

FRIDAY 17TH APRIL 2020 EASTER SUPPLEMENT 8 STAYING CONNECTED AND CURIOUS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Knowledge and understanding of attachment and trauma

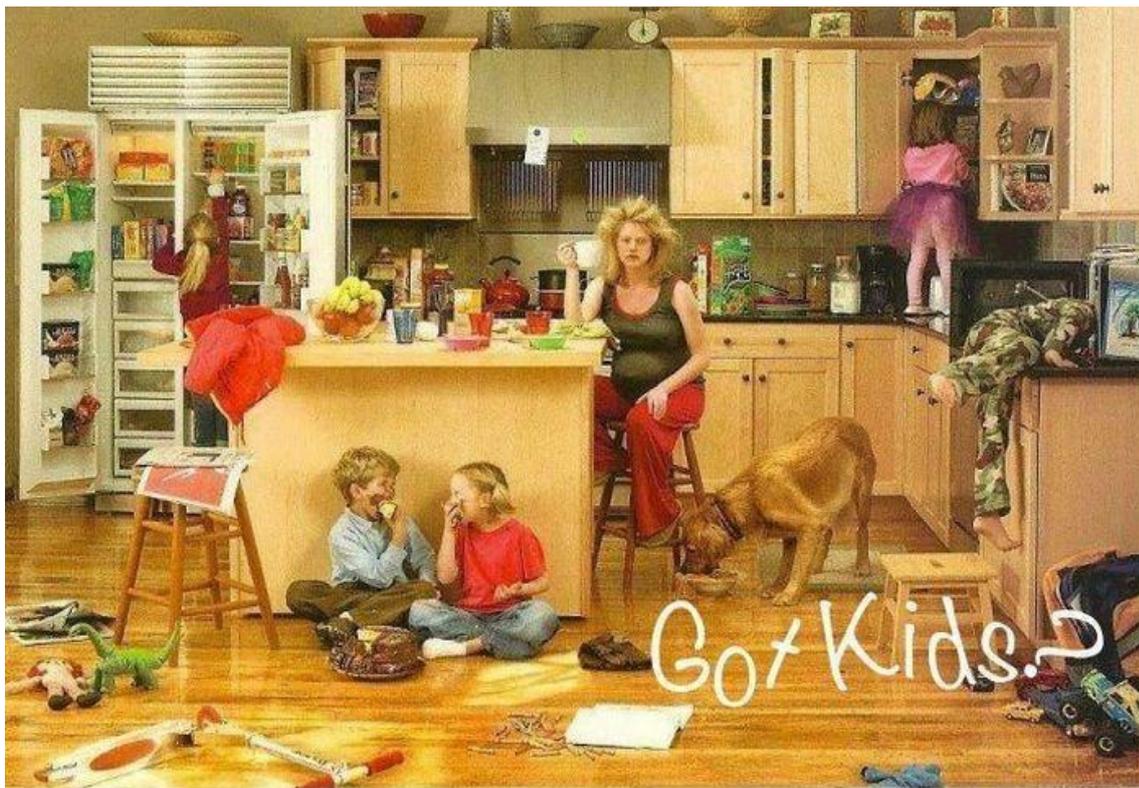
Being Good-Enough Parents (and Educators!)

We're going to return to Suzanne Zeedyk's excellent blog today. Please read the article again.

<http://www.suzannezeedyk.com/fed-up-of-being-cooped-up-in-lockdown-with-the-kids/>

I've also saved the article as a PDF, which might be easier for some people to access and/or distribute.

Home School



The concept of good-enough parenting

"The good-enough mother...starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant's needs, and as time proceeds she adapts less and less completely, gradually, according to the infant's growing ability to deal with her failure"
(Winnicott, 1953)

I have always loved the notion of the 'good-enough' parent. I was introduced to Winnecott's work during my training as a Nursery Nurse (NNEB) at Accrington and Rossendale College of Further Education in the 1970s, and even as a teenager, the good-enough framework seemed to have a lightness, a freedom, that not all so-called 'experts' e.g. Super Nanny, convey.

The concept of good-enough parenting was first used by Winnicott. In doing so he was recognising that it is unhelpful and unrealistic to demand perfection of parents, and to do so undermines the efforts of the vast majority of parents who are in all practical respects "good enough" to meet their children's needs. In this original context, good-enough was defined as the child's needs being met adequately and more than adequately, most of the time.

An email from a headteacher earlier this week really got me thinking about parenting in the current climate. She wrote: *'I sincerely hope, but am not optimistic that the powers that be have an understanding of the serious impact that this will have on some of our children. The idea that some of the media is portraying - everyone sitting around their kitchen table making playdough and home educating their children is a dangerous myth I think.'*

Our discussion was more around the experiences of children, but what of parents who are being bombarded daily with the cosy images of smiling families making playdough, sipping hot chocolate round a campfire in the garden, doing PE with Joe, painting self-portraits, baking, experiencing 'un-interrupted learning', along with instructions from at least one school leader on 'how to sanction your child if they are not engaging with home learning'? Surely these images perpetuate and reinforce the crippling notion of the 'perfect parent'. They are not liberating or comforting messages during these challenging and traumatic times, and the good-enough concept, with its acceptance of human limitations and vulnerability, is the concept we need to console ourselves and share with the families in our schools.

We also need to consider how current trends (and budgets) may have 'lowered the bar' in our understanding of good-enough parenting. Many people, myself included, believe that the meaning of good-enough has been corrupted since it was first conceptualised. One educator recently told me that when she was starting her career back in the 1970s, it meant that the child's needs were met adequately, and more than adequately most of the time. Now she said, it seems that as long as the electricity hasn't been cut off and there's a tin of beans the cupboard, the care is judged as good-enough.

Questions for reflection

1. What was your first emotional response to the image entitled 'Home School' on page 1?
2. What does the term 'good enough parent' mean to you as an educator?

3. Do you think that the original idea of needs being adequately met, and more than adequately met most of the time, still holds? Why or why not?
4. What about corporate parents: Local Authorities, councils, elected members, employees, and partner agencies? In your experience are they 'good-enough'? Why or why not.
5. **Covid-19 relevance as yesterday:** Many parents at home for this extended period will be struggling with the issues raised in the blog. How can you support them during lockdown to own their feelings and not judge themselves harshly? Could you share the Suzanne Zeedyk blog with parents?
6. Thinking ahead, when schools reopen, parents will need a lot of support. How could you use Winnecott's concept of the 'good enough' parent to support and scaffold their recovery?

This may be enough for today, but if you want to do more, draw, sculpt, paint or any other creative representation, an image of 'Home School'. Please share your images with me.

This is our last Easter Supplement, and next Monday, we'll be starting off with a EYFS focus, but it will be relevant to all educators.

Thank you for continuing to engage during the Easter break.

Don't forget your self-care today. Enjoy the weather. Be kind to yourself. Breathe. Aim for good-enough, whatever you're doing.

Have a good weekend, keep safe and healthy and ring or email me to chat if that would help. *Jenny x*