



## Making forgiveness easier: a Mum's story

“When I went on a parenting course recently called the Solihull approach and we were given a DVD to watch about how babies’ brains form and make connections strong through experiencing. They are using their instinct and primitive brain and the connections are formed from there on experience. So what they said was people learn their parenting style from how they are parented. The child builds up strong connections based upon the reactions and interactions of their caregivers. They learn by stimulation ie if they cry and are soothed they learn that behaviour, they learn to smile and get happiness and contentment from the amount of love, stimulation, smiles, affection, etc they get. They learn to know whether their needs get met by the amount of times they cry and they get changed, fed, comforted, smiled at, talked to, the world explained to them. They react very emotively or not as the case may be to the human face and the emotions from human touch, sing song voices and skin to skin contact/hormones from mum.

Basically they were saying our ability to parent well, love well and feel valued and important all depends on how well that happened for us as infants as well as well as other life changing factors along the way but our instinctual response is also very heavily hardwired from the experience we all receive. I found it much easier to forgive myself for feeling so down on myself on certain aspects of my parenting in the early days of my daughter’s life when life was very tough. It allowed me to see that I should not have taken my babies cries as a personal attack on my parenting and her personality was not saying that she did not like me, but they came from different primal instincts and needs being met and I just hadn't figured out the difference between the cries at those stages. I took it all personally as I was not prepared for parenthood and I was feeling very insecure and uncertain of my future.

I also found it much easier to forgive where parents may fall down and realize there is so much more to it under the surface and it also made me see how vital those early years and interaction, contact, positive responses are. I left my daughter too much in chair and watching telly as I didn't bond too well with her at first and I had lots of stress initially. Parenting is one of the hardest jobs with the least amount of care and understanding and training/preparation in my book.

I saw a really stressed out mum today in the supermarket. Her toddler was screaming and running after her and her mum was completely zoned out and tense, the little girl was desperate for her mum to pay her attention and be emotionally engaged with her and her screaming was out of frustration. Her mum looked emotionally drained and kept getting really angry at her daughter because her screaming was so loud and people were staring. She looked at her wits end and she was constantly walking four steps ahead. Looking on as someone who has healed was painful as I could see a bit of myself in that girl and my heart went out to her daughter who did not understand why her mum could barely even look at her and was getting so cross. The situation was just going into a negative cycle. I went over and gave the girl a slip of paper with a book that really helped me and gave her a reassuring word that I knew how she felt and that the book would help her. She looked thankful for a friendly face and some help as there is nothing worse than feeling judged when people are looking and confirming what the negative voice in your head is telling you - you already think you are a bad mum. What we need is love, encouraging words and support - those are the foundations and building blocks where you can get back up from depression and anger. We tell ourselves all kinds of painful things when we feel helpless and lost and we project that fear and anger into our children. Love heals all wounds. I remembered a midwife who helped me so much with breast feeding just by giving me encouraging words of support and never letting me believe that failure was an option where as others just tried to convince me to give up and that breast wasn't all it was made out to be. Her loving words and a cuddle made all the difference when I was beside myself in fear and depression.”

### A Mother after completing ‘Understanding your child’s behaviour’ group for parents