

SATURDAY 13TH MAY 2023

With Lavinia Donling

ROYAL BANK HOLIDAY

On Monday, it was an extra bank holiday to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. I don't know whether you celebrated it or not, but the weather was a little disappointing for us here on the Isle of Anglesey, so I was frantically trying to do work in and around the weather in the garden. Last year I was so hopeful to get the writing room up in the secret garden, but, alas, it never happened, and I really need that head space to have time away to write. Hopefully, it will be erected in the next 2 months in timely fashion for the summer. January was very sluggish this year with getting light, but we are now in May and it is light from 04:30 right through till 22:00 on the island. My office view y/d showed the island off at its best, and I feel very lucky to be able to live in this beautiful part of the world. Monty spent a fair amount of time sunbathing outside the front door, which is incredible for him as he usually likes to sleep on the sofa or bed for most of the day and night!



PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE AWARENESS DAY

On Wednesday it was Pathological Demand Avoidance awareness day. Many of TMW clients have been screened and found to have PDA. PDA is a wily rascal and not too dissimilar from its cousin, Oppositional Defiance Disorder. They both suffer with crippling anxiety, but PDA is has an interesting facet of being presented with profuse masking, unlike the cousin of being in your face being, well, defiant. In 1980, Prof Elizabeth Newton noted within her research around Autism, that there was a select group observable for their meltdowns, often associated by laymen of toddler tantrums. Anyone who has experienced or witnessed a meltdown will see the fear and distress it causes. It is extremely uncomfortable to witness.



What Prof Newton did not note is that there are a lot of young people who become situationally mute or withdraw and internalize. Yet, their meltdowns are voiceless and what we refer to shut downs. Hence, why I refer to PDA being a wily rascal. It is not always obvious, clearly, when one parent advised me that their child's Head Teacher was emphatic that she would recognise masking and there was no evidence to support, when the child would get into the car and break down!

I completed an Initial Screening for a Parent this week. They have been on anti-depressants for quite some time, and once their child was diagnosed got them thinking. However, they came to see us in 2021 because "something is still not right". When we completed the Initial Screening on their child, we uncovered that ADHD had been missed, but that wily rascal also had been missed! Yes, Pathological Demand Avoidance! The National Autistic Society some years ago had identified through research that 70% of those with PDA are unable to attend mainstream school! Having worked extensively with this parent with an EOTAS package, the parent plucked up the courage to ask if I could coach them through their recent diagnosis of Autism. They had felt "euphoria" when they got the diagnosis feeling that everything would slot into place, which it did for a while, but they still could not come off the anti-depressants. I asked if it was possible, given what we uncovered 2yrs previously with their child, (hence the EOTAS package) that they too may have ADHD and PDA. Guess what? Yep, they screened for both.

WHAT LIFE HAS IN STORE

Last month was no different when I screened a parent whose child had been diagnosed 20 years ago. The difference of knowing and then being coached through understanding their diagnosis was "nothing short of miraculous", and "for the first time in a number of years, I feel enthusiastic about what life has in store. Thank you!" Therapy and/or coaching does not take as long as you might expect - for this parent got to this point after only six weeks, and is now looking to complete another six sessions fortnightly. I would stress that finding the right therapist is key to trusting and doing the work, no matter how tough or bonkers you think therapist is! Those who have worked with me will know exactly what I mean, but we share a joint mission of getting stuck in to find solutions with greater understanding in a short period of time (as we are all very busy with our lives).



Next week is Mental Health awareness week which is rather apt, following on from PDA being all about anxiety. Last night an email came through telling me I had been nominated for Innovative Entrepreneur for small business award! I remember a Professor from a London University telling me in 2016 that out of Entrepreneurs, Mental Health was less than 0.1%!!! So, to get this recognition is just amazing. Big thank you to whoever nominated me.

Have a lovely long weekend!

Lavinia