

FRIDAY 5TH MAY 2023

With Lavinia Ponling

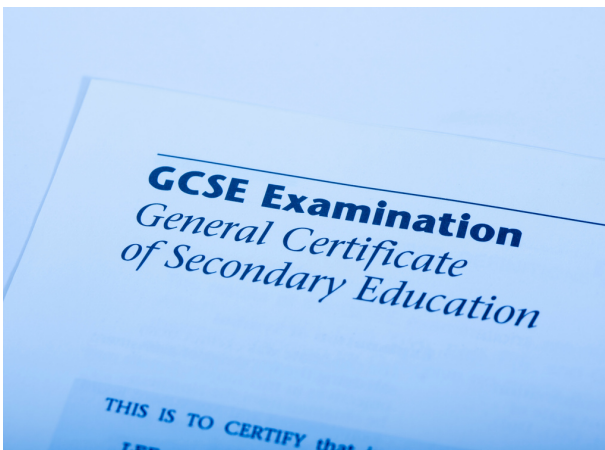
BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY

On Monday, it was bank holiday. As a neuro-diverse family we do occasionally enjoy spending an afternoon playing Uno. My family have often stated that I always let others win as I feel so uncomfortable with others losing. Like any advert that is repeated often enough, it begins to really register. Over the last six months, I have realized that I can be more assertive in my planning around Uno, despite regular outbursts of anguish from the others of 'did you shuffle this' or 'why do you not organize your cards better', 'you would be hopeless in poker as your face gives you away'. I hate pain and discomfort around people I care about, so playing Uno is particularly stressful for me, even more so now that I am playing more assertively, which means it changes the dynamics. My husband is no longer seeing me as an easy component, although giggles at seeing me play to his downfall, and I hear myself telling him, it was his doing. He takes it on the chin. I still seem to get a staggering high loss, despite winning many games. The game is absorbing and is a really good way to have me not work work, but work using my brain and memory, which is a good thing as I learn to acclimatize that people will not hold me accountable for winning occasionally.



TRIGGER WARNING - REGARDING SUICIDE BELOW

This week we learnt the awful news that a teenager committed suicide on Friday 21st of April (2 weeks ago today). It is awful as it means that, despite the warning signs, she has been failed in not being recognized in needing support. I am talking about Caitlyn Scott-Lee, who planned her suicide, which she committed on the Friday, the day before she was due to do attend for a 2hr detention. She had asked for the severity to be increased to a suspension. She had been found to have vodka and a tattoo kit in her locker just before the Easter break.



Caitlyn had interests in theatre, musicals and photography. She loved being outside with nature and watching the ducks on the lake at school. School stated that she was a “bright and talented young lady with enormous promise”. Caitlyn was diagnosed with Autism last year. On the outside, she, like many young students, deemed as bright academically, appears to be compliant, and yet masks profusely. Some parents come to me with their concerns having noted their child’s mental health having deteriorated over a couple of years. The difficulty they have is that their concerns have been dismissed, their parenting may have been subjected to criticism, and the attention is brought back to the need for compliance or face penalties. Then I assess, and see the glaringly obvious as well as the more subtle signs of poor mental health and the trajectory of impulsivity towards self-harm and suicide. I have had some very poorly teenagers over the last few weeks, all Caitlyn’s age, who are higher risk with needing support, and parents who are terrified of losing their child, which seems to be Yr 10/11 GCSEs.

Over the last three years, there are a few parents who have learnt through my eyes why their concerns are valid. Caitlyn’s parents have joined a group of parents without child lost to suicide. It is a reminder why The M Word cic was set up. We are here to support you as parents, as well as help in advocating for your child’s needs. You are not alone.

EXCITING MAY EVENTS

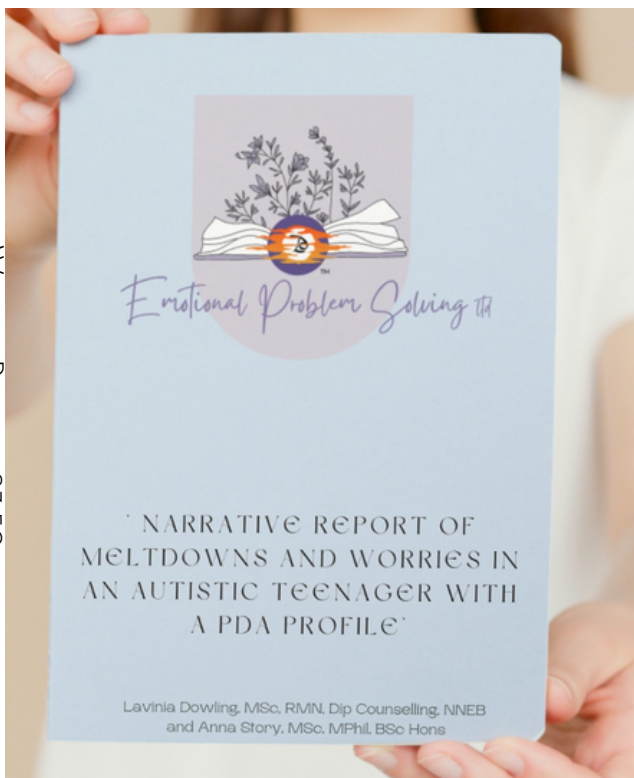
I cannot believe it is May. John and I will be attending 2 exciting events – I say exciting, John is not great with lots of people (much prefers hiding in the office with Tye), and I am publicly speaking at the second event as Guest speaker (no pressure there then!). The first event is a long weekend at the Vintage Rally on the Isle of Anglesey (Fri19-21), and the second is sponsored event in north Wales (Fri 26th) talking about my two favourite subjects – Mental Health and Autism. My thanks to Charlotte Wragg for inviting me to come and speak.

This coming Monday is the Coronation for King Charles III. For some this will mean celebrating, especially if you are an ardent Royal fan. For others, it will be a welcome extra day off work and/or school. And for some, it is a wretched day off with loss of income. There is mixed feelings in my household, but I suspect there will be more Uno being played!

On Monday the office is closed for the Kings Coronation.

Have a lovely long weekend!

Lavinia



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