

The Importance of Boredom

Our lives are ever so busy and we have created opportunities for our children that keep them involved constantly. Breakfast Club, School, after school club, weekend activities. What opportunities are there for your little ones to be bored. I found out the importance of boredom from my youngest during a period of high extra-curricular activity season.



The Importance of Boredom

When planning how we create opportunities, social skills and friendships for our young ones we can look around our own personal environment and see a variety of individuals that are filled with activities every moment, have opportunities for activities a couple of times a week or have no activities other than school and home. Our personal circumstances play a part in this as well as our mindset on what we perceive as important for our kid/s.

Having researched and observed varying individuals develop over the years I have become aware of the affects on individuals in different ways and what has become highly apparent is that boredom plays a huge role in creativity and problem solving.

When we fill our young people's time completely there leaves little space for self-thought which creates comments along the lines 'what are we doing today?', 'I'm bored mum'. My youngest a couple of years ago brought this home to me one day when I said, immediately after her interest in a particular activity, "I will have a look into it, I am sure you can fit that in after dance on a Thursday" her response was "mum I do enough at the moment, I need some time for me." A small comment with huge impact for me, I wonder who else would have heard this request? 'Me', our identity, values and beliefs comes out of both searching for our likes and dislikes along with searching our mind when silent and processing the activities we have done.

Reflection space is a key development state within the young mind for all the key stages from toddler up to adolescent. Provide opportunities for self/reflection space and make attempts not to fill space when "I'm bored" or "what shall I do?" can be heard. Create times away from activity and electronics and see what materialises.

Calming Techniques For SATS Week

This week is SATS week for all Year 6 Students so I thought it would be supportive to provide calming techniques for SATS week to support your little ones manage the days ahead.

The main aim during the week is to encourage and provide a calm energy whatever your child throws at you. The calm energy you emit will be absorbed by your child and assist their system in resetting.

Remember: **FACES**



Fun – after school focus on fun, allow your young one to play in the park, climb a tree, play tennis, sing, dance whatever is their thing. This allows the mind to reset and file the activities of the day without having to verbalise the activities of the day. They will talk when they are ready.

Affection – hugs without expectation are very powerful. Whatever happened in school your young one will find the safety and security of your affection re-centering, even if they think they are too old already!

Calm – your calmness rubs off. If your young one has struggled during the day and needs to verbally or physically let this out, your emotional calmness will support the reset quicker. Boundaries of behaviour are always key for yours and your child's safety, the deep breath programme will support all around you. Try this exercise:

Find a quiet corner (anywhere, corner of the playground, park). Ask your child to look at you: both breath in completely bursting to the count of three through the nose...hold for a count of three...breath out completely for the count of three. Repeat 5 times, on the last one breath out the the move quick and fast.

Energy – energy comes from good nutrition. Help your child have great brain power through the week with well planned meals, including packed lunch, omit high sugar, too many

carbohydrates and if possible include omega3 and 6 during meals that can be found in fish and seeds.

Sleep – ensure your child is sleeping well throughout the week with a clear calling bedtime routine, a warm sleep helping drink such as decaf tea, peppermint tea, warm milk, time with your full attention reading or telling a story, listening to them release their day if they choose. Remove blue-light (screens, TV etc) distraction if possible.

Before School:

Wake with time to have a solid breakfast, walk to school if possible, especially whilst the weather is so sunny, the movement wakes up the system and integrates the brain allowing calmness and rational to kick in for self-regulation. Provide unconditional support on leaving your child in the morning.

Remember your child is AMAZING, look what they have achieved so far in their lives whatever challenges they have faced, they are still pushing forward, learning every moment, let them know how amazing that makes them.

Guide to the Joy of a Smile



It has been a couple of days since my last post as I am still recovering and have promised myself that I will not work at the weekend as this allows my body to reset from the week and I get time to make myself and my family spend time smiling. So here is my guide to the joy of a smile.

So this weekend we did all the things that make us smile. Some you might think we did special things that were treats, no! I sent my eldest out with her father on a 10.5 kilometre walk with rucksacks (she is preparing for Duke of Edinburgh expedition!), I took my youngest to her dancing sessions which take 3 hours and I went and took my dogs for a long walk. My eldest came back exhausted but I understand from my husband that she did not stop talking all the way, now something you need to know, my eldest is not a sporty, athletic child she is the couch, cosy, cooking child! So this was a BIG deal, we underestimated her resolve and the ability for her moving system to be settled and in rhythm to be chirpy and happily vocal all the way around. My youngest came out of dance smiling and starving and I had the opportunity to enjoy a walk in nature allowing my dogs freedom and me time to reset.

The reason I tell you all of this is because all of these activities involved movement and movement makes us smile. Research shows how important movement is for mental health, this does not mean we need to be exercising what it does mean is we need to find opportunities for bi-lateral movement, this can come from walking, painting, playing an instrument, dancing, climbing trees! and yes, sports also are included in this list. I am so encouraged when I hear stories of

classrooms moving outside, interventions such as forest school [Forest School](#) , opportunities for young learners to move within the classroom. When I witness the engagement and contentment in childrens' faces when they have opportunities to move they are in an emotional space to learn and absorb.

Tips for creating opportunities to Smile:

Begin the day with a group positive statement. Spend time when having breakfast to each make a happy statement to support each other during the day.

Walk to school / work if possible. Opportunities in walk together enables opportunities for conversations that get missed during busy family time

Encourage your child to make the most of playtime by using climbing equipment or using play equipment such as skipping rope or hop-sotch (the old ones are the best!)

After School spend five minutes telling jokes. It has been shown that when laughing we cannot be emotionally low, thereby providing opportunity to wash of the days events if needed. Jokes also speed up the working memory to recall and remember communication skills, important facts, listening and emotional connection.

Top 10 Anxiety Reducing Tips for Tweens

When anxiety hits it can be so sudden and everything goes blank. Individuals respond in different ways, some struggle to

move, some struggle to verbally communicate, some get so overloaded they explode or implode. Mix this with the development going on at this age and our young person can become confused, embarrassed on top of being anxious. Below are the top 10 anxiety reducing tips for tweens to enable individuals to move forward.

1. Stop Talking

When our system is under pressure excess stimulation fills an already filled space more extending the recovery time. Allow the individual verbal space and possibly a quiet area to go and be.

2. Touch

Touch can be very comforting, even if it is holding the hand or shoulder. The touch is a connection to your calm energy.

3. Breath

When we are highly anxious our system can forget to breath and this leads to shallow breathing. The system needs deeper breathing to provide new oxygen to allow thought to be moving. Old fashioned remedy of 'paper bag' may sound silly nowadays, however it is successful at controlling the breathing and providing focus, the same can be achieved by blowing into a loose fist.

4. Be Present

Get the individual to draw or write or talk about what is happening 'right now'. Keeping the young person in the present stops the mind from wondering to an uncomfortable and often irrational thought.



5. Question

Get your young person to question their mind. ' I cannot go to the party because nobody likes me!' Question: 'Is that really true?, I know I played with 'J' yesterday and they are going to the party'

Help your young person to trick their mind out of the negative thought through questioning.

6. Move

Get up/out of the current location and find an activity, be this craft sport, agility, dog walking anything that removes them from the current location. Movement stimulates the brain hemispheres to integrate and start talking to each other allowing balance to re-enter the system.

7. Laugh

Laughter lifts the endorphin hormone levels. It leaves the system on a natural high and this allows new thought patterns to enter the system.

8. Speak to the Feelings

Get the young person to name the feelings and speak to them as though they were just energy, nothing else. Ask them to pick each feeling and ask it where it wants to go? What is stopping it?" If child is stuck ask them to guess. Ask the child to follow the energy to where it wants to go and then release it.

9. STOP the Thoughts.

Tricking our mind is a key ingredient to changing thought patterns. Our thoughts are often automatic and we sometimes have to be very fine and controlling to engage the mind to listen. Try closing the eyes. Visualize a STOP sign big and bold. When that appears say STOP out loud with full belief. When you fully believe the word you said. Turn to focus on your breathing fully, breath in for the count of three and breath out for the count of three. Do this 5 times and then go and get a drink and change activity.

10. Be Patient

Anxiety can reoccur at any time. Each episode is completely separate from the last and if treated this way will never become a bigger concern. Make sure once the system is reset, get on with your joyful activity and focus on that. If another concern comes in, choose a tip to try, something different may help this time as this is a completely different episode.

Realization...How It Hurts



Over the past six weeks I have been really sick... not that I tell you this for sympathy, well maybe a little, but as a reason for you to stop and look at yourself. I started with a terrible ongoing headache which was singularly located and progressed to complete tiredness in all areas, lack of appetite and no ability to focus or concentrate, yes we were worried there for a time and I am still going through tests, just to be sure, however during this period of

time I have been forced to STOP. I have been forced to QUESTION and I have been forced to give myself some ANSWERS, and the realization...How It Hurts.

Firstly, am I being the best person I can be for myself?

Am I giving my family all I can give them?

Am I giving my clients the best possible service?

The answers to all of these questions was NO...this realization was upsetting and hurt.

I was not being the best person to myself because I was over-working which I had promised myself many years ago never to visit again, so questioning what draws me to this over-work need? I can hear you all screaming at me... fear, failure, not good enough.... mmmmm

Second because of this over-working what was I not doing? Spending quality time with my family, 'I just need to...', 'I have a presentation in the morning...' you name it, so many reasons to be in the office and not with my family, where is the balance I promised myself?

Thirdly, my clients. How can I possibly be giving my clients the best parts of me when I am still in the room with the visitor before or thinking about the next visitor, not making enough time to think about each of their personal needs so I can best support them during their time with me.

All of these realisations are painful, hurt my head more and have been slow to materialise as has the energy to make a transition.

This time has allowed me to also see a number of things.... How wonderfully lucky I am to have such an awesome vocation as helping young people, as I passionately love what I do and know I am on the right path finally after many years. How awesomely lucky I am to have the family I have that fully

understand the work I do, how taxing it can be and how fabulous my visitors feel when they have left me so they are behind me 100% when I am studying, when I am working and when I run away and hide whilst walking my lovely dogs! And how amazing my clients are who supported me all the way with concern and worry when I had to stop everything without huge explanations except, I am sick and need to rest. They were all there to support and enquire how I was which boosted my confidence and steadfastly helped me on the road to recovery and get back to further support them.

I am so grateful for this time, although being unwell is not pleasant, I have seen a side of myself that I was concealing and trying hard not to look at, thinking I can support and understand and help without being true to myself. This is not genuine and not whole.

It has opened my eyes to my fears and shown me what I am, how I move forward from here will be with my eyes open and questioning, it is a little scary and is never full-proof which life is not; being open to my fears, difficulties and challenges shows all I come into contact with that I am human, that's all any of us can ask for.

**Self Harm Awareness. Am I
self harming if I**



I am sitting at my desk this afternoon and have been reading about self harm awareness day, which is today, so I thought it would be open to talk about experiences with self harm and observations within the workplace.

10% of young adolescents will self harm. This may sound low but when we think about it that is 2 people in each classroom that have or are self harming. Our individual relationships with mental health are very personal and our ways of expressing worry, concern, anxiousness is also very personal. We may be surprised to know that self-harm forms many faces and the feelings and emotions that are connected to each incident are different, every time.

The definition of self harm is:

Any behaviour that that causes harm or injury to someone as a way to deal with difficult emotions can be seen as self harm.

I have come across young people who goad, push, threaten, to receive the same in return, would we classed this as self-harm? I have come across young people who eat without stop buttons or restrict food is this self-harm? How about ongoing negative thoughts or self-talk? How about the more common, releasing through cutting?, what about biting the skin around the nails excessively? All of these can come under the spectrum of self-harm and all need acknowledgement and ongoing support. When faced with turmoil inside it can be so hard to clear a path for something to change as our mind and bodies become consumed with the turmoil. Opportunities for change seem very far away, unreachable, untouchable.

Self harm is not an attention seeking exercise nor is it a suicide attempt, it is a cry for help and a clear sign of internal turmoil.

Whenever I walk into a session whether this be an educational,

private or voluntary I have no idea the mindset of my young ward on that day and at that moment. Some days I am privileged to be entrusted with a personal struggle or worry and on other days, the doors are shut and non-verbal approaches are our friend, listening, watching, emotionally being completely present. I question myself daily about the right approaches for support, sometimes, I go home and have to release the emotion just as my wards do and I have healthy and non-healthy ways of doing that. I acknowledge these personal challenges and continuously work on them as I have to remember, I was a young person once too and our child grows up with us, is part of us and wants to be acknowledged, supported, assisted and nurtured just as it did when it was younger. I remember this every time I come across a young person or adult who is struggling and openly listen and be present for their needs at that time.

The mental health foundation has provided a useful download for [Self Harm Awareness Day](#) a useful tool to have I believe.

photo credit: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/42621850@N00/4929766695> "WORRY" (I told my good friend, one day, that I was fearful and worried. I had just been laid off and money was the issue or so I thought. She told me to "Paint 'worry' and see what she has to tell you" and so I did and she "TOLD ME" plenty! via <http://photopin.com> <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/> (license)

What Parents Say



Clients ask what we do and how our approaches work. Please find below some messages from parents who have been through the support process.

Finding all round support for a child with problems is very hard as we found out. I would highly recommend Jacqueline to any other parents, who like us, were at the end of their tether trying to find support for their child. We can't thank Jacqueline enough for the help and support she gave to our son. She has supported him for nearly a year through a very difficult period. He was dealing with a lot of issues including bereavement and medical problems. Jacqueline took a fun and creative approach to each issue which really helped him. He said he loved going to see her as she helped and it was fun. She also has some fantastic approaches to dealing with long term problems such as helpful CD's which can be used at home in conjunction with the support she provides at each session. Jacqueline has also taught 'D' a lot of life skills which I know he can use to help him in the future.

Jacqueline has been supporting my daughter for a while now and is amazing. She has been the only person who has been able to get her to verbalise her feelings and to be able to help me help her

Jacqueline has been brilliant at helping to support our child (and us parents!) through some tricky (and changing) behavioural issues we've had. Many of her approaches are fun and engaging and she explains the theory behind the practical really well so that you know why you're doing what you're doing. Her follow-up help has also been fantastic with suggestions for longer-term projects to continue the support and practice for during school holidays.

I would totally recommend Jacqueline to anyone considering support in this way (and have done so already).

I hired Jacqueline Dennaforde in 2014 to assist my eldest son, who was struggling with anxiety, worry and enuresis.

Following a thorough assessment Jacqueline set out a programme of support to include developmental reflex exercises and Emotional, Social and Communication Development sessions to support my son in change.

My son had his 10 week review in late January. Prior to his review Jacqueline sent us a detailed questionnaire about changes that we had noticed since his sessions had started. It was startlingly to myself and my husband as we began to think about areas in which we had noticed changes, and the speed in which these changes had occurred. Within the 10 week period my son diligently worked on the primitive reflex exercises that Jacqueline had outlined for him as well as worked with Jacqueline in weekly sessions. By the time he had his 10 week review he had become more comfortable within his own skin and appeared more relaxed in his behavior around the home. Prior to the sessions he always seemed anxious, and he admitted that he hated being alone in any rooms in the house, he also found enclosed spaces like cars or lifts distressing and would become very anxious with physical symptoms if he had to travel in a lift. Recently when we

travelled in a lift together he appeared very relaxed, when I asked him about going in the lift later on that day he said that he had used some of the visualization techniques that Jacqueline had taught him. My son previously found it difficult to initiate play in the playground at school. This was upsetting for him as he always felt that he was on the fringes at playtime and struggled to join in. There has been an improvement with this and he is a lot happier at playtime. His sense of humour has really developed too and he now really enjoys having a giggle and a laugh, where previously he was unable to understand when and where it was okay to relax and have fun and therefore approached every situation with anxiety and seriousness.

I can highly recommend Jacqueline for individual intervention therapeutic support. My son has made many positive life long changes with Jacqueline's support. She has a calm and nurturing manner and a welcoming space in which she works. My son always looked forward to visiting Jacqueline for his sessions and felt very comfortable in her company.

Start The Conversation

Adolescent Depression – Start The Conversation

Reading this morning an article by [Bekah Miles](#) who recently opened up about living with depression, my heart went out to her as she clearly expressed the struggles she has with talking about depression not only with living with the

constant pressure it places on her life. When working with young people who struggle with mental pressure it is easy to forget that as a society we still do not discuss mental illness openly with the words; 'embarrassed', 'humiliated', 'worried', 'guilty', 'different' often entering my ears. I wonder how many young people would raise their hands if asked 'is life a struggle?'



When we break down depression into the daily struggles of the individual we can start to clearly see how it individually affects every aspect of life from getting up/not getting up to going through the whole wardrobe just to look right, eating/not eating, achieving/not achieving, going out/not going out, crying for no particular reason/shouting for no particular reason, the list can go on.

Some individuals are able to forge a life around depression, some with outside help and some by themselves, this does not mean everything fine, it means that on that day the individual is managing. Helping individuals communicate this part of their lives without fear of judgement and finding other individuals who understand what they are going through is a huge part of the change process. The only way to find other people with this experience is to 'start talking about it'. So I take my hat off to Bekah for talking about who she is to the outside world and I thank her for her courage and bravery and hope this is the beginning of a long a fruitful journey of

discovery for her.

You can find Bekah's article below:

(Dear mom and dad, please don't kill me over this permanent choice. I want you to hear me out.)

Today, I am coming out with something that only few of you know. I am ready to have a conversation about my mental illness.

Last year, I was diagnosed with depression. And in all honesty, I believe it was a problem for quite a while before that, but I think it just got worse to the point of hardly functioning.

So today, I got this tattoo. I feel that my leg was the best place for the meaning behind it. When everyone else sees it, they see "I'm fine," but from my viewpoint, it reads "save me." To me, it means that others see this person that seems okay, but, in reality, is not okay at all. It reminds me that people who may appear happy, may be at battle with themselves.

To me, depression is the days that I feel sad for no reason. Depression is the mornings that I don't feel capable of getting out of bed.

Depression is the sleeping too much, or sleeping too little.

Depression is the homework that I never completed, simply because I didn't feel like I was capable.

Depression is the break downs I have over absolutely nothing.

Depression is the eating too much, or eating too little.

Depression is the nights I begin to cry because I feel so overwhelmed, even though everything is going right.

Depression is the 50 pounds I carry in my chest at all times.

Depression is the need to constantly be distracted (being on social media, playing video games, watching movies or shows, or working all the time) because I can't trust myself with my thoughts for longer than 3 minutes.

Depression is the friendships that have suffered because of my

inability to function.

Depression is the hurtful thoughts and actions I have towards myself.

Depression is the tears I have because I don't know why I feel so worthless, when I know I should feel happy.

This is one of the most difficult things to open up about because it's extremely hard for me to feel vulnerable...but this needs to be talked about. Mental illness is serious, but so shamed in our society. We care so much for our physical health, but hardly a thing about our mental state. And that is seriously messed up. Mental illness is not a choice and will likely hit everyone at some point in their life. If it's such a huge issue, why aren't we having this conversation about it?

That's why I got this tattoo; they are great conversation starters. This forces me to talk about my own struggle, and why the awareness of it is important. You'd be surprised by how many people YOU know that struggle with depression, anxiety, or other mental illness. I may only be one person, but one can save another...and that's all I could really ask for.

Maybe this is part of why I am so interested in psychology. I want to help people who feel the way I have—and still do—because it's hell. And I don't wish that upon anyone.

“I think the saddest people always try their hardest to make people happy because they know what it's like to feel absolutely worthless and they don't want anyone else to feel like that.”

—Robin Williams

Also, THANK YOU to the ones who have helped me in this battle. I would not be where I am without you.

Joy Versus Sadness



Joy Versus Sadness Cupcake

Having had a fun-filled extended vacation with my lovely family and friends I found myself today facing rain for the first time in a long while. Gorgeous daughter 1 had made plans so I found myself with gorgeous daughter 2 and lovely friend at a little loose end so we trundled off to the cinema to see 'Inside Out'

Having no idea about the content of the story I was transfixed by the message it was sending to our young minds. How enlightening to be taught not as a child but as an adult that 'joy' is whilst very important needs a balance with other emotions to be strong and understandable.

I have had the pleasure of working with a variety of wonderful young people and their families who contact me for many reasons in relation to the emotional well-being of their offspring. Whilst cases are complex and individual, it is a valuable life lesson to teach both the young minds and the older ones that life is not all about happiness. The the value of sadness and upset both enables our minds and bodies to make sense of our experiences, learning to

embrace and allow time and space for the feelings to surface and release is healthy and natural, energy released through tears and talking/drawing/expressing allows space for new internal acceptance. With this knowledge we are less likely to suppress unwanted emotions or blockages causing overload and sometimes other life stopping occurrences such as panic, obsessive compulsive tendencies, self-harming, addictions.

Young minds are supported through enabling their systems to have the opportunity for all emotions to be expressed at various opportunities, offering space for the emotion to evolve and through careful intervention guiding the young mind to understanding, acceptance and management; through this support the balance has the opportunity to develop and the internal emotional management system to grow.

Further reading can be found at:

Hey Sigmund – <http://www.heysigmund.com>

Young Minds – <http://www.youngminds.org.uk>

Elevating Childcare –
<https://www.facebook.com/janetlansburyElevatingChildCare?fref=ts>

Would you know what to do?

Welcoming my Guest Blogger today; Norma Lewis from Norma Lewis Nannies

Would you know what to do?

This is a true story....

My husband is a licensed London taxi driver. Last year, as he was driving around St. John's wood, London, a well dressed woman frantically waved him down. She asked my husband to take her to a certain hospital, and to get her there desperately urgently. It turned out that she had been babysitting for her grandson, who had choked on something. She called the ambulance but in the meantime had no knowledge of what to do in order to help him.

The ambulance thankfully apparently came quickly, but the woman really was distraught with worry, and didn't know whether the child was alright or not. My husband drove the woman to the hospital just as fast as he could.

I don't know what happened next, or whether the story has a happy ending, so I can't pass that on to you.....

What I can tell you is that according to CAPT, (Child Accident Prevention Trust), around 29,000 under-15s have to go to A&E after choking on something or swallowing non-toxic items other than food. That's 80 children every day.

I can also tell you that it takes less than 3 minutes for a child to go from happy, laughing and playing, to brain damaged, unconscious or dead.

So – would you know what to do?

There are videos on the internet that you can watch that show you what to do in an emergency such as I have just described, including demonstrations of abdominal thrusts, (which used to be known as the Heimlich manoeuvre, and was demonstrated in the restaurant scene in the kids' favourite "Mrs Doubtfire".)

However, watching something on screen is not the same as attending a first aid course, and being taught properly what

to do, and practicing for yourself on mannequins.

PLEASE don't think that someone choking, or being injured, could never happen to you or your family. It really could. Be prepared learn what to do.

My paediatric first aid courses are open to parents and grandparents as well as to nannies and au pairs etc. – they are for ANYONE who cares for a child.

<http://www.normalewisnannies.co.uk/first-aid-courses/>

Contact me on norma@normalewisnannies.co.uk, or

call me on 020 8950 8611 / 020 70 60 40 50.

Today.

Meta tags: CAPT, Child Accident Protection Trust, Mrs Doubtfire, Robin Williams, abdominal thrusts, Heimlich manoeuvre, choking, choking statistics, first aid, first aid courses, paediatric first aid, paediatric first aid courses.