



P1: [00:00:00] Hi.

P2: Hi, Alexa.

P1: Hi, oh, sorry. I just lost your picture. Uh, where did you go? There you are [laughs]. How are you?

P2: Fine thanks, and you?

P1: Good, thank you. Um, thank you for sending back the consent forms. It's really helpful to get them before. Um, was there anything you wanted to ask me about that?

P2: No, not at all.

P1: Okay. Perfect, so, um, thank you so much for participating. It's really -- I really appreciate it. Um, maybe we could just start by, I mean, I guess you saw the advert for research somewhere on Facebook. Maybe you could tell me what went through your mind, what you thought about it, um, yeah, that type of thing.

P2: Uh, I just thought I could identify with what...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...you were talking [**voice cut 00:01:45**].

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...because it's something I'm, experiencing.

P1: Yeah -- yeah. So tell me -- I mean, tell me what you're experiencing? Yeah, what's happening for you at the moment?

P2: Uh, so in the beginning of lockdown my son became incredibly clingy and dependant on me to stimulate him all the time.

P1: Right.



P2: And that was [voice cut 00:02:07] on me emotionally because I never had space and, um, he also started shifting his naps. So he'd usually have two to three hour naps, and then it would only become a one-hour nap. So I usually I had downtime to have some time out for myself, or work or, um, you know, just rest and do things I needed to get done around the house, that I would need -- I couldn't necessarily do with him. Because he was so needy and demanding, it was very difficult for me to do anything else besides play with him. And he would always say, "Mum, what's next on the list?" Because he knew I had a list of things to do. [laughs] I'm like a school teacher planning his day. So, for me it was taxing emotionally and I would get very overwhelmed and obviously he would get [voice cut 00:02:58] on my emotions so that he would also get overwhelmed.

P1: Yes.

P2: And if -- even though I knew what he was going through, I struggled to manage my own emotions during that time and reflect on what he he's going through by tampering my reactions to his outbursts, so...

P1: Okay.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Do you have any example? I mean, is there a memory that you've got of a time where that happened?

P2: Not really. It's -- it's just a replay of the same thing over and over. Um, it would just be like he wants us to do something and I would say, "No, not now." And then he would, um, just start getting hysterical and then I would either end up shouting at him, or, um, yeah. Just getting really mad with him and then he'd -- he'd escalate. Yeah.

P1: Okay. What does it look like when he gets -- sorry, how old is he just before I ask?



P2: He's two. He's turning three, um, this month. So, yeah.

P1: Oh, okay happy birthday[laughs].

P2: Thank you.

P1: Okay. Um, sorry, okay so what does he look like when he gets hysterical?

P2: He starts to cry and then he starts or he'll -- or he'll shout at me, um, and become incredibly wane, yeah. But mostly it's a lot of tears and tears from his [past 00:04:24] mode of crying. And then he struggles to calm down because I myself struggle to calm down as well.

P1: Right.

P2: So, I struggle to manage myself, and I struggle to manage his emotions too. So, whether it was -- so that was the beginning, and now it's got better, but I usually find it either goes one of three ways. So, either I'm -- I'm overwhelmed and so my emotions reflect on him and he picks up on that, or he's not having a good day, and then I get overwhelmed because I can't really manage him for so long before it overwhelms me.

P1: Right.

P2: Um, or we're both in a bad mood, [laughs] we just don't get along. [laughs]

P1: Yeah -- yeah -- yeah -- yeah. So, I mean, sorry, I was thinking about something that you said, um, in the beginning, um, he would -- he would have the meltdown, um, and then you would get upset. I mean, what would happen? Would you be upset beforehand and then that would sort of tip it over or would his becoming hysterical cause you to then become upset? Does that -- sorry, does that make sense?

P2: Yeah, that makes sense. I think it's a bit of both, but I think the second one is more of the, um, more common reaction where his reaction builds



up something in me, because I'm also very sensitive to people's emotions.

P1: Okay.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Yeah, so what is it that you feel when he is becoming hysterical?

P2: I get overwhelmed and then I get, um -- I get angry as well, because I also can't calm myself.

P1: Right.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Angry with him, angry with yourself angry at both?

P2: Both, but I'd say more so getting upset with him first.

P1: Okay -- okay.

P2: And then -- and then getting upset with myself for my reaction and not taking a breath and just not, you know, engaging with that emotion.

P1: But I would imagine, and then please correct me, but I would imagine that comes later after...

P2: Yeah. Where I feel guilty of how I reacted.

P1: Yes, yeah -- yeah. Okay, um, and the angriness? Um, how does it feel? What goes through your mind?

P2: Um, it's because I'm -- I can be an anxious person and I realise now that my behaviour since the beginning of lockdown had been anxious behaviours but I haven't picked up on it because it looks different now on lockdown.

P1: Right.

P2: So, it has -- it has come across as very, um, controlling behaviours, so, um, you know, having a schedule routine that we followed it started



like that. And then if I couldn't control his emotions or -- or mine, that's when it would escalate. So, when I have lots of control of that, that's when it gets to escalate for me and I tend to want to keep everything together.

P1: Yeah.

P2: And I don't like it when it's not together. So, that cause anxiety for me.

P1: Yes -- yes -- yes. Okay -- okay. Um, so what you're saying is -- um, sorry, I was just writing something down and I don't know if you mentioned this, but there -- did the anxiety look different at -- at lockdown?

P2: Yeah.

P1: Sorry...

P2: So, I didn't recognise it, yeah at least.

P1: Uh, what did it look like before lockdown? How did you recognise it before?

P2: Well, I haven't had, um, anxiety like this for quite a few years. So, before my son was born, um, I suffered from panic disorders. So, I would get extreme panic attacks it would land me in the hospital because I could never calm down from them.

P1: Right.

P2: Um, so I learned to manage them. So, my anxiety will always go from zero to 100 very quickly, and now it was just kind of, like, you know, hovering at like maybe 30, 50% and I wouldn't recognise it, yeah.

P1: Yeah, okay. All right, so not full-blown. Panic attacks but just like there's constant low grade awful anxiety that's just always there.

P2: Yes.



P1: Yeah, how did you manage it in the past?

P2: I didn't. It was medication that I was -- I was on. But then eventually, I was able to come off of it because I've been through therapy, and I was able to then manage without it. So, it was only a temporary situation and then, um, when I fell pregnant with him, you know, before I had a miscarriage and that brought a lot of anxiety because I couldn't take medication. So, I struggled to manage that on its own without medication.

P1: Yes.

P2: And then -- and so then when I fell pregnant with him, I was starting to have panic attacks again because I was bleeding. So, I got worried but then I learned, with the help of my family and with my therapist to...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...manage that without medication. So, I equipped myself with tools beyond medication. So, because I had adapted and learned to regulate myself that way, it was far easy for me to not be on medication. So, I haven't been on medication. And so I've been able to manage it without, which is great. So, I think, having that experience and catching anxiety earlier like I have now, has prevented it from escalating to full blown.

P1: Okay. Okay, because that was my next question which is you've obviously, um, learn to manage it very well, and you had it under control and then it sounds like what you're saying is that it sort of like snuck back in...

P2: Yeah.

P1: ...um, in a way that you hadn't -- because it was different from before, in a way that you -- you didn't recognise.

P2: Yes.



P1: Okay. So, when did you start to notice? When were you like, "Okay, this is looking like anxiety?" [00:10:00]

P2: About three weeks ago, actually.

P1: Okay.

P2: So, um, our church has started doing community conversations on a Monday night over Zoom, and the first session was about fear and anxiety.

P1: Right.

P2: And when they were talking about how the behaviours might -- might be manifesting anxiety, I started checking all the boxes and I realised, "Okay, this is me. I've been doing this."

P1: Right.

P2: And that's when I recognised it, yeah.

P1: Okay. Okay -- okay and then what happened? What did you do from there?

P2: So, then I contacted the lady who is running it. She's, uh, she was my -- my therapist beforehand and I said to her, "I'm struggling again, can we please have -- schedule some sessions?" And then she said, yes. So, since then I've had some sessions with her which has really helped.

P1: Okay. So, I mean, sorry if you don't mind me asking, like what kinds of things do you do to manage?

P2: Um, more along my thought life. So, self-regulating my thoughts, so catching them early and recognise what's rational and what's irrational.

P1: Okay.

P2: Um, and then taking a pause and -- and not reacting but rather responding. So, that's set me a lot now with my, um, my interactions with



my son. Instead of it becoming overwhelming it's minimised now. So, it's getting better. So, I think that's definitely helps calm it down and, um, sometimes I need some space. So, my husband because he's working from home...

P1: Okay.

P2: ...he can hear -- he can hear what's going on and he can sense that I need some space from my son, because I'm getting overwhelmed. He will come and he will maybe -- he will just, um, give me some space and he will take care of our son. Bring him back down and I can go off and just regulate and just get my thoughts back together and calm down and then come back. Yeah.

P1: Yeah -- yeah. Um, I mean, do you mind me asking, what are the kinds of thoughts that you -- that go through your mind that you try and manage?

P2: Um, I can't think specifically, but it's more along the lines of I'm treating my son a decent adult and forgetting that he's three. Um, so I have to talk myself down and say, "He's only three. It was just an accident. Like he didn't mean to do that. He's going to push boundaries. He's going to break things, and he's not going to not listen. That's who he is right now and I can't expect him to be, um, self-controlled at this point."

P1: Right, okay. Yeah that makes a lot of sense. I mean is it -- is it okay that sometimes it feels as if he is doing those things intentionally?

P2: Uh, the irrational part of me thinks that yes. So, that's why I have to -- I have to, you know, just talk myself down. So, this morning we were doing a moms and tots class over Zoom and, um, he wanted to play with the bubbles. And I said, "No, not now. Can I say goodbye and then you can play with your bubbles?" So, he proceeded to look at me and then open the bubbles regardless, and in his defiance, then he spilled the



bubbles everywhere and then I got cross because he didn't listen. But it's a normal three-year-old behaviour, you know, but I got very angry and I had to turn off the cameras so that I can [inaudible 00:13:15] so no one saw what happened. But like, um, that was just an incident that happened this morning. So, you -- you know, that's normal testing behaviour so he do it deliberately but, you know, it's expected for a three-year-old, yeah.

P1: Yes, and I guess the deliberate because, um, it's the part where he looks at you and then opens the bubbles after you've said no.

P2: Yes.

P1: So, the behaviour is deliberate but, uh, maybe we're talking about the intention behind it.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Um, it feels like he's intentionally trying to make you furious [laughs].

P2: Yes. Because I think he does know how to -- he does know how to push my buttons sometimes. Sometimes not all the time because he's been -- I'm noticing this behaviour that he will say to me, "Mommy how are you feeling?" And so he technically asked that question, every time after he's done something naughty. He wants to gauge my emotions from what the interaction just was. So, he asks that a lot. Sometimes he can ask it five times in the space of a minute. Because he's trying to see how he should react compared to my emotion when I'm feeling right now. So, he's trying to gauge that. So, I've noticed that sometimes he asks that deliberately after he's done something naughty or if I've just responded even though it's a harmless, you know, not listening pushing boundaries, yeah.

P1: Okay. That's really interesting. I mean, do you -- if it's, um, sorry I don't know if it's the right question. I want to ask if it's hard for him to



know how you're feeling or if it is very clear -- do you make it very clear how you're feeling? Sorry, did that question kind make sense?

P2: Yes, it makes sense. So, I do -- I do let him know how I'm feeling. So, for instance, at bed time whenever we're supposed to be getting dressed after bath, he deliberately, you know, acts silly and, you know, just go around and not get dressed and I'll say, "Come here, let's get dressed, you're going to get cold." Um, and so then I would say -- I would look him in the eyes and I would say, "~~Am~~ I am cross with you now. I need you to listen and get dressed." So, I would be very upfront with my emotion with him, and I would tell him, "You are making me mad because you're not listening."

P1: Yeah -- yeah.

P2: So, I think he's gauging it from that as well. So, when I'm -- there're times when I don't convey my emotion, and he tried to read my face. Um, he asked me that question, because we've also been playing games around emotions. So, like I did a little chart for him with a little person, and on bottle caps I drew different, um, emotions on there. So angry, happy, sad, cross, um, and what was the fifth one I forget. And I would tell him, put the sad face on and put the cross face on. So, he is in the process of learning how to read emotions on people's faces at the moment. So, I think that's why he ask that question a lot. He gauges it to know how he should respond too.

P1: Okay -- okay. Got you. And also there's something about what you're saying and -- and the way you started talking about this that speaks to your anxiety in the beginning and you were saying like your anxiety -- you think your anxiety initially he was feeding off of that and, um, I mean, I wonder what he sees when you are very anxious. What do you think you look like to him?



P2: Distant. I switch off. Yeah, I switch off and I -- I focus my attention elsewhere so I will start cleaning or just get engrossed on my phone because I need a -- I need a place to just zone out so I don't think.

P1: Okay.

P2: And so to him I look distant. That's how I feel I look to him, you know.

P1: All right. Okay, that's really interesting. So, he sees you as switched off or far away and then which makes me think, uh, what is it that he is wanting when he acts up? I mean, is he wanting to draw you back in?

P2: Yeah, he is wanting to draw me back in because he sometimes thinks it's naughty. You know, more so, um, during that time when I'm switched off and I'm not paying attention anymore because, you know, I need to just get out of my own mental space for a bit and my interaction with him. So, I think he's looking for me to show him how to calm down from how he's feeling as well. And I think he's not sure how to engage with me when I'm at that point.

P1: Yeah -- yeah -- yeah. I mean, that must be especially hard for you, because when you are in that way it's because you're needing the space. Um, and now you're being pulled back in again. Um, I don't know, how do you manage that? It's so -- it's so difficult.

P2: Yeah, I quite haven't gotten that right yet. So, I do have to sometimes snap out of it or my husband intervenes, um, yeah.

P1: Yeah -- yeah. It sounds especially difficult at the moment where you're especially needing a bit of a break is when they especially don't want you to have that break.

P2: Yeah. Sorry just [**background noise 00:18:18**] on the background sorry.

P1: It is okay. [**Inaudible 00:18:20**] [laughs] Um...



P2: What did you want to ask me?

P1: I wanted to ask you, actually which is kind of funny but, um, the timing because I wanted to ask you if you are somebody that asks for help when you're feeling overwhelmed, are you likely to tap out and say like...

P2: Um, no, not all the time. So, **[crosstalk 00:18:44]**. I think because I'm not used to -- you know, when my husband was at work and used the office, then I didn't have somebody to do that for me. So, I, you know, I didn't -- I didn't know how to ask for help. I think I only asked for help when it escalates to the extreme. Um...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...when my son and I are both in tears tearing at each other, I think that's when I ask for help but then I struggle to ask when it's just simmering on the surface.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So, I'm really good -- my husband can recognise that from my voice just from conversation. [Laughs]

P1: Are you -- and are you a stay-at-home mom?

P2: Yes.

P1: Okay -- okay. So, you're not -- um, you -- you aren't working from home or going back to work after this or?

P2: No, so I did run my own business, um, before lockdown, um.

P1: Okay.

P2: So I was technically working from home, but that was really only in his nap time or after he goes to sleep or when my husband came home from work and he can play with him. So, he was with me when we go to the shops, um, at home everything was done together.



P1: Right -- right -- right. Um, interesting, I was just asking because, uh, it's a different position -- a lot of the moms I've spoken to, are trying to [00:20:00] I don't know, they're battling a lot of anxiety either by going back to work and now they're home and they're having less time, and for some of them it's been good and for some of them it's been terrible. Um so, your anxiety hasn't been about that, but has it been about the lockdown in general?

P2: I think it's the lockdown in general, um -- um, so I was very prepared going to lockdown. We made sure we had all the projects to do, uh, in the home. And I think it's also been -- anxiety has also been brought on by other two things, is that my husband is, um, you know, compromised. So, he is a high risk factor.

P1: Right.

P2: So, it's also doing everything that I can to make sure that everything that comes into the house is sanitised. Making sure that he's gone to shops that he's clean and I'm clean, and, you know, all the cleaning behaviours that go with it. Um, not to say it's extreme, it's just the protocols of watering down your groceries and you know, putting your clothes in the wash and things like that. Um, so that's also brought on my anxiety and also my mom doesn't seem to think that the corona virus is an extreme as it is being portrayed by the media. She thinks it's just a flu, so she's been pushing boundaries with -- on us to see her grandson, and that's made me highly stressed and anxious because I don't know how to handle a conversation without it getting into a fight.

P1: Okay. Um, okay do you normally see a lot of your mom?

P2: Yeah, we used a lot of each other. Um, when ~~Aaron~~ was born, um, she used to come every week. And it's fizzled down a little bit. So, it's maybe twice a month now. So she does -- she does ask for daily photos or videos of her grandson or a couple of chats a week, which for me it's a bit



too much. Trying to just manage my own household, manage myself and manage my son and my husband and then trying to manage her need for contact all the time. So, that's things that have sparked my anxiety a lot. Yeah.

P1: Okay -- okay, so it wasn't the case that she helped with the childcare really. She just sort of visits?

P2: Mm-hmm.

P1: Okay. Is -- is that your decision? Is that just the way she is?

P2: So, whose decision that she helps or not?

P1: Yeah -- yeah, that she doesn't -- that she's not necessarily helpful with the childcare.

P2: Um, she always...

P1: Uh, yeah.

P2: So she not just wants to be the role of, uh, the granny that plays with him. So, she just wants to, you know, to look after him. That seems by playing with him. We've never had to -- had to leave him with her. Um, but she -- if she had to babysit then she would come to our house. So, she would -- but it didn't -- it hasn't happened a lot. Um...

P1: Okay.

P2: ...just because my son was still waking up quite -- quite a lot in the night up until he turned two. So, it never really was, um, feasible for her to have him over if he's going to wake up a lot in her house. So, um, we never really relied on her for any child care. We would rely on her for babysitting.

P1: Okay.

P2: Um, but we also ask my, um, my sister-in-law to do that as well.



P1: Oh, okay.

P2: So, my mom more just in the role of a playmate to play with your grandson and spoil him.

P1: Yeah, right -- right. Okay. Um, and what's your relationship like with her?

P2: It's good. Um, I'm just struggling at the moment with her and our differing opinions about the virus and boundaries around this. So, she has been visiting my brother and my nephew...

P1: Right.

P2: ...in lockdown even though we're not supposed to, and so she's been asking me for that too and I've had to say, no.

P1: Right -- right.

P2: Um, so, the only thing I have allowed, is because we live in a complex, uh, if she wants to drop off something for him like snacks and chocolates or something eat, I will go to the gate and fetch if from her and we talk through the gate and that was it. And we will walk away. So, I don't let her come in, um. So, that is as much as I've allowed, but she's trying to push that boundary a lot.

P1: Yeah -- yeah.

P2: And I'm...

P1: And you're finding that quite difficult?

P2: Yeah, I'm finding it difficult to manage, um, uh, because I -- I was saying to my therapist and I feel like in my interactions with my mom, it feels like she still treats me as the child in the relationship and not as an adult in my own right to make these kinds of decisions and have differing opinions. And my therapist said to me, my mom is just that person who is going to push boundaries all the time. So, uh...



P1: Okay.

P2: ...you know, I shouldn't let what her actions -- what her actions are manipulate me emotionally. But I find that every time I engage with her, I do get anxious because I don't like having these, um, conversations, um, with her because they can be explosive.

P1: Okay.

P2: And she can be passive aggressive and I'm -- yeah, it makes me very uncomfortable.

P1: Okay. I mean, what does it mean to be the child to your mom? Does it mean that she doesn't listen to you or she disregards you or she thinks you're silly?

P2: I think she feels like, uh -- um, oh, I feel like I'm disrespected in that regard that I -- that I feel like I can't have differing opinions to her.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Um, where she wants me to just believe the same things she does. So, what that looks like is she's been sharing a lot of fake news videos with me to watch and listen to and, um, then it works a lot of anxiety in me. So, I actually just don't watch them. I say I'm going to watch them, but I don't, um, just to like get her off my back. So, those kinds of things evoke anxiety with me and every time that I have a conversation or see her, then I find that the next day or two afterwards my anxiety is a little bit off the charts.

P1: Right. Right -- right. And um, okay and you said she -- she's quite passive aggressive. Has she always been that way?

P2: Um, uh, I've struggled to see that beforehand. But I notice that it's been a bit more of a struggle since I became a mom. So, since my son was born there's been this push for me to do what she tells me to do.



P1: Yeah.

P2: Whereas before, to do, or I didn't see it. Maybe I was just a little bit blinded to it, but, um, it just seems like **[inaudible 00:26:16]** more so now that I'm a mom and I want to do things differently to how she raised me.

P1: Mm-hmm. Okay -- okay. I was going to ask, are you two very different moms? Are you very different from the way that she was as a mom?

P2: Yeah, so -- so what she said to me is that, you know, she didn't have her mother be with her when she had children. So, she didn't have a mother to ask for advice. So, she wanted that kind of relationship with me.

P1: Okay.

P2: Um, and I'm very much where I like to also figure things out for myself. I don't always ask for help.

P1: Yeah -- yeah.

P2: Or I ask somebody else who is an expert in that field for example. So...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...um, that's, you know -- so that's really what it was like being in that kind of struggle where she was upset that I wasn't asking her for advice. I wasn't doing what she was telling me to do. So, I've had to put up boundaries with her to say, "You know, you'll speak to me as a parent. You can't just give me unsolicited advice anymore because it makes my husband and I feel like we're being judged 24/7 by you whenever you're around us."



P1: Okay. And it's [voice cut 00:27:24] advice that you don't agree with, um, which is, yeah.

P2: Yeah.

P1: [laughs] What kinds of -- I mean, have you got any examples? What kinds of things would she want you to do?

P2: So, for example, um, she didn't understand that my, uh, that ~~Ammon~~ waking up in the middle night as baby was incredibly normal and that's, you know, he -- he's not supposed to be -- I believe he's not supposed to be sleeping through it. It's normal habit for a breastfed baby to not sleep through the night. And so she was telling me that I need to give him water, and I know that's incredibly dangerous because of water intoxication for babies. So, I completely disagreed with that kind of advice or sleep training a baby where they're just left to cry and scream it out, I disagreed with her on those points completely.

P1: Okay -- okay. Um, all right. And then that becomes a source of tension between you guys it sounds like.

P2: Yeah. So, just small things like that, that's how it started.

P1: Yeah -- yeah, okay. Um, all right. Sorry, I lost my train of thought, there was something else that I wanted to ask you, but well what was it? Um, sorry go on. Gosh, okay. Never mind. All right, and so it's -- okay, that sounds difficult and it's difficult trying to manage all the things coming to the house, it sounds like around your -- you know, your husband and...

P2: Yeah.

P1: ...um, does he -- so how does he react to ~~Ammon~~? Has he noticed that ~~Ammon~~ has been more anxious or acting up more during the lockdown?

P2: Yeah, he's seen it too. He's seen how incredibly, um, dependant he has been on me.



P1: Yeah.

P2: It got -- yeah, so, he noticed it and then he, um -- and it got to the point where I actually contacted a friend who is a educational psychologist, and asked, is it normal for me to be so attached to me where he used to be able to play before on his own? And my husband picked up on that too that, um, ~~Asa~~ is incredibly dependant -- was incredibly dependent on or dependant on us to play with him, and so my husband was also feeling exhausted from the constant play. So...

P1: Right.

P2: ...for me being there since, um, you know, he wakes up until my husband finishes work half past three, then from half past three until, you know, bed and bath time, then he's incredibly dependant on my husband. And my husband is feeling this need to also have a downtime for himself. But he doesn't get that because I have had like eight hours of -- with him.

P1: Yeah.

P2: And only an hour break and I desperately need him to step in for me whereas he also needs a break from work. So, he's noticed it in that regard where [00:30:00] it's influenced his ability to have his own downtime where we could leave him to play outside by himself and the both of us could just go do our thing.

P1: Yeah -- yeah absolutely. How does he react, your husband? Does he react similarly to you? Is he very different?

P2: He's very different. So, he -- he processes things more inwardly and he's very good at self-regulating his thoughts. Um, but so his tipping point of getting upset is much greater than mine. Um, and his also technically manifests his skin, so he suffers from eczma.

P1: Okay.



P2: So, the stress will manifest in his skin when he gets incredibly itchy, and he needs to go take a shower to calm his skin down, and he needs to go have a lie down, you know, just to also step out of it.

P1: Yeah -- yeah -- yeah, okay all right. Um, okay that's interesting how the stress like manifests physically for him.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Yeah. Um, okay and -- because I -- sorry, what I was asking -- what I was wondering about while I was asking you is if ~~_____~~ -- do you feel like he acts up more for you than your husband? If you guys end up getting in more, like power struggles or tussles, um, and it might obviously just be a factor, you know, because you're spending more time together.

P2: Yeah, so I definitely do think it's power struggles. So, that's what I've noticed, um, with ~~_____~~ for the past couple of months it's that it has been a power struggle because I want to control everything. But because he's three and he wants to be a little more autonomous, that he is also pushing for control to do his own thing, to make his own decisions. And so, I was good at giving him choices, um, but he would pick options C, D, E and F. He wouldn't pick -- he was very clever [laughs]. So, um, he would -- he would do that with us. Um, so then I would just write it back, ride it back and tell him, you will do something and then he wouldn't -- he would completely rebel.

P1: Yeah -- yeah -- yeah -- yeah. Okay, all right. That's quite tricky. Um, and -- and for you, I mean, you -- I -- I think you mentioned, did you say you are someone who likes things to be just so, um, quite -- quite...

P2: Yeah.

P1: ...controlled?



P2: Yeah, I do like to have a bit of, you know, control. You can see my house is not in control at the moment, but...

P1: Lockdown [laughs].

P2: You see there's lots of [**voice cut 00:32:36**] on the table. [laughs]

P1: Oh goodness, no I think that's how everyone's house looks like. So, [laughs] um, okay, so -- so all right. So you're someone who generally likes it to be quite, um, orderly, quite controlled, and I was thinking about you were saying you had lots of lists of things to do at the beginning of lockdown.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Uh, was that around an anxiety of like how are we going to fill the time?

P2: It was more around, um, because when we noticed that ~~Adam~~ was becoming incredibly clingy and overwhelmed himself...

P1: Okay.

P2: ...uh, he was dependant on us. My aunt who is also an educational psychologist, she said to me, um, "Maybe you need to just step up the routine a bit. So, whatever the routine you have in place now, just make it more so. Just so that he feels a little bit more secure." And it did help. So, we're at the point now where we don't need to do that anymore where we let him also dictate what he wants to do. So his imagination has come back and he wants to play his own games and he's not reliant on me to always stimulate him anymore. So, that helped in the beginning. So, it wasn't necessarily that I went running out the get with the routine, it was just more, um, because he -- he's a routine kid. So he's always had a routine where he knows if we do this, this is going to follow on from that.

P1: Yeah. And for you, I mean, did that help you as well?



P2: It did, because I kind of knew then what I was going to do with the day.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Um, because I -- um, I can -- I can be forgetful so I have all these great ideas in my head, and then because I have so much else that's going on inside my head, if I didn't write down then I have forgotten, you know, what to do.

P1: Yeah.

P2: And then I would be at a loss, because my imagination is not that great.

P1: Um, and also the extra routine, I mean, um, did it help your anxiety having a more structured routine in the day?

P2: It did, because I could see that it -- it made a difference in ~~Anger~~. So it brought my level of feeling overwhelmed down a lot.

P1: Yeah.

P2: And then I could manage him a little bit more because he had routine.

P1: Okay. Um, okay. So, that's -- sorry, you just reminded me of something else that I wanted to ask you way back at the beginning. Please excuse me jumping around a little bit.

P2: That's okay.

P1: Um, but I think we started off talking about the beginning and how difficult it was and that it would take him a long time just to sort of calm down because it took you a long time to calm down. Does that...

P2: Yeah.

P1: Okay. So, what would happen for you? Like if you've had the tussle, would the tussle between you continue? Um, how would it end?



P2: So, for me, I get very fixated on things and I struggle to come off of it.

P1: Right.

P2: So, for me, the thoughts just get progressively more irrational and then I struggle to unpack all of that very quickly to calm down off of it. So, for me, that's where my anxiety in the process to go from zero to 100 very quickly, because I'll be -- like I said, imagine a dog with a bone, like it's very difficult to let go of that. And I like to hang on to things, which is not obviously very healthy. So, I'm having to deescalate a lot and I think because then I'm not providing any source of a calm for ~~myself~~, I think he then operates at that level too, because he doesn't -- he's not getting any feedback from me on how to calm down.

P1: Yeah -- yeah -- yeah. Okay. And what has -- so what do you do now?

P2: Um, it's really just...

P1: Sorry [**crosstalk 00:36:13**] pause, I'm sorry to interrupt you.

P2: Yeah -- yeah. It's just -- it's just not tampering my thought a bit more and realising that I don't want to impact him in this way so much that I need to just pull myself together just a little bit quick more quickly than I used to before.

P1: Uh-huh. Okay, I mean, it yeah, it's, um, it sounds like -- it's a thing that we all want to do in a moment to manage it and it's so difficult because the feelings are so overwhelming.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Uh, what -- I don't know. I don't know how to articulate [voice cut 00:36:46] moment, um, and then get your thoughts back in order. Is there some technique you have? Is it just talking to yourself? Sorry, it's a very hard question.



P2: Yeah, I think I'm still trying to figure out how I do that. Um, so in my -- so in my therapy, it's also -- so I -- I'm a Christian as well, so and my therapist is a Christian too. So, she'll also give me a lot of techniques on how to pray for, you know, praying peace and -- so sometimes not in my own thinking but an interrupted thought, um, from my own [voice cut 00:37:31] that will help me to just calm down a bit. So, it's -- I don't always manage to do it on my own, um...

P1: Okay.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Okay. Do you have -- do you feel like you've got to be in a place where you can hear that? You've got to like tune into it?

P2: Yeah, so I need to take a couple of breaths and just calm down from that and realise -- okay and just think things through, "Okay, like is this -- you know, does this feels right? No, because you're overreacting." And then I think when I get to that space, then I can start to calm down off of it.

P1: I really love that question of does this feel right? Um, that's a really lovely question because just, um, what I'm thinking is, um, it -- it takes a step away from the thoughts which are sometimes, what you're saying for yourself like the problem. Sometimes the thought are the problem, and you take a step away from them and you tune into how you're feeling. And -- and that is more about feeling right or feeling wrong and then wanting to change that.

P2: Yeah. So, when I say if I -- does that feel all right, I recognise that this is -- you know, this is really overwhelming for ~~Adam~~. This is not a good situation to put him into. I don't want to be in here with him.

P1: Yeah.



P2: I think that needs to be peaceable. So it doesn't feel right for me to be here then I'm overreacting. I'm overwhelming him and I need to stay out of this now before it gets worse.

P1: Okay. I really love that. That's such a nice, um, question to ask yourself. Um, and maybe you could tell me leading on from that, a time recently when you felt like you got it really right and you were chuffed with yourself. And you were like, "Good job me. I handled that well."

P2: So -- so last night, um, at bath time, **Alex** was tired and he -- he wanted to continue to playing with the bath paints, and -- but it was really time to go because if I let go past his awake time, then he's going to crush and burn and it's going to be a total meltdown at -- at...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...bed time getting dressed.

P2: So, I was able to keep my voice very calm and I was recognising that he needed me to just, um, be calm because he can't help himself at this point because he's getting tired and he wants to play but he doesn't understand that we can't come back to this tomorrow. So, thinking along what -- how he would be thinking, helped me to be very **[00:40:00]** calm and to talk him down and then how to employ distraction techniques which I'm very -- I'm not very good at all the time.

P1: Okay.

P2: Because I can get stuck on something. It's very difficult for me to dissociate from it. So, I was able to then say, like ask him different questions about, how then you can, um, "What colour are your pyjamas?" And, you know, "And are you going to take Dory to be with you tonight?" And, you know, and just try and distract him from that. But you know, he's still would get upset with each of those questions, but the more I employ them and distract him from it, then he, you know, he would



[00:40:35] like, "Okay, I can go to bed now." Because initially he said, "We're getting out to go to sleep."

"I don't want to go to sleep. And I just want to paint."

And then I said, "Okay. You don't have to sleep but you can go in your room and you can just lie there but you have to go to your room now."

P1: Mm-hmm.

P2: "And it's no more playing." And then once we've talked all the way around that, then he didn't want to sit in his room, he said, "I do want to go to go. I am tired." So, I think just distracting and talking him around the points and getting back to it helped a lot. So, that's where I feel like I did really good last night, where I didn't let his over tiredness overwhelming emotions get the better of me because I recognised that this is -- he can't help it. He's just tired. He's three. He doesn't know how to, you know, just be a little self-controlled and recognise that he himself is tired.

P1: Yes, absolutely. Um, you know what that makes me think of something that has come up as well in interviewing moms is the -- this idea that, um, when as a mom, you know that what it is that is wrong, it is so much easier to manage than when you don't know what it is.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Um, and it sounds like, I mean, last -- your example of last night, it's like you knew he was tired. You know he just needs to go to bed. Um, and you can solve that problem.

P2: Yeah.

P1: But at times when they're cranky, you don't know what it is, that's a million times harder. I don't know if you've found that as well?



P2: Yeah. Um, I felt like that throughout my parenting journey since ~~born~~ born. Where even as a baby, when, you know, when I knew that there's nothing to be waking up for. Like why is he doing this and I would get incredibly overwhelmed and frustrated. And then only like a day or two later when I realised, oh he was teething. That's why he was like that, you know. So, sometimes it was like a delayed, ah-hah moment as to what, you know, what was going on. What was right or wrong and -- and then I would learn from that and realise, okay even if I don't know what's wrong here, you know, I still need to not react like that. I'd rather just be a little bit more calm because he doesn't know, I don't know. We don't know what's right or wrong with the situation here, so.

P1: Yeah. Yes, I mean, I guess, that is the truth at the end of the day doesn't necessarily matter the why, um, but it's the, you know, the reaction from mom needs to be the same essentially. It doesn't matter if he's teething or tired or hungry. Um, yeah, but there's something about the not being able to fix it that is so hard.

P2: Yes.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Yeah, that's something I struggle with too.

P1: Yeah, yes -- yes. And I don't know if we feel like we should be able to because we are the mom and we should know or because we're the adult and we're bigger and more advanced or -- or it's both. I don't know.

P2: Yeah. Not knowing, not being able to control it for me is a helpless place to be in. To not know what to do.

P1: Yes -- yes, absolutely. Yeah, the hopelessness and -- and powerlessness. It's not a word you've used, but it's one that's come up a lot around not having any power in the situation.

P2: Yes. Yeah, that's a very accurate word.



P1: Um, okay I'm trying to think. I'm sure there's something else I wanted to ask you, but it is, um, they are escaping me. Is there anything else you wanted to tell me about?

P2: I'm trying to think. Um...

P1: Or, maybe I could just ask you, how was pregnancy for you? Um, was it easy, difficult? Um...

P2: Um, it was difficult in the beginning because I was threatened to miscarriage with ~~Arion~~.

P1: Yes.

P2: But, um, so that was incredibly anxious for me but they after became pretty good.

P1: Okay.

P2: Um, I really enjoyed my pregnancy.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Uh, and I continued to work from home whilst I was pregnant.

P1: Okay.

P2: And then, um, but at about 34 weeks I went into premature labour.

P1: Okay.

P2: So that was incredibly stressful for me.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Um, but then once we managed to contain the situation and I was put on bed rest until he was born, then, um, I was incredibly calm throughout that process too. So, I must say being pregnant was a -- was, um, -- I love that period of my life because I was incredibly relaxed. I wasn't stressed out. I learned to just have peace.



P1: Okay.

P2: Um, and it -- it was like night and day from when he was born.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Because all that -- that anxious tendencies came back because we had a lot of struggles in the beginning. So, um, so I kind of -- I wish I could go back to just being that person because I realised that my emotions and how I'm feeling would impact him, you know, in my stomach. So I didn't want to overwhelm his as a little growing baby. So, I had that.

I'm trying to apply that now and it's very difficult because I have little [inaudible 00:45:45]

P1: Yeah, it's interesting because in some ways it's the same. I mean, what you're saying like our -- our -- our emotions influence our child in utero but there's still influence our children now but it's just so much harder because there's that constant feedback and battle.

P2: Yes.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Because I think he challenges me on that level a lot whereas when he was in my stomach, I didn't have that.

P1: Yeah -- yes -- yes. Absolutely. Okay, so it sounds like at times it was quite a scary pregnancy, um, and you said you had a previous miscarriage as well.

P2: Yes, so just before we got pregnant with ~~Anna~~, I had a -- I had a miscarriage and then -- luckily it was earlier -- earlier on I just had D&C and then two months later we fell pregnant with ~~Anna~~ again. So, I was able to come out of that dark space very quickly.

P1: Okay. Okay. Um, all right, but it can really get you in touch with the fragility of pregnancy.



P2: Yes.

P1: I don't know if everyone feels it. Um, and maybe some people feel it more than others, I guess, um yeah.

P2: Yeah, they felt they need to be incredibly protective and I -- I do feel the same now with ~~Adam~~ to be incredibly protective of him. But sometimes I feel like I need to protect him from myself sometimes and my emotions.

P1: What is he like, ~~Adam~~? Sorry I didn't ask you his personality?

P2: Um, he's incredibly gentle and he's very loving.

P1: Okay.

P2: And really playful and a joyful kid. He laughs a lot and he loves to play.

P1: Yes.

P2: Um, and I think for his -- I think he's very bright for his age in terms of emotional intelligence and recognising people's emotions like and asking the question like, "How do you feel?"

P1: Yes -- yes.

P2: And then he would often ask -- ask them to ask him in turn, "Ask me how do I feel?" And usually he has to give his answer and say, "I'm feeling happy or I'm feeling sad or --" he doesn't always get the emotion right, but he's trying very hard. So, yeah -- so, he's incredibly active and he's very playful so he's not a rough kid. He's very gentle for a boy.

P1: Yeah, was -- sorry. And you mentioned it was quite difficult, well I don't know if you said this specifically, but it was quite difficult in the beginning, in the newborn phase.



P2: Yes, because, um, he had a tongue-tie and a liptie so it made breastfeeding incredibly painful. So, I was in pain a lot of the time and we didn't know how to fix it. Um, so it was a lot of back and forth with lactation consultants and, um, eventually we had to take him to get a cut, um, and then it was, uh, after three months and it got better. But, um, it...

P1: Sorry, it did get better after three months?

P2: Yeah, it did after three months it got better, yeah. I wasn't meaning --

P1: Okay. And, oh, gosh that's so difficult, isn't it? Because it really excruciating.

P2: Yeah, and I think there's a lot of people questioning me why I put myself through pain for three months but, um, I think I was -- I'm so stubborn that I just -- I was hoping to just, um, pushing through.

P1: Yeah.

P2: And wanting to breastfeed it was my goal to do that.

P1: Okay.

P2: Um, so that's why I put myself through that pain, but I also wanted to just get it right. I didn't just want to give up.

P1: Mm-hmm. And then it sounds like you breastfed for a long time after that?

P2: Yes -- yeah.

P1: Okay -- okay. Um, all right. That's lovely. Good I'm trying to -- sorry, I'm trying to think if there's anything else that I wanted to ask you. Um, so part of the process, ~~that~~ is a follow-up interview, would that be okay with you?

P2: Yes.



P1: Um, thank you. Thank you. So, it's very much the same as this. It just gives me a chance to sort of go back and read over our interview and think about it and ask you other questions. Um, is it kind of okay?

P2: Yeah, that's perfect. I'm sure you would have more questions going too, and things that you've thought about when you would remember them after you've asked it.

P1: Always. I'm always like, "Ah, why didn't I ask you about this enormous thing that you mentioned?" And then I just like move on to the other thing. So, um, okay **[00:50:00]**. So, perfect thank you. Can I book it with you now quickly then I've got it in my diary instead of...

P2: Yeah.

P1: Um, what am I doing? Sorry. Okay, so how about -- is this time all right for you usually?

P2: Yeah, this is good. Because he goes down **[inaudible 00:50:22]** and then it gives me an hour's gap to chat.

P1: Perfect, so do you think maybe Wednesday the 10th at 12:00, would that be okay?

P2: Yeah, that would be great.

P1: Great, ah, wonderful thank you. Let me just -- Wednesday the 10th at 12:00. Okay, amazing. Thank you **[redacted]** that was really interesting. I don't know, do you have any questions for me?

P2: Um, no.

P1: Perfect, not that you had to have, I was just wondering if there's anything.[laughs] Okay. Thank you so much it's so interesting and I will see you again, um, in about two weeks.

P2: Is it Wednesday the 10th is that next week?



P1: Oh, it is next week. Sorry, hello yes it is it's next week.

P2: Do you need two weeks or a week enough?

P1: No, a week is perfect. Thank you.

P2: All right. No problem.

P1: And I'll put you in for 10th, yeah I did. Sorry, that's so strange because I've got you also in the 17th for some reason. Maybe I put it as recurring, yeah I did. I made it recurring. Sorry. Perfect. All right, thanks, and I'll see you then.

P2: Okay. Great, thanks Alexa.

P1: Okay, thanks bye.

P2: Bye.