

Mothers at home Matter.



Autumn
2019

The Unseen Cost

As the number of mothers in work continues to rise, I have been reflecting on the hidden costs to society and to our children, with more mothers having even less time to spare than ever.

The latest figures from the Office of National Statistics show that three in every four UK mothers are in paid employment. 75.1% of mothers with dependent children are in work. (ONS, 28/8/19) That is a rise of 8% from when I first became a mother in 2007, with a 5% rise in the last five years alone. There are also definite regional variations with over 77% of maternal employment in Scotland and Wales.

Demand for daycare obviously also increases hand in hand with parents being in full time work. Sadly, this has a knock-on effect regarding child development. Mothers At Home Matter and our associates like WATCH? often draw attention to studies which indicate strongly that care outside the home can increase stress in young children. We've reprinted in this autumn newsletter an article from Dr Tracy Cassels which looks in depth at this topic.

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As Claire Paye has previously stated [see 'An Inconvenient Truth' in our website archives], high levels of the steroid hormone cortisol, which rises during stress, predicts brain changes in children:


"In animals, [high cortisol] is shown to damage the pre-frontal cortex. In children, damage to the pre-frontal cortex is associated with impaired control of emotions and can be harmful to 'executive functions' including control of inhibition, sustained attention, working memory and cognitive

flexibility. Worryingly, high levels of cortisol are related to anxiety in adolescent girls and the release of testosterone in boys, leading to externalising behaviour and aggression."

I often wonder if the rising mental health problems seen in British youth today could be feasibly linked to long hours of outsourced childcare.

Another impact of the huge number of mothers at work is the cost to the local community. Community thrives when people join together and volunteer for local initiatives. When my elder daughter wanted to join Rainbows several years ago, we discovered there was a waiting list of over a year due to insufficient volunteers for the extra groups needed to satisfy demand. I was told that it was hardly worth signing her up as she would likely be too old for the group by the time a place was available.

Parents who have to fit care of their children around a full time working schedule have very little energy left to invest in community institutions. As a result, those youth clubs, hobby groups, lunches for lonely elderly, mothers and toddler groups, town shows and other events that help to gel communities together, fray at the edges due to a lack of volunteers and, in some cases, start to disappear altogether. It often seems that only the retired have time to invest because those younger have full time jobs and no time.

Society as whole communicates that choosing a lifestyle which enables mothers to be based at home for their children is a waste. A waste of an education. A waste of income potential. A waste, even, of life. We at MAHM want to encourage anyone who will stop long enough to listen that the reality is entirely the reverse. Our society is stronger when we have the time to care about things that can't be measured simply in terms of GDP growth or employment statistics. We would likely have more resilient children and stronger communities as a result. 

Philippa Nicholson, Editor



What's your story?

Our Chair, **Anne Fennell**, recounts a conversation with her family and challenges us all to change the narrative of how we talk about the 'stay at home mother'.

It was a few weeks ago, whilst sitting around the family breakfast table, that my husband raised a rather important conversation with the boys.

"What will your story be?" he asked them. They looked back rather blankly. "You are the authors of your own story you are the creators of how you perceive events, what you tell yourself and what you tell to others, and it is through these stories that others will perceive you."

We had just been to the Lake District for four days, one of which was beautifully sunny, whilst the other three days rained rather a lot.

"What will you tell your friends about your holiday? Will you say that it was miserable because it rained every day or will you concentrate on the thrill of adventure in climbing mountains, the comradeship of your brothers, and in spite of the rain, or even because of the rain, the greater the sense of danger and excitement, and the sense of achievement when after our scramble and cave exploring, wet and chilled, we laughed and enjoyed hot chocolate and cake (and beer!) in the local pub?"

The boys' cogs started turning and, after a little conversation and debate, my husband continued. "What about your mother? Some people when asked the question at a dinner party would say they were 'just a mother at home' or they could say they were 'forming the character of our next generation', 'moulding the future'. Which do you think is true?"

My own cogs started turning. Both statements were in their way true — one with the adjunct of 'just' was limiting, the other expansive and something I immediately felt proud to be associated with. The boys also seemed to agree that the formation of the next generation was a worthwhile and important role, just as impressive, if not more so, than my previous role as editor in a publishing company!

In the same way, for each action we carry out we tell ourselves a story. It can be transformational. It struck me the other day as I cooked the dinner thinking...here we go again, déjà vu, Groundhog Day — another chore to get through... that actually I could choose to see it quite differently. I was nourishing my family, lovingly creating the space and time for them to come together (whether or not they appreciated it)! With the change of story came a change of heart and enjoyment of cooking the dinner.

Changing the narrative of the 'mother at home' is one of the challenges for our organisation. It starts on a personal




Anne's six sons

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level. Changing our own narrative, our belief in ourselves, having confidence in the decision we have made and the stories we tell others. I look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it to our annual conference on **Tuesday November 12th** and perhaps we can have time to share our stories. The theme of the Conference this year is 'Taking Care of the Family'.

I am delighted that Sarah Ockwell Smith has agreed to be our first speaker. She picks up on the idea of how society and we as mothers view the role of raising children and what impact that has on the family. She challenges us to apply the same principles of love and care that we give to our children to ourselves. Sarah is a parenting expert who specialises in the psychology and science of parenting, 'gentle parenting' and attachment theory.

Our second speaker Maria Kemp, mother of seven and a new grandmother explores the emotionally volatile, but exciting world of raising teenagers. She will also speak to us about the 20th World Congress of Family Enrichment which will have just taken place in October: 'Family, The Face of Humanity'.

We will have a brief update from Emily on Mummylinks, Ronnie on taking the plunge from paid work, and Claire on founding the Mothers Matter podcast. There will be a chance to find out more about what MAHM does at our AGM and a chance for questions and debate. I do hope to see you there. (For more details please see back page.) 

Anne Fennell, Chair

FEFAP Conference 2019



Marie at the FEFAP convention, second from the right.

Networking with similar pro-motherhood groups across the world is important to MAHM. A delegation from MAHM were invited to join the FEFAP Conference (translated as *The European Federation of Unpaid Parents and Carers at Home*), held in Hungary this September.

We're delighted to say that our own MAHM Vice-President and previous Chair, **Marie Peacock**, was elected FEFAP Vice President. Here she reports back from Budapest:

Lynne Burnham, Juliet Chalk and I attended the FEFAP AGM held in Budapest, courtesy of the Swedish campaigning group HARO, together with a leading Hungarian family organisation. We extend our sincere thanks to all who hosted us during our short stay. It's the first time we've been able to attend due to family commitments.


Chaired by the Swedish delegation, FEFAP is a non-governmental, non-faith based organisation. The meeting was attended by members of a number of countries, including Poland, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Italy, the UK and Romania.

FEFAP exists to represent people who care for family at home, as well as to disseminate information on policy issues, to raise the value of the work of caring and also to participate in policy and parenting forums worldwide. Representatives of FEFAP regularly attend policy seminars, including at the UN in New York.

The group acts as an 'umbrella' membership organisation for many groups in Europe whose primary aim is to stand up for children's wellbeing, their care and development. This also means campaigning for better support and equal recognition for primary caregivers, usually the mother, sometimes the father or grandparents. There's time for everything in life, whether paid work or unpaid work, but

not always at the same time. FEFAP recognises that each family is different, with various ways of securing the work-life-care balance, but the reality is mounting financial and social pressures on all families to work more and spend less time caring, with children spending ever-longer hours in child care provision, away from their families. We need more balance and more child-centred debates that respect the role of parents as first educators.

The key raison d'être of the group is to raise awareness of the 'invisible' nature of caring, carried out by millions of women all over the world. Invisible in the sense that care work is rarely discussed in policy documents and the value of this work does not get counted in GDP. This needs to change. Care work may be 'invisible', but whole economies and communities would collapse if women went on strike tomorrow.

Caring family work needs to carry more prominent status consistent with leaders' claims that they want to prioritise and safeguard the future for our children and their children. Protecting childhood means a multi-disciplinary approach focusing on a variety of policy areas: for example investment in health and education, equal recognition for caregiving alongside paid work, maternity provision, housing and green spaces for play, sustainable living, income and pension protection for mothers, family friendly taxation, access to community services and support, care allowances and flexible working when the time is right. We look forward to participating in FEFAP's work in 2020. 

Marie Peacock, Vice President

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Mothers Matter – the Podcast

Claire Paye, one of MAHM's media contacts and previous newsletter editor, tells us about her learning curve as she successfully ventures into the world of podcasts while also balancing charity work and motherhood.



They say there is no money in podcasting and it has to be something you do because you are passionate about a subject. So far, so true. I'm passionate about the value of mothers and I pay to get the podcast produced and hosted. So there is money involved, but it's not coming my way.

Who the podcast is for

Having just downloaded my first podcast listening app only last year, I launched the Mothers Matter podcast in February this year. Everyone says that with podcasts it's best just to get started, so I did. Once I had the idea, and with vital encouragement from Mothers at Home Matter, I couldn't wait to start recording the voices of mothers who have prioritised time spent caring for their children in the home, but who are almost always busy contributing to society in other ways as well.

Many of the mothers I speak to are doing long hours of unpaid work, in the home, and in groups they run, for causes they support and so on. These mothers are missed by Government figures because they only measure value in monetary terms, and are labelled 'stay at home mothers' by the media, as though their main purpose in life was not to leave the house.

I want to give mothers more of a voice. My hope is that the mothers (mainly — apart from my dad) who listen to the podcast will feel encouraged by hearing how mothers like them get by on a daily basis. It isn't primarily about parenting skills or about coping with babies or toddlers. There are lots of podcasts out there that cover those topics. Mothers Matter is unique because I keep trying to show why mothers matter so much because of how much their children need them and what a difference mothers make in society as a whole.

I'm keeping the podcast independent of BBC Sounds at the moment as, firstly, they haven't approached me, and, secondly, I'm not sure the BBC could bring itself to celebrate mothers purely on the basis of their home lives. (However if they are, I'd love the podcast to be on BBC Sounds!) Being independent means I have editorial free range. There is more flexibility in a podcast because the



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audience are self-selecting. There is lots in the media to help mothers 'juggling home and work'. My podcast is for mothers who matter simply because of all the juggling they do at home.

How to start a podcast

Knowing how to start was a bit tricky. My life is so crammed already so I didn't have days to read all information on the internet about podcasting. I took a friend's advice to buy a microphone recorder. I was fortunate to have a logo designed for me for free (thank you very much to the newsletter editor's husband, Andy Nicholson).

I then embarked on working out editing software and that is where I hit a brick wall. I joined an online tutorial on how to make voices sound good in Audacity, which is free editing software, but was overwhelmed by the technicalities and ended up posting a question as to which was the simplest editing software available. My niece suggested putting a request on Upwork.com, where people bid for your work. I had lots of interest and went with someone who seemed good and who I felt was charging a fair rate to produce podcasts — James Ede from Be Heard.

James has been invaluable. I send him my various files and he puts them all together for me and makes the voices sound good. I would find it helpful to remove the costs involved but, if I had to do the production all myself, the time would be prohibitive. I can edit and chop bits out but, thankfully, podcasts are much more informal than proper radio interviews so there isn't too much to edit.

My podcast is for mothers who matter simply because of all the juggling they do at home.

Mothers Matter – contd.

The people who say starting a podcast is really easy are often those who are already in the media. I am very lucky that Mothers at Home Matter are so supportive of the podcast. It's not surprising that my aims are very closely aligned with MAHM's as I am still a media spokesperson and a member and have been Vice Chair and newsletter editor. But by being independent, it hopefully doubles the impact as I am an extra voice in the media through my podcasts. I am also happy to feature mothers who are doing paid work, but the focus is usually on the mother as a mother rather than on her work.

Most popular episodes

I really enjoy looking up the statistics on which episodes have been downloaded. As of now there have been 1,352 unique downloads, which is nothing by popular standards, but which I am delighted by. I have been blessed by some very positive feedback — and also by some helpful pointers in how to improve. The most downloaded episodes have been:

8. Mothers and Bereavement, an emotional listen interviewing Sarah Douglas-Pennant, a founder of MAHM and now Honorary President, who speaks heartbreakingly about her experience of bereavement and her coping strategies;

5. Mothers and Guilt, in which Erica Komisar, a psychoanalyst, explains why mothers are so important in their child's first three years, and beyond, as well as how maternal guilt can be a healthy emotion and, most helpfully for me, how to communicate with teenagers.

I have really enjoyed talking with everyone I've met so far for the podcasts, which you would expect as I have chosen the topics!

So far I have discussed mental health, the sacrifices required with high achieving children, home education, how policy makers feel about mothers and one mother's efforts to combat knife crime in her area. My latest podcast is about the empty nest syndrome and transitions, as children prepare to leave home for university/start secondary school/start primary school/start pre-school — all those occasions which shake our world as mothers and change the axis we orbit on.

Future topics

I have a list of topics I'm looking forward to covering in

The great challenge is to find time for the podcast.

the autumn and beyond. I'd like to cover anxiety, working from home (a topic suggested by a listener — I'm looking for case studies or ideas on this, how do you make money whilst being available for your children?), returning to work after a lifetime of caring for the family, Christmas (the mother's craziest time of year), family taxation and housing and other topics.

I'm very open to hearing from anyone who would like me to cover something, or who I could interview for a podcast. I live in Hampshire so it's easier if someone lives in the south/south east so I can drive to meet with them.

The great challenge is to find the time for the podcast. I try to give my children priority over my time, I do a bit of paid work from home in corporate finance and I do more unpaid work as a director of the Mwezi Foundation, a charity which gives solar lights to school children in Kenya.

I am also trying to take sleep more seriously! But the good old shoe-horn comes out, and I put dates in the diary and it happens, because my hope is that it makes a difference and is worthwhile.

It is ironic that my time for mothering is sometimes affected by the time I put into the Mothers Matter podcast, but I hope I have the balance right.

How you can get involved

I'd love it if you could subscribe and download the Mothers Matter podcast please. Just search for it in your podcast app (I use Podcast Addict) or even on Spotify. If you like it and can rate it, apparently that moves it up the searches so hopefully it will be easier to find. I frequently reference MAHM in the podcasts.

I post new episode information (and not much else) on social media:

Instagram and Facebook are:


www.instagram.com/mothersmatterpodcast

and

www.facebook.com/mothersmatterpodcast

and Twitter

twitter.com/PodcastMothers (search @podcastmothers)

You can email me on mothersmatter@outlook.com with any feedback or ideas for future topics. I especially enjoy reading positive feedback! 



Claire Paye

What do Daycare and Cortisol Levels Tell us?

Dr Tracy Cassels is an international speaker and the director of Evolutionary Parenting, a science-based, attachment-oriented resource for families on a variety of parenting issues. She lives in Canada with her husband and two children. She has kindly given us permission to reprint this article from her website: EvolutionaryParenting.com.



The issue of daycare is probably the only other topic to rival infant feeding as one of the most contentious in parenting discourse today. The idea that daycare may be “bad” for a child has many parents seeing red, despite much research that decries the quantity and, most importantly, the quality of daycare being used in many (but not all) developed nations today (e.g., [1][2][3][4][5]). One of the means we have to look at how children are adapting to daycare is to examine their cortisol levels during the transition to daycare, after the transition, and at home. Cortisol can tell us about the degree of stress that is caused by the separation to the primary caregiver, and for how long this type of stress continues.

What we seem to know so far is the following (with a caveat that although there is a fair bit of research that converges in this area, it is far from conclusive due in part to the many variations of care that exist):

- Cortisol has been consistently found to increase over the course of the day in daycare (versus when a child is at home with a primary caregiver) [6][7], which raises a flag as to the effects on the developing brain. Of note here is that the normal diurnal pattern is for cortisol to be highest in the morning and to gradually decrease as the day progresses, so it is not just that this is muted in daycare, but we are often seeing the total opposite.

- The rises in cortisol that have been shown to exist are at least partially dependent upon the quality of care provided. Specifically, the magnitude of increase is much higher in lower-quality daycare settings [8][9] with high-quality, home-based child care seeming to be associated with little to no increase in cortisol levels [10]. This provides some evidence that the rises seen are indeed reflective of stress in the daycare environment and fit with the behavioural research cited above that shows significant differences in externalizing problems based on quality of care.

- These rises are not necessarily temporary. In one study looking at young toddlers’ transition to daycare at 15 months, the increase that occurred during transition was still visible 15 months later [7]. This shouldn’t be too surprising as other

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research has not specifically looked at transition, but rather the cortisol levels of children who have been in daycare for a spell already. Child temperament influences the degree of increase in cortisol with higher-needs children showing greater increases even in higher-quality daycare settings [10]. This is likely not too surprising given what we know of the need for what some researchers have called “optimum” care for these children (with “optimum” meaning very attachment-based parenting).

- Age influences this cortisol effect, with younger children (3 and under) showing greater effects than older children [6][11], though what remains unclear is if this is due to developmental differences or the amount of time spent in daycare. That is, do older children show this effect because they are used to daycare already or is there something that occurs during development that leads to this change.

Enter some new research aimed at examining cortisol effects during a 10-week transition to a new daycare setting across a variety of ages to see if differences in cortisol levels in daycare by age previously have been due to development of the child or the time spent in daycare [12]. A total of 168 children in the United States aged 1.2 months to 8 years of age were included with a mean of 3.27 years of age, though 34 children were over age 5 and thus in school for part of the time and hence secondary analyses were done with these children removed.

Quality of daycare was not assessed, though the daycare was a center (which is often associated with lower-quality care), but was a university-based daycare (which may result in higher-quality care). Cortisol samples were collected 6 days over the study time period of 10 weeks, twice per day (morning and afternoon) and were collected during times that activities would not influence levels (e.g., eating or sleeping or playing outside). For 129 children, parents collected saliva samples at home for 2 consecutive days prior to them entering the daycare.

What do Daycare and Cortisol Levels tell us? - contd.

What was found?

In line with myriad other research, the researchers found that being in daycare resulted in an increase in cortisol levels compared to being at home. Notably, though, over the 10-week period, the degree of increase also increased. That is, the increase in cortisol from mid-morning to afternoon actually got worse over the 10-week transition to daycare. Further analyses showed that this was due to a consistent decline in mid-morning cortisol with a stable-high afternoon cortisol level. Finally, the effects remained the same for the infancy and toddler group when the school-age children were removed from the analysis (they were removed as they often were missing morning data due to not actually being at the centre during those times).

There were some nuances though that are worth looking into. In terms of the increase in change over time, this was not driven by a small group of children, but rather a higher percentage of children showed an increase in cortisol throughout the day as the weeks went by as opposed to some form of attenuation.

For example, in the infancy group, 39% showed a rise on day 1, 30% on the week 2 measurement, 38% on week 4, 54% on week 6, 60% on week 7, and 47% on week 8. Though this may seem sporadic, there is a significant general linear trend and this is mirrored in all three age groups.

The question of interest, however, was how age influenced findings. In this regard, there was a quadratic effect of age with the greatest increase in cortisol occurring in the preschool years (over infancy or school age years). There were also differences in the types of effects. At home in infancy, the “normal” pattern was virtually no change in cortisol from mid-morning to afternoon (not surprising given that this diurnal pattern of a decline can take months to even remotely establish and further develops for years) whereas in daycare there was an increase from mid-morning to afternoon. At home in the preschool years, there was a moderate decline from mid-morning to afternoon, but at daycare there was an increase (i.e., there were totally opposite patterns). In school-age children, at home there was a steep decline from mid-morning to afternoon, but a relatively stable level in daycare. Thus the daycare effect was similar for infants and toddlers, though the home effect differed, but the daycare effect differed for older children.

There are a few considerations that deserve discussion based on the pattern of findings. First, it is worth noting that the failure to show home-like patterns at the end of 10 weeks does not support the idea that children fully adapt to the daycare environment. Rather, there are continued struggles relative to

a home environment.

Second, this finding of a failure to adapt coupled with the largest increase being in the preschool years suggests a large portion of this may be driven by peer interactions. That is, toddlers and preschoolers are the group most likely to struggle with peer interactions and what is expected of them in this regard in a daycare environment (think sharing), causing the most difficulties over this time period (and based on other research, continuing for months [7]). Infants don't really engage with peers and school-age children have had far more experience in this realm and know what is expected of them, although infants do show the same rise in cortisol, suggesting they also experience stress, it is just not as magnified as with the toddler group.

Third, how should we interpret the drop in mid-morning cortisol levels? There are three possibilities raised by the researchers:

1. The results may suggest there may be some adaptation to the parental separation. The results found that there were decreases to the mid-morning levels of cortisol which could suggest that the early weeks were representative of stress upon leaving the parent which does seem to attenuate as the weeks progress.
2. In line with other research [11][13], children (even infants) “anticipate” daycare days and have higher HPA axis activity overnight, resulting in periods of hypoactivation the following morning. This means that the anticipation of daycare causes stress and by the next morning, their brains have gone into a period of hypoactivation to compensate for the higher levels of adrenocortical activity overnight.
3. The third possibility is that the sleep changes that often go along with transitions to daycares result in a shifting of the cortisol levels at the midmorning assessment if they have been waking earlier the longer they are in daycare. This presupposes that the patterns of sleep-wake times shifted significantly over the 10 weeks, something that was not measured in this particular study, but remains a possibility.


This seems to fit quite nicely in with what we already know about other research on daycare: Namely, that daycare results in changes to cortisol levels, specifically changes in line with possible stress responses. This adds to the body of research by demonstrating that these changes occur during transition regardless of age, though the magnitude and effect differ by age. Perhaps most importantly, this study failed to assess quality of care which raises questions about the applicability to all daycares.



What do Daycare and Cortisol Levels tell us? - contd.

This is critical as other new research on daycare that was published recently was used to debunk the idea of any long-term externalizing problems [14]. However, this research is difficult to extrapolate or compare to the bulk of behavioural research cited earlier for one big reason: The daycare in question was in Norway, not the United States where the bulk of the behavioural research has been done. Scandinavian countries are renowned for having excellent, high-quality daycare for all children, something that is lacking in the USA and elsewhere. In line with this, many of the effects seen in daycare are eliminated or at least minimized when the daycare is deemed “high-quality” (and why I believe we need to push for high-quality daycare on a larger scale for families who need it), as mentioned previously. This is important if we view the cortisol levels as being a flag for possible stress that would impact long-term development, particularly social development if the stress is, indeed, peer-related.

Interestingly, even in the Norwegian study, there were differences in levels of aggression based on time spent in daycare at 2 years of age, but rather these effects had faded by 4 years of age. This could suggest that daycare is stressful for children, but that higher-quality daycare helps children adapt and cope with this stress in a manner that is conducive to longer-term well-being. In lower-quality care, the stress is left to build up with little support from caregivers, leading to a higher risk of longer-term problems based on time spent in this lower-quality care and child temperament.

The take-home message here is that we need to fight for high-quality care and for families to have the options of staying home during these critical developmental windows. Though I acknowledge not all families will want to or be able to take advantage of being at home, it should be an option for all. (This is particularly important for parents of higher-needs children who seem to be most affected by their environment.) For those that utilize daycare, being able to find and use high-quality daycare is essential for the well-being of our children. 

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A Shouting Success for Mental Health!

The last six months have been busy for our mental health rep, **Emily Tredget**. Below she tells us more about her destigmatisation campaign, the exciting progression of her free MummyLinks app, and how she can help MAHM mums.



In May I launched my third annual campaign to raise awareness and reduce the stigma of maternal mental health called #ShoutieSelfie and it was a huge success! The campaign kicks off Maternal Mental Health week and encourages those on social media to post a selfie of them shouting to show their support for those struggling with a mental health issue such as Post-Natal Depression.

Over the three years the campaign has gained over ten million impressions, with organisations such as HeadsTogether, PANDAS and NCT supporting as well as some amazing celebs including Anna Richardson and Janie Felstead. This year it was notable how many more mums got involved who had recently or were still struggling, and they feedback that the campaign had helped them speak to friends, family and medical professionals.

This year during the campaign I was lucky enough to be invited to speak on BBC Radio, and Channel 5 News about my own experience of Post-Natal Depression and the campaign. It's also been an exciting few months for my free app MummyLinks. MummyLinks aims to help mums beat loneliness through safe and local playdates and thus reduce the likelihood of common mental health issues in new mums. I have just been awarded some funding from an NHS research and innovation fund to test the app in part of the East Midlands!

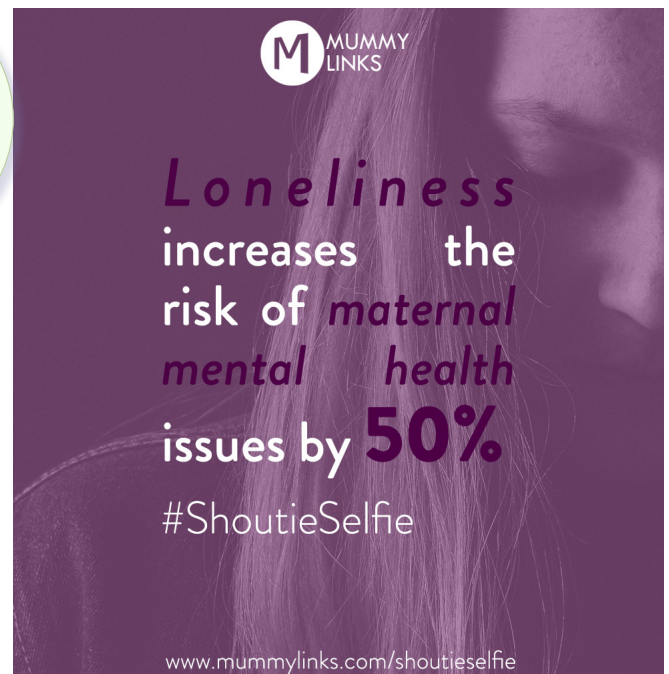
There is a lot still to do. The cost of perinatal mental health is estimated to be £8.1bn per yearly cohort of births in the UK — 70% of this cost to support the children of those struggling throughout their lifetime, so beating one of the key factors in maternal mental health — loneliness — is key.

Not only this, but hot off the press I am joining my MummyLinks app with the Happity website which is run by a fabulous mum called Sara. Bringing MummyLinks and Happity together marks a momentous step in our parallel journeys. We have a strong shared vision and mission and we share the same values. Together we will enable you to meet other parents and build your local community through both playdates and playgroups – something that sadly didn't exist when we became new mums ourselves.

You can find out more info on the joining together here: www.happity.co.uk/blog/newbeginningsfor-happity-mummylinks/ or you can download the new Happity app in your app store!

If you'd like to hear updates about Happity please join my mailing list (still named MummyLinks but I'm working on it!): <http://eepurl.com/dvAVE1> 

Emily Tredget

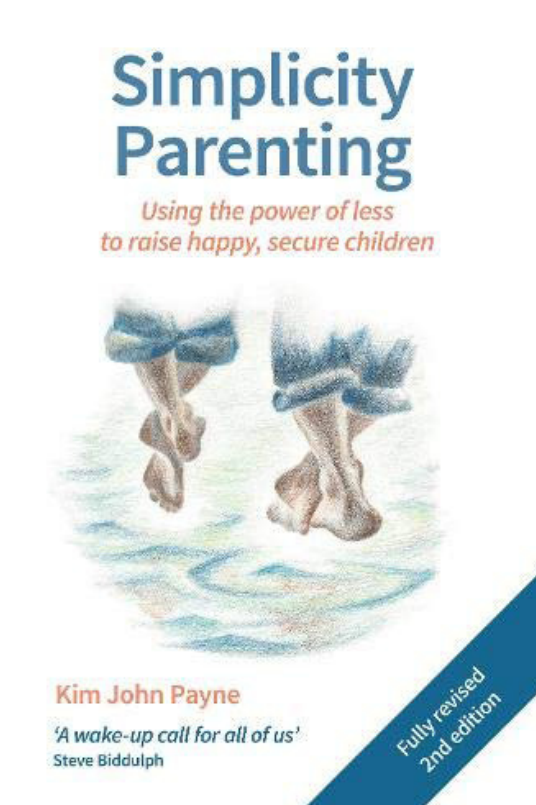


If you have any links to Children's Services or Perinatal Mental Health Services in your area please do get in touch with Emily as she will be looking to expand into different areas by linking up with local NHS and Council services once the pilot is underway. She is also as ever looking to raise donations to enable her app work to continue. If you'd like to help in either of these ways please do get in touch: emily.tredget@gmail.com

Finally, just because the above campaign, app and being a mum wasn't enough to keep her busy, Emily has also trained as a Life Coach, specialising in helping mums maintain mental wellness by helping them to find balance within their family in a world where life is often so fast it passes by with lack of intention.

She has helped mums find their identity as a mum, overcome overwhelm, confidently return to work, as well as stop working to be with their families full time. **Emily has kindly agreed to offer MAHM members a 10% discount for these services.** Please email Emily directly on the email above if you would like to take up this offer.





Maria Lyons reviews the newly updated edition of Kim John Payne's groundbreaking book; and Sally Goddard Blythe has a book hot off the press explaining how movement and music are essential to strong brain development.

Simplicity Parenting: Using the power of less to raise happy, secure children

Kim John Payne, Hawthorn Press, ISBN 9781912480036

'Childhood is not a race to accumulate all of the consumer goods and stresses of adulthood in record time.'

In his book *Simplicity Parenting* Kim John Payne argues that the wealthy industrialised West is an increasingly hostile place for children and young people, albeit in far subtler ways than in other parts of the world. Building on his work with children in Asian refugee camps, Payne describes how youngsters in the United States and United Kingdom are showing signs of a 'cumulative stress reaction' to immersion in the 'media rich, multi-tasking, complex, information overloaded, time pressured' existence we now call normal daily life.

This is manifesting in all varieties of health problems. Payne asserts that in children if even moderate levels of excitement or stimulation become a permanent feature of daily life, never counterbalanced by interludes of peacefulness, predictability and even boredom, stress can act as the catalyst which turns what might have been only a quirk or tendency into one of the dreaded 'disorders'.

Seen in this light, the solution becomes obvious. Stress reduction in the daily life of our children can be done by a

process of 'simplification' in four key areas: the environment, rhythms, scheduling, and exposure to the adult world.

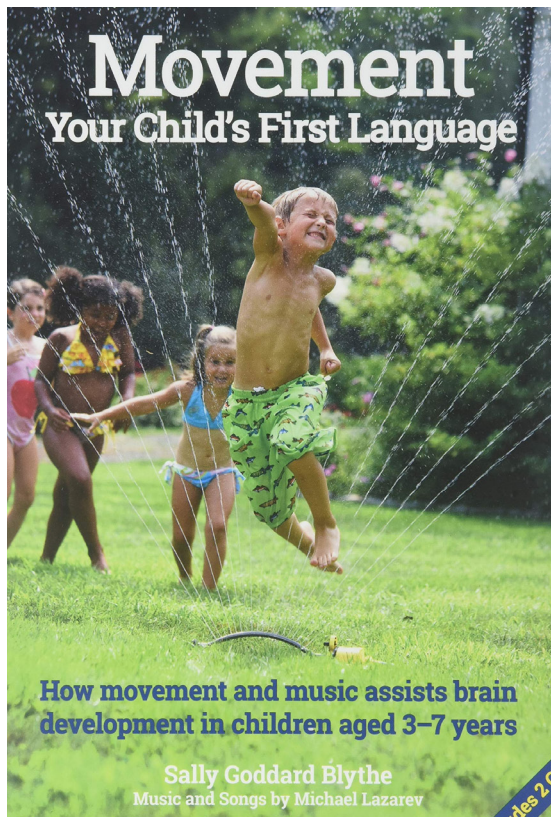
Modifying one's physical environment is the most tangible and perhaps manageable step in the process of simplification. While acknowledging the pressures that are pushing them in the opposite direction, Payne urges parents to drastically reduce the amount of possessions their children have or have access to. Whether with toys, books, clothes or food, decreasing amount and variety in a child's surroundings can help to instil the lifelong lesson that it is 'relationships, not purchases, which sustain us emotionally'.

By gently turning our family's attention away from the temptations of passive entertainment and instant gratification and toward more hard-won yet meaningful experiences, we encourage qualities and capacities that will be of both immediate and lasting benefit. The certainty of rhythms and rituals create 'islands of consistency and security' which punctuate the day and ground the child in space and time and within the family world. They are like the 'place set at the table'. An unquestioned invitation to participate, connect and belong'.

The same principles apply to how we organise and fill our children's time. As with too many toys, too many scheduled activities can stifle a child's ability to be creative, independent and self-motivated. We have become so busy 'enriching' our children we have forgotten to allow them free, unstructured time in which to discover what they really love to do. Here again, balance is the key concept. When it comes to our children's schedules we must remember that, as much as programmed events can be 'enriching', the spaces in between them can be equally so.

In a chapter entitled 'Filtering out the adult world', Payne discusses how worry, always a part of parenthood, seems in the last few decades to have come to define how parents relate to their children. Anxiety sells, and it is being delivered right into the heart of our homes and bursting out of multiple screens all clamouring for our attention. The diet of fear and exaggerated risk to which so many of us have become addicted is compromising our sense of perspective, and that in turn is polluting the way our children see the world. 'Too much information doesn't "prepare" a child for a complicated world; it paralyses them.'

This fully revised edition of a book which a decade ago inspired a movement is very accessible and brimming with valuable insights. It will appeal to parents who are uneasy about the status quo but need practical suggestions for change. Likewise it will appeal to those dealing with specific problem behaviours but seeking a different set of answers from the conventional, frequently medication-based approach to child health. Payne's observations and recommendations are made with great empathy and respect for the challenges parents face, as well as their motivations. Harnessing 'the power of less' is certainly an important step in re-attuning to the true needs of children today, to seeing the world from their perspective and ensuring that perspective is allowed to matter.




Movement: Your Child's First Language

Sally Goddard Blythe, Hawthorn Press, ISBN: 9781907359859

Movement, Your Child's First Language challenges our mainstream assumptions about early development and learning with a rich distillation of perennial wisdom and cutting-edge science. In this new book, Sally Goddard Blythe eschews politically-correct accelerationism with her refreshing focus on children's real age-appropriate needs - as opposed to the ones that impatient adults think they should have.

Based on whole-body approaches to learning developed by Sally Goddard Blythe and Michael Lazarev, *Movement, Your Child's First Language* gives us an essential overview of child growth from age three to seven years. It explains why movement and music are essential for healthy brain development and learning, and includes tried and tested activities for helping children become school ready. Sally describes the neonatal reflexes, how children learn with their bodies, and explains the hidden dangers of speeding up childhood.

Two CDs within the book include ten songs by Michael Lazarev for Goddard Blythe's exercises that provide creative and enjoyable music with movement activities to help develop coordination and language skills, while the narrated action-stories and nursery rhymes will encourage children to move, listen, and learn.

This invaluable resource is suitable for use by parents, teachers early-years educators and all care providers. 




Karen McMillan is a stay-at-home-mum with a great Instagram page which she keeps very real with her poems about the joys and struggles of motherhood. You can find her on Instagram @**mother_truths**. This particular offering will, no doubt, strike a chord with some of our readers!

S.A.H.M

So, what do you do?
 Me? Oh..I'm JUST a mum
 Stay-at-home-mum
 Feel-quite-alone-mum
 No-right-to-moan-mum
 Call-yourself-a-feminist-mum?
 Letting-the-side-down-mum
 Don't-you-want-to-have-it-all-mum?
 Something-just-for-you-mum?
 Exactly-what-do-you-DO-mum?
 Sit-on-the-couch-mum
 Got-the-day-off-mum
 Daytime-TV-mum
 He'd-really-thrive-in-a-nursery-mum
 Big-gap-in-your-CV-mum
 No-good-for-the-economy-mum
 So-what's-for-tea-mum?

Elizabeth Bracken is a native of Suffolk and a former librarian and social worker; she is also a published poet who has won awards including the Waveney and Blyth Arts prize in 2014. For further details on her books 'Appreciating the Place' and 'Unhurried Voices', contact her at meg.sea@btinternet.com.

A Grandchild's Backpack

What should we gather up for your life's journey?
 A loaf of bread — may you never go hungry.
 A bottle of pure water — may you never go thirsty.
 A breath of clean air, to wish you good health.
 A silver coin — wishing you enough for your needs
 And something to spare to give away to others.
 A book of words and pictures that you might be curious to learn.
 A rose, that you might see the beauty in the world;
 And a song — may music go with you wherever you go.
 As you heave the backpack high
 On your small shoulders
 Know it will be light with love. 

Come and join us at the...

MAHM Annual Conference 2019

- Taking Care of the Family -

Tuesday 12th November, 10am - 4pm

11 Mandeville Place, London, W1U 3AJ

Cost: £16.50 MAHM members, £19.50 non-members

Tickets available at: <https://www.happity.co.uk/mahm>



The timings of the day will be:

- 10 am Tea & coffee, and an opportunity to mingle
- 10.15 am Chair's Welcome
- 10.20 am Speakers: Sarah Ockwell-Smith & Maria Kemp
- 12 pm Questions
- 12.15 pm Updates from Emily Tredget, Mummylinks; Claire Paye, Mothers Matter Podcast; Ronnie Cloke Browne, Career Break People
- 1 pm Lunch
- 2 pm Mothers at Home Matter AGM. Feedback on our activities. All very welcome.
- 4 pm Close

Speakers:

Being Kinder to Ourselves

Why are we so hard on ourselves? Why when the role of mother is to love and care are we so bad at applying the same principles to ourselves? For a family to thrive all members need to feel valued and be happy.



Sarah Ockwell-Smith, parenting expert, parenting coach and bestselling parenting author who specialises in the psychology and science of parenting, gentle parenting and attachment theory looks at the role of the mother, how society views the role of raising children, how mothers view their own role of raising children and how these views impact our children. What can we do to change what we tell ourselves and the world?

Yes, we CAN enjoy our teenage children!

Discover how to understand and accompany your teens through the adventure of growing up into adulthood. **Maria Kemp**, mother of seven, grandmother of one, has worked in primary and secondary schools for fourteen years and as a Director of UK branch of 'International Federation for Family Development' (IFFD) has created and run the 'Smart Home Management' courses to enable mothers to enjoy their family life to the full. Maria will explore with us the wonderful but thorny world of raising teenagers as well as giving us a brief overview of the 20th International Family Enrichment Congress organised this year in October in London by IFFD: 'Family, The Face of Humanity'.



PO BOX NOTICE

Please note that due to low use and high costs, we have closed our PO Box address. If you need a postal address for subscriptions etc, please email Pat Dudley on pj.dudley@btinternet.com.

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Subs Renewal

If you've already organised payment of this year's membership subscription, or have joined in the last six months, please ignore the request for membership renewal. However, if you're a long-standing member, please don't forget to increase your Standing Order at your bank to £12.50 for single members or £15 for couple membership.

If you have changed your address or email, please let us know. If you would like to set up a Standing Order please print out the Renewal and Standing Order forms from our website and contact the Membership Secretary for postal details. (OUR PO BOX IS NO LONGER USED.) Alternatively, you can pay online using Paypal.

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