



Anxiety in children and ways that it can be overcome

By Emma Chrzastowski, of Childhood Mental Health Needs

It is now well documented that mental health disorders are on the rise amongst children, even quite young ones, particularly emotional disorders such as anxiety. Despite this increase, access to mental health services can be limited, especially for those under 12.

Unless they can afford private care, this results in many families suffering in isolation. Having experienced this ourselves and seen first-hand how difficult it can be to get care, support or information we wanted to provide a space for families in similar situations in our community to come together, gain knowledge and a realisation that they are not alone.

When emotion overrides thought

At the end of January we held a pop-up workshop on Anxiety in Children at St. Mary's in East Finchley, where Jo Holden was our speaker. She is a mental health trainer with ConnectEd, the early intervention mental health service offered by the Catholic Children's Society (CCS) for families of all faiths and none.

Jo very clearly set out at the beginning to help us understand how serious anxiety is by asking us to consider how we think it would compare to a physical illness. The room was surprised to hear that the closest direct

comparison for how debilitating anxiety can be is a severe spinal injury.

She explained that the amygdala, which is the emotional centre of the brain, can override the thinking part of the brain when we experience fear, anger or sadness. This of course is part of the essential fight-or-flight response.

Anxiety occurs when a perceived threat appears bigger than our ability to cope with it and our emotional brain takes over. At these times it's important to calm the emotional part of the brain by focusing on something physical or practical like breathing or utilising techniques such as hand-tracing.

Workshop programme

The workshop was well attended, showing the real need in the community. Due to its success, we are going to hold regular workshops on different areas of child mental health. To find out more, please follow us on Facebook @childhoodmentalhealthneeds and on Instagram @childhoodmentalhealth_needs

School's good progress

Staff and governors are celebrating after Bishop Douglass School achieved one of the highest progress scores in the country. The secondary school, in Hamilton Road, N2, was named in the top 10 schools in the UK for progress in last year's GCSEs.

The school's score of 1.39 means that last year's GCSE students averaged more than a grade higher than typical students.

Headteacher Martin Tissot said: "Results over the past few years have been getting stronger and stronger. We are lucky to have extraordinarily dedicated staff who go above and beyond

to support students."

Michelle Henderson, the new Head of School, said: "We are very well ordered, well-disciplined school and we support our students pastorally and work in partnership with them and their parents. We have a strong community feel, where everyone is valued."



Fashioned in flame: Glass designer Samantha Sweet, right, in her workshop. Photo Mike Coles.

Glass creations in a garden setting

By Diana Cormack

Do you ever wonder what goes on in your neighbours' back garden buildings? I've discovered that one near me houses the studio of highly skilled glass maker Samantha Sweet.

Sam originally set out to study jewellery at Bucks University, but found herself so inspired when attending a glass making session that she changed her course. After her degree she was apprenticed for eight years to a firm in Finsbury Park, this being the only way to learn and get paid as well, then gained her MA at the Royal College of Art, followed by scholarships at the National Glass Centre in Sunderland.

Flame, not furnace

These years of facing up to the heat (and burns) of furnaces, along with the cost of gas, made Sam consider other ways of dealing with glass. Back in London she began fashioning handmade lead crystal 'milk bottles' which became popular and sold well in a range of top shops, as did her other hand blown and cut glass vessels.

She found working with a torch flame to create beautiful objects was just what she wanted to do and far preferable to the fierceness of a furnace. "I absolutely love it!" she told *The Archer*. Fans will love the bracelets, charms, earrings

and necklaces displayed in her studio, where students come to learn from her and practise making their own lovely objects. For taster sessions visit www.samanthasweet.com.

Let there be light

At present, Sam and her New Zealand-born husband are constructing a fabulous chandelier. No doubt this will go on show at Muswell Hill Creatives, the group of diverse talents and designers to which Sam has belonged for several years.

With her passion for working with glass using quality material and traditional skills, Sam produces pieces which

reflect modern culture in their shape and pattern, all in a building nestling under the ancient trees of Cherry Tree Wood.

Let there be light

East Finchley Open Artists are helping to raise money to install improved lighting on the gallery wall of the Phoenix Cinema, which regularly plays host to exhibitions by local artists. Find out more at www.east-finchleyopen.org.uk

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

Spring is springing

Hi, folks, and Happy New Year! I'm not joking, because until 1752 no one celebrated the new year in cold December. Until then, we used the weird and wacky Julian calendar so the new year started on 25 March. Made sense. Start the new year when spring sprang, not when snow fell. So, why change? I blame the moon.

The old calendar worked on the idea that all years were the same and that meant things got astronomically twisted. It was so serious a problem that by 1752 we were 14 days behind the times. If you're into religion that meant you were celebrating Christmas on 7 January, which was pretty weird even for the 18th century. So they changed to the Gregorian calendar and nicked 14 days.

At the same time someone got a serious case of common sense and made New Year the 1 January. All that March had left was the start of spring, so now is the time to put things right.

Let's start on the 1st with one close to my heart, the day Iceland celebrates Beer Day. And it's also Pig Day in America, so we can all start the day with a pint and a bacon butty. Maybe with added celery as March is National Celery Month.

Once you've got over your hangover you've got Employee Appreciation Day on the 6th when your boss is meant to be nice to you and on the 17th the Roman feast of Matronalia celebrating women and motherhood, their version of Mother's Day. Fair bets that was probably invented by florists long before St Patrick grabbed the same date in the name of all things Guinness.

But the day I like most is Friday the 13th. Not for all the bad things that might happen, but for the excuse it gives me for not going to work. Because this year it coincides with World Sleep Day, or as I call it Hide Under the Duvet, Drink Beer, Eat Bacon and Celery Butties and Watch a Box Set Day. All of which is fine by me.

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