjoy them?"

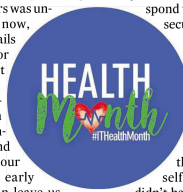
"Do I encourage my child to try new things and take (appropriate) risks? Do I praise their efforts regardless of outcomes?"

"Do I play with my child every day?"
A parental self-audit is not a one-time reflection. This is an exercise that you can and should repeat as your child grows up.

Joanna Fortune is a psychotherapist and author of the 15-Minute Parenting Series of books (See solamh.com)



How to parent when your reserves are at rock bottom



15-minutes of play when parental stamina is low

Parental stamina is a term I use to describe that drive that somehow keeps us all going as parents. Sometimes, even the most playful parent will feel a drop in stamina and crave their armchair.

■ Give your children a blanket, cushions, chairs etc to build a fort. When done they

can take a snack and play inside the fort while you sit back with a hot cuppa and a book for (even) 15-minutes.

■ Balloon volleyball – sitting in your armchair, hit a balloon to your child who must then hit it back to you. The aim is to keep the balloon in the air but they do all of

the running around.

■ Create a scavenger hunt ahead of time to use when a day like this comes. Draw out a map or clues and plant them around your house/garden with a prize at the end.

■ Time your children doing tasks (eg run from here to garden and back).

PARENTING

Encouraging (safe) risk-taking behaviour

Challenge and risk-taking activities are directly linked to children's self-esteem, writes **Joanna Fortune**



Risk is a major developmental milestone in adolescence, largely because of how the adolescent brain rewires with the thrill-seeking and reward drive of the brain developing very quickly while the part of the brain that serves to urge caution, consideration and to weigh up pros and cons takes until at least the mid-20s to develop. So teenagers are neurologically wired to take risks but the groundwork for their relationship to risk begins in early childhood and we (parents) must grow this in line with our children's growth.

Take, for example, when your baby starts to crawl – or stand and wobble – you may have been blessed with a climber, a child who sees every standing piece of furniture and windowsill in your home as an invitation. Bring to mind those times your young child is climbing and exploring playground equipment and might stumble, fall as they do so. Think again to when your older child participates in team sports or takes up a hobby outside of their typical school peer group and has to meet new peo-

ple and develop new relationships. Or the first time they walk to school with a friend rather than with you or learn to cycle a bike or walk to the shop alone for the first time.

Simply put, risk-taking behaviour is making a choice or taking an action when the outcome of that choice or action is unknown and cannot be fully predicted ie anything with a chance of success or failure but which you do anyway.

I always encourage parents I work with to pause and engage in a parental risk self-audit, which is a list of questions I developed to explore and reflect on our own relationship to risk. These are questions such as:

If you think something is against the rules, would it stop you doing it?

Is it difficult for you to send a meal back or make a complaint in a restaurant? Does how others might think/feel about you influence your actions?

Do you often do things to please others even if it is not something you want to do?

Understanding our own relationship to risk-taking behaviour is really helpful

when it comes to parenting our children through each stage of development and risk features in different ways across all stages of development.

If you are risk avoidant you may pass your hesitation down to your children if you dissuade them from taking risks or hover while they do so. We want children to take risks, we want them to take chances and try new things in unfamiliar situations and environments. We want them to take risks that are, at least mostly, positive risks rather than harmful ones as this primes them to engage in healthy risk taking behaviour during adolescence.

Risk aversion and fear conditioning begins early and it has a gendered lens. Challenge and risk-taking activities are directly linked to children's self-esteem, yet girls are more likely to be warned away from such activities than same age boys are. A study published in the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology showed parents are much more likely to caution their daughters about the dangers of climbing a playground pole while encouraging their same aged sons to do just that. We encourage boys to face fears and girls to become fearful. This is something we must be mind-

■ **Parents are much more likely to caution their daughters about the dangers of climbing a playground pole while encouraging their same aged sons to do just that.** PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

ful of when introducing our children to (appropriate) levels of risk.

Kindness is a healthy risk-taking behaviour. I know it may not seem like it but practising kindness involves emotionally reaching out in a bid to connect with those around you in a meaningful way without guarantee that your bid to connect will be reciprocated. As such, kindness is a vulnerable process that carries risk: risk of rejection and risk of being hurt. We must raise our children to look upon kindness as a strength of character and nurture this in them as they grow. In addition to being healthy risk-taking behaviour there are many psycho-social benefits to being kind not least of which is the "helper's high" it releases bringing a sense of belonging, community, connection and pride leaving us healthier and happier.

So, be aware of the gendered lens associated with risk taking. Be mindful of your own relationship to risk (as a child and now as a parent). Consciously avoid sabotaging healthy risk taking behaviour with unnecessary caution. Easy for me to say, right? If this is difficult for you, start by asking yourself what is the worst that could happen here? What is the potential benefit and learning from this behaviour? Now, weigh one up against the other and take a risk on risk-taking behaviour.

Joanna Fortune is a psychotherapist and author of the 15-Minute Parenting Series of books (See solamh.com). Throughout Health Month, she will be suggesting playful ways to connect with your children this year

15-minutes of risk taking play

Cushion-balance/jump: Place one cushion on the floor and have your child stand on it and centre themselves (easy). Praise their effort – great idea to stand right in the middle for balance, etc. Have them jump off, either into your open arms or onto a sofa/pile of cushions.

Now place a second cushion onto the first and repeat. Then a third cushion and repeat and so on until you see them struggle, when you can give them your shoulder to balance and end the game on

that number of cushions.

Blindfold-walk: Show your child around the space of the room. Show them how you are placing (safe) obstacles around the room. Cover their eyes and tell them to listen and follow your directions while you safely guide them around the room. Swap roles for a second round with a slightly older child and allow them guide you.

Kindness challenge: Take a week or even a month and set a challenge that everyone must practice one act of kindness each

day. Something small is great. Keep a kindness notebook for everyone to share what they did each day.

At the end do a shared, larger scale act of kindness.

Maybe saving a small amount of pocket money/skipping your take-out coffee and saving the daily cost and do something together eg make dignity packs to drop to a hostel for people who experience homelessness or bring flowers to a home for the elderly, etc.

Childproof your RELATIONSHIP

Navigate your new roles *together* and help build on your bond, says psychotherapist Joanna Fortune

Despite what the title of my book, *15-Minute Parenting*, might indicate, we all know that parenting is a 24/7 role! Once we become parents our brains are hardwired to be on constant alert; attending to our children's needs, worrying if they're OK, and if we are doing enough for them, all while we try to keep homes, jobs and family life working harmoniously. So it's little wonder that parenting can impact on our intimate partner relationships. Becoming parents is stressful, even if it's not your first time or first child. And what happens after birth can set the trajectory for your journey through parenthood, and how you adjust within your relationship to accommodate your new roles.

Children should be an important part of your family, but they should never be *the* most important part of your family. This may seem like a controversial statement, but what I mean is that children should grow up seeing that every member of their family is valued, appreciated and important. The overall family dynamic and your relationship with each other is the most important aspect of building a family. Becoming parents is the hardest thing a couple will go through together. It is vital that they find ways to go on the journey together – but that's certainly not always easy. Expectations rarely align with reality, and there is a very real adjustment period that can take anything up to three years. But the transition to parenthood should never be at the cost of your relationship.

PREPARING TO PARENT

Pregnancy is so all-consuming, physically and emotionally, that it is not uncommon for a couple to not really think about what it will be like when pregnancy ends and Baby comes home. Most couples find that they are faced with renegotiating their relationships afterwards, which is difficult to do given everything else that is going on in the post-

partum period! The hope is that this can be done in an open and communicative way, resulting in vast improvements – after some initial adjustments, of course. The amount of time needed for these adjustments varies for different couples, from a few months to close to a year, or longer. Of course, most couples spend a lot of energy trying to adapt to life with a new baby who has 'changed everything'. Finding time for your non-parent selves, as individuals and as a couple, and trying to pursue lifestyle activities you enjoyed before becoming parents is not easy – but it *is* important.

Just as you might invest in a top-end buggy or designer nursery furniture, it's well worth investing in childproofing your relationship and preparing for parenthood together. And it's important to start by accepting that we cannot possibly know what we do not know!

Pre-conception, when we are trying for a baby, and during pregnancy, when we are expecting a baby, what is happening to our changing bodies is all-consuming. Then we attend antenatal classes and the focus is on delivering the baby. But right up to the moment when your new baby is placed in your arms (when the focus shifts to how you will feed the baby), nobody talks to you about how your relationship with each other will feel once the baby comes home with you and two become three.

KNOW THAT IT'S NORMAL

Emotionally we take a bit of a battering in the first year of parenting. Between hormones, sleep deprivation, and attuning and responding to the constant



PHOTOGRAPHY: ADOBESTOCK, GETTY IMAGES

CHILDPROOF YOUR RELATIONSHIP

and evolving needs of a newborn baby, we can end up feeling lost without a road map to tell us whether we are going in the right direction. And this makes us extremely emotionally vulnerable. If we know ahead of time that this will happen (and it *will* happen!), we can better identify, empathise with and support each other's emotional vulnerability. This will also help us to normalise it as a stage of the process of adjusting to parenthood, and it won't feel so overwhelming in the moment.

We can become so focused on responding to every need our new baby might have that we often do so at a cost to our own needs and those of our partner. Babies (typically but certainly not universally) settle into a routine of sorts between four and six months of age. This is a good time to set aside some time for yourself and each other. Enlist a couple of



MEET THE EXPERT

Joanna Fortune is a child and family psychotherapist, author of *15-Minute Parenting* (£9.99, Thread Books), and a mum of one

hours' babysitting from friends or family and take yourselves out to dinner. This time in parenthood is about really focusing on what matters; the simple, small things (healthy food, a trip to the hairdresser, and meeting up with friends for an hour or two, as well as grabbing some time as a couple) and ensuring that we communicate these needs to each other. When we name and address our own needs, we are better able to recognise and respond to these needs in those we care about.

KEEP UP COMMUNICATION

As new parents, we can find ourselves staring at an unrecognisable version of ourselves in the mirror, wondering who we are and how we got here. This is compounded when we feel as if we are failing at parenthood because it doesn't feel anything like the photos and online posts. We can suffer a loss of identity, a drop in self-esteem, and terrible loneliness. Support from one's partner is crucial in turning this around, but it can take 18 months or more for this roller coaster to settle and slow down. Feeling that your partner believes that you are a good-enough parent is a big factor.

You may discover that you did not know each other's position on parenting and raising children ahead of time. And when those differences emerge they can cause tension, and you may enter a power struggle you hadn't anticipated. Ideally, we would sit down with our partner pre-conception and discuss our thoughts and beliefs about raising happy and secure children, but this doesn't always happen. However, it is never too late to have that conversation. This is about the art of compromise, accepting that neither of you is fully right or fully wrong, but knowing that together you can reach an agreed parenting plan. Remember that while it can feel as though the baby is the master of your home, you and your partner are the glue that holds the whole thing together. So learn to reach out, share your vulnerability with each other, say what you need, and empathise with and support one another – and take up those babysitting offers!

REDISCOVER PLAY!

When it comes to bringing fun back into your relationship, you need look no further than your own children for inspiration. Children can literally make a game out of anything! So prioritise playfulness and make it an essential part of your family life...

TURN CHORES INTO GAMES

Housework can be a source of real tension for many parents, especially at the end of a tiring day. So seek out ways to diffuse stress. If one of you washes the dishes while the other dries, introduce a little tongue-in-cheek role play as interviewer and interviewee. Think along the lines of 'So tell me, Tom, how did you prepare for this role of Cinderella? Had you done much housework previously?'

READ AND SHARE

Choose a favourite passage from a book you love, your favourite children's book from your own childhood, or some poetry, and read to each other, perhaps sharing what you love so much about this particular piece or narrative.

KEEP LAUGHING

Challenge one another to come up with a different joke each day and see who can make the other laugh the hardest!

PLAY HIDE AND SEEK

Introduce some affection and leave your partner a surprise note telling them one thing you love about them or a memory you thought of from your dating days that made you smile.

ENJOY SOME OLD-FASHIONED FUN

If you are taking a journey together, play a game of 'I went on a picnic and I brought...'. Each person adds one item to the list of things brought and when it is your turn you must recite the entire list before adding a new item to the end of it.

TOUCH WITHOUT AGENDA

Touch has healing and soothing powers; it lowers blood pressure and helps reduce anxiety, so it is very helpful in busy households and in relationships where you can feel like ships passing in the night. Try a hug, playfully grabbing each other, tickling, or even just holding hands while sitting or lying side by side at the end of a hectic day.

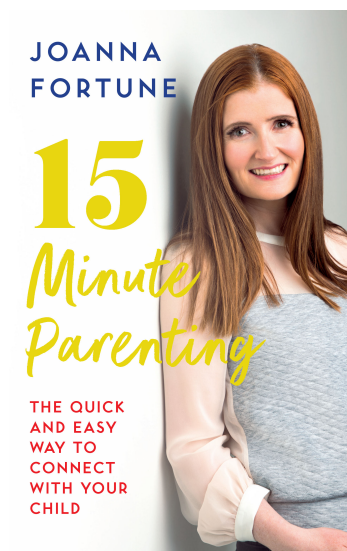
Appendix 2(d): Graphics used to amplify model on social media*



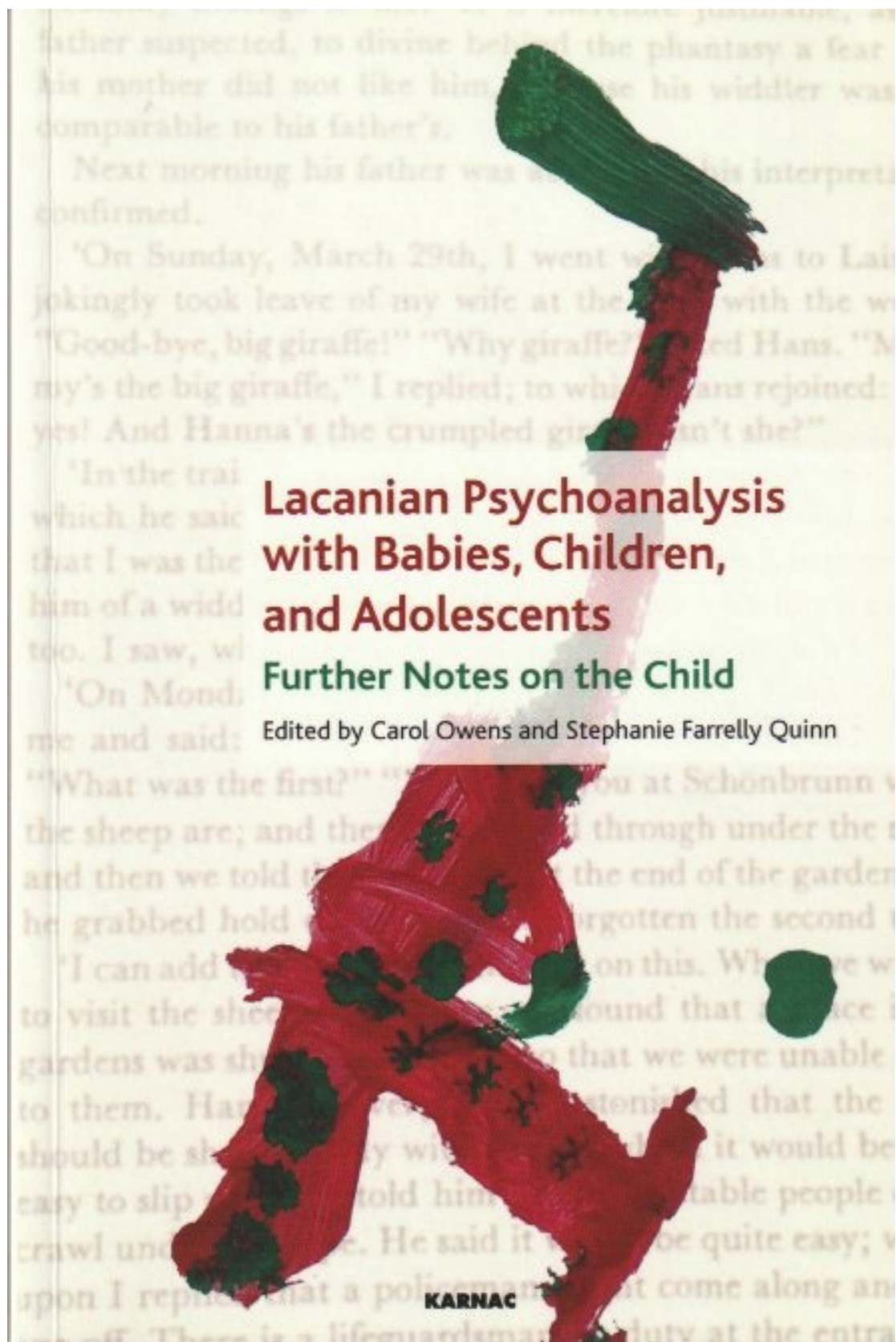
Appendix 3: Imagery

Appendix 3(a): Imagery for public works referenced

Imagery for 15-Minute Parenting



Imagery for other public works



'The relevance and specificity of Lacanian psychoanalysis for children had never been properly assessed before the publication of this crisp, intelligent, and highly readable collection of essays by renowned specialists. Here is the original ABC of psychoanalysis with the young: adolescents, babies and children. We will keep learning from these lucid, compelling, and profound elaborations combining insights drawn from Lacan with analyses found in Spielrein, Winnicott, and Dolto. Countless concrete examples and evocative vignettes make this collection come to life on every page.'

—Patricia Gherovici, psychoanalyst and author of *Please Select Your Gender and Transgender Psychoanalysis*

'Carol Owens and Stephanie Farrelly Quinn bring us chapters by clinicians working with child and adolescent subjects suffering from a wide variety of age-old and all-too-modern maladies, predicaments, and family configurations. In addition to a lucid presentation of Françoise Dolto's views about what position to adopt and how to proceed in analytic work with children, the many case discussions provided here should be of interest and value to child therapists of many persuasions.'

—Bruce Fink, Lacanian psychoanalyst

'This is a landmark text that will engage practitioners working with children. It marks out new terrain in Lacanian psychoanalysis, but also connects with other traditions and key current challenges and debates posed by children and childhood. This impressive volume connects with wider debates about forms of neoliberal subjectivity now inhabited by children and young people, and also modes and practices of gender and sexual diversity. Both these directions challenge psychoanalytic orthodoxies, as well as highlighting how the figure of the child in analysis reinvigorates core questions of analysis in general – from the status of the Father to the inevitable others materially and bodily engaged in the analysis with the child.'

—Erica Burman, Professor of Education, University of Manchester, and group analyst

'With its beautifully delineated clinical examples, drawn from a wide range of international contexts, this book advances the field of Lacanian child psychoanalysis. The work offers a broad and deep introduction to Lacanian theory, and does so in the context of carefully etched clinical portraits. It breaks new clinical ground, exploring institutional care, absent fathers, collateral work with parents, and the effects of "psycho-technologies of consumer capitalism" such as smartphones and tablets. For clinicians new to Lacanian work, this book offers a warm invitation to join a conversation that always puts the interests of the speaking subject first.'

—Michael O'Loughlin, Adelphi University, author of *The Subject of Childhood*

'This book is a fundamental reading in psychoanalysis not only for all those working with children, but also for those working with adults as well. It is important for demonstrating the Lacanian approach to child analysis and also for bringing the work of Françoise Dolto to a wider audience.'

—Danuza Machado, psychoanalyst, member of the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research and coordinator of its Child Analysis Working Group; founder member of the Maison Verte, UK

'This is a particularly stimulating book that vouches for the vitality of the Lacanian movement in psychoanalysis with children. Lacan's distant students show the fruitfulness of his teaching by reinventing psychoanalysis with children today, and taking us further.'

—Alain Vanier, full professor of psychopathology and psychoanalysis, and director of graduate studies at the University of Paris Diderot – Paris 7

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Cover painting of giraffe by Oscar Pujol Owens (then aged 3).
Page 40 from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume X (1909), *Two Case Histories: "Little Hans" and the "Rat Man"*, translated and edited by James Strachey, published by Hogarth Press, is reproduced by kind permission of the Random House Group Ltd.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The “iMirror stage”: not-so-smartphones and the pre-schooler—some clinical observations

Joanna Fortune

In this chapter I want to examine the idea that the prevalence of new technologies is not only changing the form of the family but is interfering with how the psyche becomes structured. I will argue that the smartphone has become a substitute for the desire of the Other and the child cannot integrate the desire of the Other through the lens of the smartphone. It will be my assertion that the lens of the smartphone does not operate in the same way as Lacan had conceptualised the function of the “Mirror” and that therefore, the Mirror stage is interrupted with effects for the formation of the ego and the structuring of the psyche (Lacan, 1949).

A Californian mother decided to monitor the amount of times her young infants sought out her gaze during their playtime. Instead of passing the time on her smartphone/smart device while her children played, she sat and watched them at play. Of this experience, she wrote: “As I sat quietly in the corner of the room I tallied how many times they looked at me for various reasons: to see if I saw their cool ricks, to seek approval or disapproval for what they were doing, and to watch my reactions.” She goes on to wonder what kind of message he would have been sending her children had she missed all of their attempts to seek out her gaze during their playtime, and how might



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TAKING PLAYTIME SERIOUSLY

BY
JOANNA FORTUNE

Play is a really important part of your toddler's development. Child development expert **Joanna Fortune** has lots of ideas that will help you make the most of your playtime – and still have lots of fun!

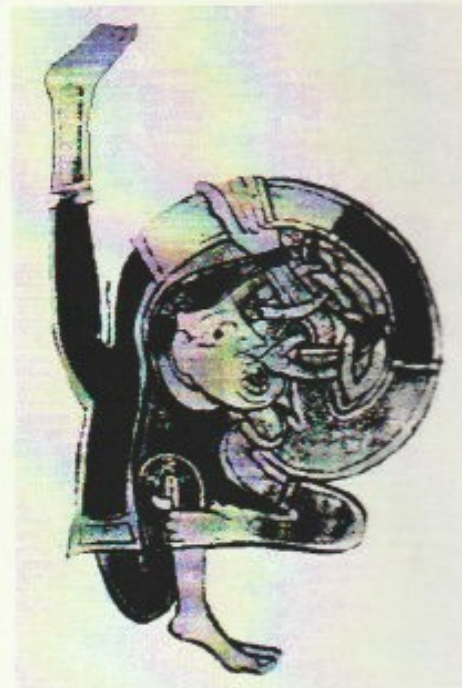


"Peck-a-boo shows me you still exist even when I can't see you. I love lots & lots of this kind of play. (Yippee!)"

THE LETTER

Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis

Summer 2004 – Autumn 2004



THE LETTER

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NOW THAT I AM FOREVER WITH CHILD*

Joanna Fortune

There is a voice crying in the wilderness, the voice of a body dancing, laughing, shrieking, crying. Whose is it? It is, they say, the voice of a woman, newborn and yet archaic, a voice of milk and blood, a voice silenced but savage.¹

In writing this paper I have set myself the task of examining female subjectivity in pregnancy. However, in addition to this being a much larger question than can be addressed in a single paper, it is immediately apparent that in order to examine pregnancy one must first look at female subjectivity itself, and in doing this we must also look to female sexuality, the female position in a patriarchal society, the mother-daughter relationship, and the silence of women surrounding all of the above that led Freud to declare in 1926 'that the sexual life of adult women is a dark continent for psychology'.

Lacan's Seminar XX, *Encore*, and the current congress in which we find ourselves discussing this seminar² provoke a diversity of feelings, thoughts and most importantly, dialogue concerning female subjectivity and more particularly female sexuality. I think that this is not surprising as there is dialogue, questioning and constant debate in society in general regarding female sexuality. But how do we respond to these debates?

I will turn to the work of Helene Deutsch as a starting point. Helene Deutsch is careful from the outset to distinguish between the concept of motherhood, (the relationship of a mother to her child as a whole), and motherliness, which she sees as a quality in a woman's character and also as emotional phenomena directly connected to the

* This paper was presented at the 11th Annual Congress of APPI on 13th November 2004.

¹ H. Cixous & C. Clement. *The Newly Born Woman*. London, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd. 1996.

² 11th Annual Congress of APPI.

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Shame: A Disowned Part of the Self

Joanna Fortune, M.A.

Solamh Parent Child Relationship Clinic

The patterns of our default mechanisms are laid down by the age of 3. This is the place we will default to in times of crisis later in life and for most of us this is a mostly stable place. But what if it's not, what if we are defaulting to a very unstable and frightening place every time we experience emotional stress/crisis in our adult lives? Trauma, especially early childhood trauma, would cause this and even if we do not consciously know the trauma the mnemonic memory trace of it would be enough to cause a disturbance in our default mechanisms. The result is that we would exist in a hypervigilant state, always waiting for the next traumatic event and, as per Freud's pleasure/pain principle, that pressure will build to an unsustainable level meaning we will either explode and act out on/with others or implode and act in on ourselves. This is the motivation behind my exploration of the themes in the movie *Shame* and in particular the perceived childhood trauma of Brandon and his relationship with his sister Sissy.

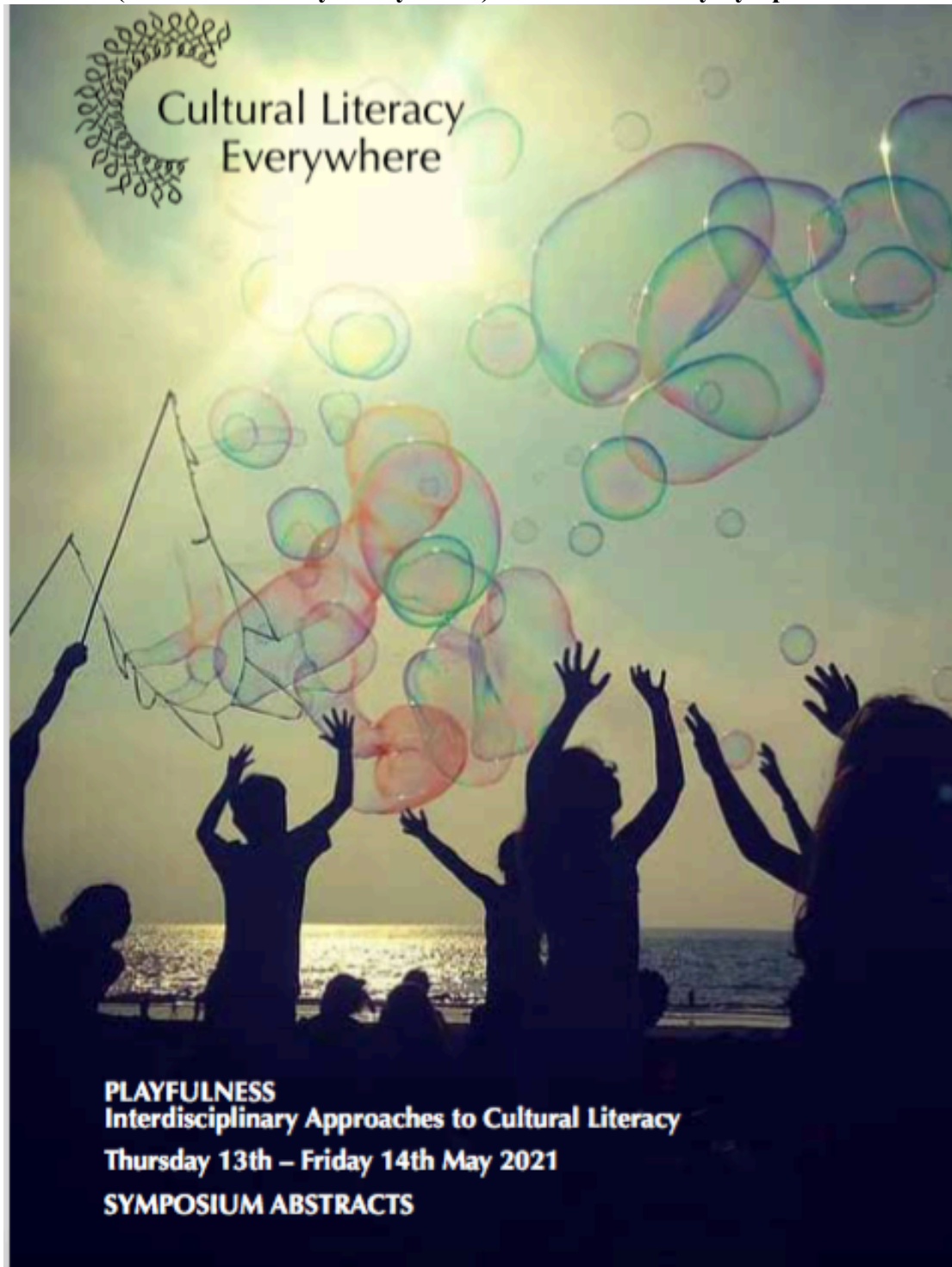
Carl Gustav Jung once said, "Shame is a soul eating emotion" (Jung, 2009, p. 232) and this quote stayed in my head when I first watched the movie *Shame* (McQueen, 2011). Watching this movie raised questions for me around the human relationship with shame and when this might come about in our development of self-consciousness. Children begin to develop their capacity for metallization and to hold others in mind by the age of 3, Philippe Rochat, in his paper "The Five Levels of Self Awareness as They Unfold in Early Life" (Rochat, 2003), saw self-consciousness or meta self-awareness being internalized at Level 5 of this process when the child has some understanding of what he calls the self-conscious emotions of pride and shame. In this he saw that "a self-conscious self is expressed: an entity that is simulated and projected in the mind of others" (p. 722). It was this notion that I held in mind watching this movie and that I explore further in this article. The protagonist Brandon and his sister Sissy grapple with both their own and their shared shame throughout this movie, but where has it come from?

The movie is ostensibly about sex addiction, at least according to its director. In an interview with *The Huffington Post*, McQueen was asked what inspired him to make a movie about sex addiction. He said, "Being a sex addict is all about numbing yourself out. In this case, it's the sex that numbs the addict out. The whole idea that this is an addiction is so far removed from most of us. With alcohol or drugs, it involves something that can be removed from us, something we can stay away from. But everyone has sex. I liked the idea of an addiction to something we all know, something that's not alien. This character isn't a freak; he's one of us" (Fine, 2012).

Correspondence should be sent to Joanna Fortune, M.A., Solamh Clinic, Unit 5 Cube 3, Beacon South Quarter, Sandyford, Dublin 18, Ireland. E-mail: joanna.fortune@solamh.com

**Appendix 3(b): Conferences I have spoken about 15-Minute Parenting
at**

CLE UK (Cultural Literacy Everywhere) International Play Symposium 2021



Breakout Groupings

Thursday 13th May 2021

9:30 - 11:00	A1: Theories of playfulness	A2: Close readings
	Cumming	Di Maio
	Hagbi	O'Brien
	Masek	Palin
	Potemka	Radaviciute

15:10 - 16:40	B1: Playful research projects	B2: Toys & games
	Bayley/Hay	McGinley
	Cunningham/Gibertoni	Bloom
	Dghaim	Segal
	Lädesmäki et al	Pavšič

Friday 14th May 2021

9:50 - 11:20	C1: Playful education	C2: COVID-related
	Fortune	Crawshaw
	Chao	Tarasova
	Nagy-Seres	Wright
	Clarke	Yeung

13:30 - 15:00	D1: Playing with the arts	D2: Places & spaces
	Schrag	Martins
	Michaels	Milci
	Burke	van Duppen
	Simpson	Wolf

Introduction

Ask busy children what they're doing and they'll say 'I'm playing'. Ask an adult and they will be playing the piano, the foot, or a video game. While playfulness forms an integral part of cultural expression and communication, its interpretation often depends on cultural expectations and limited interdisciplinary research can be found on the aesthetics of playfulness, or its role in intercultural communication. For D W Winnicott, playfulness takes place in the area between inside (self) and the outside (other/wider cultural experiences) in an intermediate, transitional area. Melanie Klein and Anna Freud both pioneered their own ways of utilizing children's playfulness within the psychotherapeutic setting as a way of accessing unconscious processes.

Kant's definition of art as 'purposeless purposiveness' sits it at exactly the point where play & seriousness meet. The reification of play occurs when ambiguity, humour & laughter, irony or satire, are deployed in music, literary or visual culture to achieve specific aims (eg. to critique or lampoon extreme or repressive regimes) – for example Molière's play *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, or Buñuel's film *Cet obscur objet du désir*, or in postmodern resistance as formulated in Jacques Derrida's concept of "play" and Jean Baudrillard's "simulacra", or to counteract the rigidity of institutions and systems – see for example Pippa Hale's recent work "Play Rebellion" (2018). The search for meaning in a chaotic world is eschewed, often playfully, and the postmodern medium becomes a parody of this quest. 'Play' then also becomes a powerful form of political resistance – of displacing hegemonic narratives not for the purpose of creating something new, but to destroy and reveal the constructed nature of what previously existed.

The act of 'objectless', or intransitive playfulness, and its experiential dimension, however, remain largely unexplored. One example of such 'play' can be found in Zen Buddhism, as expressed in the arts of the Japanese Edo period and in the visual culture of the Japanese Design Movement of the late 1970s and '80s. Another example is the acting method developed by Oleksandr Tokarchuk at his school of creative acting in Kyiv, summed up by the phrase "conducting your self" (written as two separate words). Playfulness, then, becomes part of the artistic personality, when the real world is understood as a theatre stage and its decor.

In a world of increasingly transnational and transmedial forms of expression, exploring notions of playfulness in their socio-cultural context offers an approach to cultural literacy which can arguably foster intercultural understanding in a manner less readily accessible than through purely experiential means. At the same time, experimenting with the process and aesthetics of playfulness, facilitated by instant communication technologies, which cross-fertilise between ages, cultures and media with remarkable resilience (eg. surrealism), can also offer valuable insights in fostering intercultural literacy. The aim of this conference, therefore, is to invite scholars from a wide range of backgrounds and interests to engage in thoughtful and critical discussion around the multiple manifestations of playfulness and their contributions to cultural literacy.

This two-day online Symposium is designed to generate active discussion, focusing on thinking and talking rather than formal presentations, using simple online platforms and apps to foster a virtual experience. If your proposal is accepted, it will be included in a digital 'book of presentations' that all participants will be asked to read in advance of the Symposium. The contributions will be grouped together into parallel break-out sessions of 90 minutes during which each presenter will briefly summarise their points in a presentation of max 5 minutes & three slides, and the subsequent discussion will aim to explore the key theme of the panel.

Joanna FORTUNE

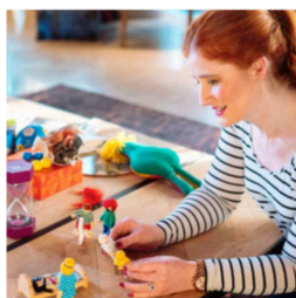
15-Minute Parenting – the design of a play-based therapeutic parenting model to bridge the gap between the clinic and the home

I firmly believe in the transformative power of play when it is understood as more than merely a box of toys in the corner but is embraced as a state of mind and a way of being with others. Over the course of my 20+ years career in psychotherapy, in which I have specialised in the parent-child relationship, I have developed a model based on the principle of play being more than a box of toys in the corner of a room but rather a state of mind and way of being. I have seen the sustained impact that this way of working has on clients and through this I began to wonder about the parent-child relationships that might never find their way to the clinic but who, nonetheless, experience the everyday challenges parenting brings. Could the parent address these everyday parenting challenges at home if that parent had a therapeutic understanding of play and playfulness? My 15-Minute Parenting book series is a model of accessible psycho-education for people who don't have cause, means or inclination to attend at the psychotherapy clinic but for whom a small change would make a big difference in their everyday parenting challenges. Finding an accessible theoretical framework to prescribe play and playfulness to the parent-child relationship so that parents could problem-solve this level of dysregulation at home themselves but in an informed way became my vision. I was motivated to bridge the gap between the family home and the therapy clinic without seeking to make the parent their child's therapist (far from it!) but to increase connection. Parenting is about connection and play fuels connection. If we want to decrease the level of psychopathology in children's lives, we must work playfully with their parents. I will speak to this as a way of bringing playfulness as a state of mind and means of strengthening and enhancing the parent-child relationship both inside and moreover outside the psychoanalytic clinic.

Bio

Joanna Fortune (MSc, MFT, Reg Pract APT), CIPP, APT, is an accredited psychotherapist and attachment specialist. She is the author of the 15-Minute Parenting series of books (3-7 years, 8-12 years and the Teenage years) published by Thornd Books UK. She is the host of the 15-Minute Parenting podcast. She founded the Solanah Parent Child Relationship Clinic in Dublin in 2010 (www.solanah.com) where she works with families around a variety of issues. She is a recognised supervisor, trainer and conference speaker in her field. In 2017 she delivered a TEDx Talk on the topic 'Social media – the ultimate shame game?' Having previously written a parenting column for The Sunday Times she continues to write and contribute to articles on child development and parenting in various other print publications. She is also a regular media contributor to a variety of radio (RTÉ, NewsTalk and regional radio) and TV shows (RTÉ and Virgin Media Television). She is the parenting consultant on the weekly parenting slot on NewsTalk FM's award-winning Moncrieff Show for over 3 years. She is a Doctoral candidate for the DCPW (Diploma in Psychotherapy by Public Works) at Middlesex University where she is undertaking a heuristic study of her body of published work and her 15-Minute Parenting model.

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<https://solanah.com>



MENTAL HEALTH & THE ARTS

An interdisciplinary, cross-border initiative

Experiencing Empathy through Creativity

Friday 16th April 2021 @ 6.30pm-9.30pm

Join us on Zoom

Registration

Registration is £5. Pre-registration is necessary. Registration is open to all and is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Register here: <https://store.ulster.ac.uk/product-catalogue/faculty-of-arts-humanities-and-social-sciences/school-of-communication-and-media>

Places are limited and we expect the event to book out, so early registration is advised. Refunds are not possible, however, tickets are transferable so you can give your ticket to someone else if you are unable to attend. It is necessary to write to us to let us know who will be attending in your place and their email address: n.giffney@ulster.ac.uk, m.long@ulster.ac.uk, j.mairs-dyer@ulster.ac.uk

Event Description

This event focuses on empathy, and explores how the experience of empathy is related to creativity and playfulness. How is empathy experienced, and how is this experience linked to creativity? How, in turn, is creativity related to the capacity to play, and why is this so important?

Empathy describes the emotional capacity to get in touch with another's experience; to 'put oneself in someone else's shoes'. Psychologically, to be able to empathise with another person's experience is considered to be a developmental achievement. The concept of self-compassion suggests we can also direct an empathic response towards ourselves. In moments of empathy, our feelings are held without judgement. Thus, consistent experiences of empathy between people foster meaningful relationships. More generally, empathic attunement in our relationships is a vital component of emotional wellbeing. Indeed, for some of us, the therapy relationship provides what feels to be respite from relationships in which we might otherwise feel unheard, judged or misunderstood. The experience of empathy is, however, complex and not without its challenges. There are times, for example, when we can find other people's expressions of empathy towards us difficult to trust or accept, particularly if we have not experienced much empathy in our early lives.

This event concentrates on the place of empathy in creative expression. We will reflect particularly on how acts of creativity might hold open a space for the expression of empathy. We will be especially concerned with how creativity connects to playfulness. As children, we play with toys; as adults, we play with ideas. To be able to retain an ability to play and be flexible in our thoughts, particularly in stressful situations, is an important factor in being able to manage difficulties and feel enjoyment and satisfaction in life. This is necessary to maintain an ability to empathise.

This online event brings together mental health practitioners and creative practitioners to reflect on the place of empathy in our lives and relationships. Join us online for an evening of conversation and creative play. This event is open to all. It will be of particular interest to counsellors, psychotherapists, creative arts therapists, psychologists, social workers, social care workers, community workers, youth workers, psychiatrists, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, as well as practitioners in the creative and performing arts. The event will also be of interest to researchers and students in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

CPD Points

The Mental Health and the Arts initiative will issue certificates with 3 continuing professional development (CPD) points for practitioners who attend the event.

Schedule

6.30pm-6.35pm Welcome and Opening Remarks

Geralyn Mulqueen and Jolene Mairs Dyer

6.35pm-7.05pm Geralyn in conversation with Jolene

7.05pm-7.15pm Comfort break

Joanna Fortune and Noreen Giffney

7.15pm-7.45pm Joanna in conversation with Noreen

7.45pm- 7.55pm Comfort break

Shelley Tracey and Maggie Long

7.55pm-8.25pm Shelley in conversation with Maggie

8.25pm-8.35pm Comfort break

Group Discussion

8.35pm-9.25pm Discussion between the speakers, conveners and attendees

9.25pm-9.30pm Thanks and Closing Remarks

Speakers and Conveners



Joanna Fortune MICP|MIFPP|Reg Pract APPI|CTTTS|ApSup PTI is an accredited Psychotherapist and attachment specialist. She is the author of the *15-Minute Parenting* series of books (0-7 years; 8-12 years and the Teenage years) published by Thread Books. She is the host of the 15-Minute parenting podcast. She founded the Solamh Parent Child Relationship Clinic in Dublin in 2010 (www.solamh.com) where she works with families around a variety of issues. She is a recognised supervisor, trainer and conference speaker in her field. In 2017 she delivered a TEDx

Talk on the topic 'Social media – the ultimate shame game?' Having previously written a parenting column for *The Sunday Times* she continues to write and contribute to articles on child development and parenting in various other print publications. She is also a regular media contributor to a variety of radio (RTE, Newstalk and regional radio) and TV shows (RTE and Virgin Media Television). She is the parenting consultant on the weekly parenting slot on Newstalk's *Moncrieff* for over three years. She is an invited speaker at this event.

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Noreen Giffney PhD MNIHR|MIFPP|MICP|MUKCP|MCPJA is a Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist and a psychosocial theorist. She is a founding scholar of the British Psychoanalytic Council and a fully-accredited clinical member of the Northern Ireland Institute of Human Relations, the Irish Forum for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, the Psychoanalytic Section of the Irish Council for Psychotherapy, the College for Psychoanalysis and Jungian Analysis, and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy. She is the author of the book, *The Culture-Breast: Cultural Experiences and the Psychoanalytic Clinic* (Routledge 2021), and the author and/or editor of many articles and books on psychoanalysis, psychosocial studies, and critical theory. She is particularly interested in the emotional and unconscious use we make of cultural objects (film, art, literature, music) for our mental health and wellbeing. She also has a particular clinical interest in the impact of psychosocial factors on the transference-countertransference dynamic in psychoanalytic practice, and co-edited a book on this topic entitled *Clinical Encounters in Sexuality* (Punctum Books 2017) with Eve Watson. She is the Director of 'Psychoanalysis +', an international, interdisciplinary initiative that brings together clinical, academic and artistic approaches to, and applications of, psychoanalysis. She is a Lecturer in Counselling in the School of Communication & Media at Ulster University. She is a co-convenor of this event.

W: www.psychoanalyticpsychotherapyclinic.ie, <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/n-giffney>



Maggie Long PhD has been a Lecturer in Counselling at Ulster University since 2011. Maggie is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA) and a Registered Member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Maggie has been Course Director for the BSc Communication and Counselling Studies since 2015. She is Subject Lead for Counselling & Health Communication at Ulster. Maggie is also Athena Swan Faculty Lead for the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Ulster. Maggie's research interests are in



JOIN OUR TODDLER WEBINAR

SATURDAY 12TH JUNE 2021 | 10:00AM – 12:15PM

SPEAKERS



SARAH KEOGH
DIETITIAN



JOANNA FORTUNE
PSYCHOTHERAPIST AND
ATTACHMENT SPECIALIST

PROGRAMME

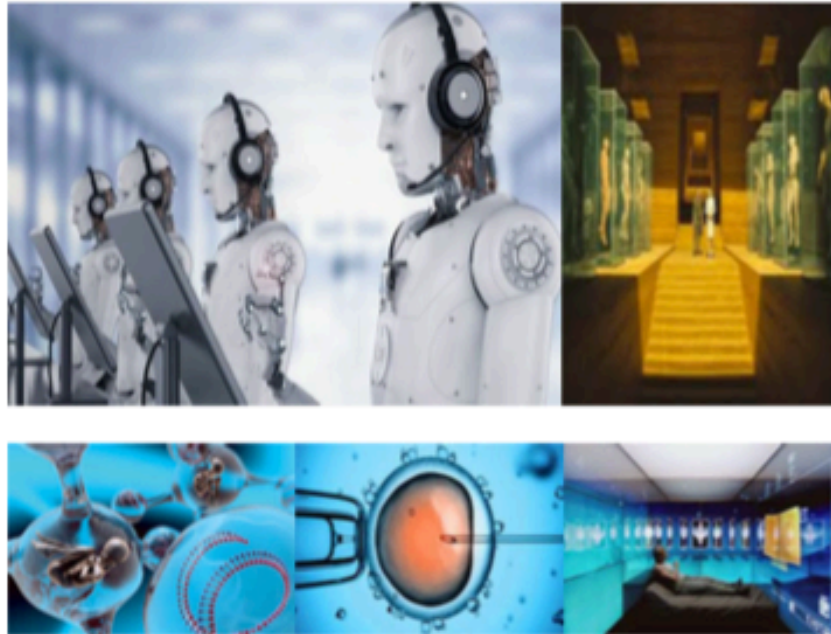
- 10:00** Introduction and Welcome - Anne O'Grady, Head of Medical Affairs and Market Access, Nutricia Ireland
- 10:15** Child Nutrition and Fussy Eating - Sarah Keogh, Dietitian
- 11:00** Questions
- 11:15** Parenting Through a Pandemic - The Role of Self-Care in Sustaining Parental Stamina - Joanna Fortune, Psychotherapist and Attachment Specialist
- 12:00** Questions
- 12:15** Summary and close

REGISTER NOW ▼

For further information or queries email
events.ireland@nutricia.com



Freud Lacan Institute 2019 – Sex, Love and Reproduction Conference



Sex, Love and Reproduction in the Age of Technology (Dec 6-7)

2-day inaugural seminar organised by the **Freud Lacan Institute (FLI)**

Friday December 6th (6:30-8:30 pm) & Saturday 7th (10 am-12:30 pm)

Full Fee €60, Student/Unwaged Rate: €30

Venue: Central Hotel, Exchequer St., Dublin 2

5 CPD Points awarded by APPI

To Book a place, see <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sex-love-and-reproduction-in-the-age-of-technology-tickets-81280966559>

Event Description: In our “cyber” age how do we do sex, love and reproduction? This seminar is an interdisciplinary dialogue among psychoanalysts, critical and cultural thinkers, writers and those interested in how our age of technology, consumer (re)production, including pornography, and mass social media has affected what psychoanalysts call “the subject,” which is how each and every one of us is uniquely human.

The seminar takes place over 2 days, commencing on Friday evening with a panel of invited speakers who will give short presentations, followed by audience discussion. The seminar continues on Saturday morning with the invited **keynote speaker, Isabel Millar** (see talk and bio below). This is followed by a roundtable discussion with the Friday evening panellists and

the invited speaker, and the seminar will conclude with an audience Q&A session. Participants are strongly advised to attend on both days.

Friday Evening (Dec 6th) Program

6:30-8:30 pm: Panel of Speakers

Ingmar Hinz (PhD Researcher, Kingston University, London)

"What Starts with a Tickle & Ends in a Blaze? Far-Right Humour in the Digital Age."

Carol Owens (PhD, Psychoanalyst and Author, Dublin)

"The Good Enough Mother-21st Century Style."

Joanna Fortune (Psychotherapist, Author, Dublin)

"Children and the Impact of Being Online."

Mark Twomey (Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist, Dublin)

"Imaginary Effects of Virtual Identifications"

Caroline West (PhD, Lecturer in Sexuality Studies at Dublin City University)

"Pornography and the Female Speaking Subject" (by video)

June Caldwell (renowned Irish author)

"The Writer as a Dust-Catcher for Human Behaviour in an Age of Artificial Intelligence."

(see bios and talk descriptions below)

Saturday Morning Program (Dec 7th)

10:00 am-12:30 pm

(Keynote Talk 10:00-11:00 am, Roundtable Panel & Audience Q&A: 11:30-12:30)

Keynote Speaker: Isabel Millar: Sex, AI and the Enigma of Reproduction

Outline of Talks

June Caldwell: Creative writing is a moral form, it's a way to look at the connection between human behaviour, events and how we perceive things. That's what is so interesting about creative writing compared to journalism; you're limited by what you can do in journalism, you're only writing the facts but with creative writing you can take it a lot further. You can try and understand what the hell is going on in someone's head and you can recreate the events around that, the drama which might give you a sense of horror, completion or whatever. My stories tend to have some kind of social element to them and they have a journalistic twist because the journalist in me is still so strong. I'll take some of the facts, make them surreal in some way and play around with them. I think creative writing is way more powerful than journalism, I really do. You can find a new way to present the truth.

Joanna Fortune will discuss the impact that life through a lens has on the emerging sense of self in children and adolescents. She will explore how shame gets played out online while exploring the question, is social media the ultimate shame game?

Ingmar Hinz. Recent years have seen a drastic rise in far-right online activity. While many have attended to the novel, historical and comparative facets of this process, a certain aesthetic dimension has so far been systematically overlooked: humour. This presentation will flesh out some preliminary thoughts on what role humour plays in the formation and organisation of far-right online communities.

Isabel Millar (Saturday keynote) discusses the new psychoanalytic, philosophical and political questions provoked by the entrance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the social bond, the conceptual figure of the sex robot and the theoretical problems this raises for psychoanalytic accounts of subjectivity. Exploring the film *Blade Runner 2049* among others, she will discuss

Samples of online parenting events

Artane Coolock Family Resource Centre
Hosts

Joanna Fortune
Child and Adolescent
Psychotherapist

**Parenting challenges
during pandemic times**

**Wednesday February 17th
@7pm**

Tips on how to deal with
different and challenging
behaviours at home theirs
and yours!

Tips on homeschooling

#15MINUTEPARENTING

FREE ON ZOOM

**Parenting in the Digital Age
Facebook Live Q&A**
7th April @7pm

Laura Woods
TV Presenter

Joanna Fortune
Psychotherapist and author
of 15 Minute Parenting

Littlewoods
Ireland.ie x **CYBERSAFE
KIDS**

@cybersafekidsie

**Delighted to be speaking at
this event tomorrow**

irishgirlguides

irishgirlguides The past year has been
tough on everyone and we could all... more

**Thank you @irishgirlguides
for having me to speak at
your emotional wellbeing
and resilience event today**

SOUL SISTERS

Aisling O'Boyle

Joanna Fortune @joannafortune

@IRISHGIRLGUIDES

Appendix 3(c): Images from Talks/Events



(Above) Panel for Empowering Women Charity Event with Media mogul Norah Casey and TV Presenter Mary Kennedy (Below) Parent talk for Kellogg's and Podium presentation for P20 Global Ambassadors event



A playful, interactive presentation of my 15-Minute Parenting practice with parents



Having delivered a specialised Trauma and Group Play program to staff working with families who experience homelessness



As a follow-up to this program, Janet Healy and I made a series of videos called “Playful Parenting in a Pandemic” as part of our state Child and Family Agency’s “let’s Play Ireland” initiative funded by CYPSC

Live TV Work speaking about my 15-Minute Parenting practice

