

**MONDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2020 SESSION 15**  
**STAYING CONNECTED AND CURIOUS DURING THE COVID-19**  
**PANDEMIC**

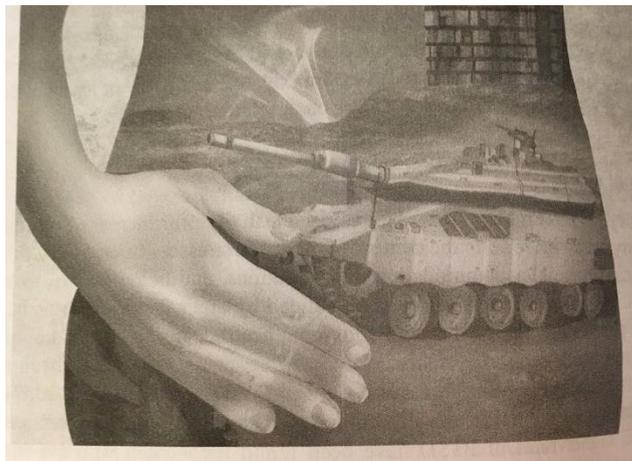
**EARLY YEARS SPECIAL – BUT RELEVANT TO ALL!**  
**Knowledge and understanding of attachment and trauma**

**The In-Utero World**

We have explored the development of attachment in the womb previously, and last Monday, you were invited to reflect on some metaphors of the womb as the first introduction to the world, the first experience of relationship and connection to another person, the first classroom, the first learning experience (Triesman, 2017), the first playground, the first restaurant. Were you able think of any other metaphors that are useful in helping us to understand the impact of events and experiences in the womb?

The metaphors I suggested last week were positive in nature. However, for some children, a sense of unsafety may have developed in the womb, and their experience there may be characterised by hostility, fear, toxic stress, unresponsiveness, threat, ambivalence, poverty, poor diet, domestic violence, exposure to substances, abuse, homelessness, dangerous migration, war and even international pandemic, as we are currently experiencing.

Karen Treisman suggests 'The Womb as Warzone':



Treisman 2017, p.73

Such a powerful image.

Today, I'd like to deepen our understanding of the in-utero experience by using a powerful creative process. Creative activities and techniques help us to externalise our thinking using more than language, hence the saying *A picture tells a thousand words*. Creative, externalised representations of ideas, feelings etc, can offer fresh insight and sometimes bring to light new ideas and deeper understanding. Using all our senses to express our thoughts and feelings helps us to scaffold, extend, reinforce, enrich and embed the ideas that we are seeking to express, making them more meaningful and relevant. This applies to children too.

### Activity

Ideally, make a womb outline and baby from PlayDoh, and place the baby in the womb. Alternatively, draw, paint or collage the womb and baby. Select or draw/paint/collage at least four items to represent in-utero stress and trauma. These could be keys, padlocks, pill bottles, sharks, lions, vehicles, hero/villain figurines etc. Give your work a title.

Spend some time reflecting on your work. How does the end result make you feel? How did you feel when you were creating your in-utero world? Has the activity deepened your insight about how pre-natal experiences may affect a child? If possible, share with a partner your thoughts and feelings about this activity.

Take a photograph of your work to remind you of the importance of the in-utero world and experiences. Please do share your photographs and social media and with me.

Extension: Make a model or other visual representation of the womb as a safe place. Follow the same reflective process as above.

See below for some work done by delegates on my **Three Day Masterclass: Using non-clinical creative & expressive tools & techniques**.



**Covid-19 relevance** Start or continue to develop a questionnaire to use when welcoming new families into the setting, where the mother has been pregnant during the Covid-19 pandemic. This may simply be an add-on to your current induction interview, or it may form a separate assessment tool. **While you may not want to develop this questionnaire at the moment, it is essential that it forms part of**

**your Return to School/Setting Policy.** Is it possible to task a small working party with the development of the questionnaire? Example questions could include:

- Did mother receive consistent antenatal care?
- What support systems were available during pregnancy?
- Who were the most significant people in mother's personal support network during pregnancy?
- What were the stresses and anxieties during the pregnancy?
- Were there any significant losses, such as bereavement, loss of income or home, during pregnancy?
- What were the mother's dominant thoughts, feelings, reactions during the pregnancy?
- Was mother able to engage in healthy mental and physical self-care routines during pregnancy?
- Did the mother have a hospital or home birth? If a home birth, did she have professional support?
- How was the labour and delivery? Did mother have a birth partner or doula?

**NB Prompt to recall Covid-19 pandemic if necessary, throughout.**

Don't forget your self-care today, particularly your exercise. Have a good day, keep safe and healthy and ring or email me to chat if that would help. **Jenny x**

## Reference

Treisman, K, (2017) A Therapeutic Treasure Box for Working with Children and Adolescents with Developmental Trauma: Creative Techniques and Activities, JKP, London