



Amy 2

P1: [00:00:00]Do a double record, there we go. Cool, so, um, yeah, last time I spoke to you, I think we were right in the middle of lockdown. So, I've been quite curious to hear how things have been going and, um, if anything has changed. Sorry, I just realised I need to plug my computer in. Hung on.

P2: No worry.

P1: There we go. Yes, sorry. So, yeah because lockdown is a lot different how are you guys going?

P2: Um, good. Things are better. Um, I've been chatting a lot of things through with my psychologist. Um, so she's given me some tools that's helped a lot.

P1: Oh, good. Okay.

P2: Yeah, and we're still under lockdown because my husband is still working from home, and he isn't going to compromise, so, we're still very much where we were when we left off.

P1: Okay. Did you have a nanny ever? I don't remember reading about a nanny, um, in the original interview.

P2: No, I don't have a nanny. I'm a stay-at-home mom and I worked from home before.

P1: I remember that.

P2: So, I've always working at home with him.

P1: Okay. And do you have anyone that helps you with the cleaning and stuff like that or do you do it all yourself?

P2: I do it all myself.

P1: Oh, wow, okay that's a lot to do in one day. Yeah, um, must be tired at the end of the day. laughing



Amy 2

P2: Yes, I have been tired. And lately I have wanted to not just clean but organise. So, I'm doing spring cleaning early. Decluttering, organising, so I've been especially tired.

did i move away from something here?

P1: Oh, shame, okay. Okay. I wanted to check if there was anything left over from our last interview that's stuck with you or that you were sort of like running through your mind?

long pause **P2:** Um, what I've realised when I spoke to you is that, um, you know, from my talking with my therapist is that I can be quite hard on myself.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So, I think I was very hard on myself when I spoke to you during in the initial interview. So I do see myself very negatively and we had to bring back the session of how and who I was a mother. And I think I just lacked a few tools to just tweak it a bit and I think it's really helped and what's made it better for me lately. And I find that I do slip into the default of getting impatient and upset and reacting to -- reacting badly initially instead of using it as either a teaching opportunity for him or a learning opportunity or if it's really requires disciplined depending on his behaviour and it came down to my anxiety. So, if I was, uh, anxious, then I find that I defaulted back to those responses instead of pausing and, you know, responding instead of just reacting.

P1: Yeah -- yeah. Okay. Were you worried that about how I had perceived you, that I had perceived you as a bad mom or that you were particularly hard on yourself and I saw that?

long pause **P2:** I think it was more how I perceived myself as being bad.

P1: Yeah -- yeah. Perfect.

ok ok i was just cecking- perfect

P2: To a degree I do worry about how other people see me. So, I haven't really spoken about this with, um, anybody else just because I thought that they make really [inaudible 00:04:07] things about me.



Amy 2

P1: And actually, sorry I'm just looking for the notes I made because I was just rereading our interview, but I remember you were saying -- it was one incident that you had described where -- sorry, what is your son's name?

P2: ~~At the time~~

P1: Yes, I knew it was ~~at the time~~, sorry. You had -- you were doing a Zoom call, and then he wanted to play with the bubbles and you said, "We'll play with the bubbles after," and then he looked at you and poured the bubbles, [laughter] and you had said in that moment you ended the call because you didn't want anybody else to see. And I had wondered if there was -- what you were afraid of other people seeing in that moment.

P2: Um, I think I was afraid of them seeing how angry I got.

P1: Okay.

P2: And how it might be perceived as irrational and to a degree they would have been right because I did overreact to the bubbles.

P1: Sure.

P2: Um, I suppose I told my psychologist about that after, and she said that was actually a learning opportunity, not an opportunity to get mad.

P1: Right.

P2: So, she said, you know, you could have -- you know, and I also realised it. So, in that session we spoke about how I could have instead of said to him go get a cloth and now you're going to clean this up. Instead of me having to say now I have to clean up. If I use this opportunity to clean it up, it would have soften my reaction a lot more...

P1: Right.

P2: ...and he would have learned something out of instead of now mommy gets angry if I make a mistake.



P1: Right -- right.

P2: And I don't want him to think like that. Because I grew up thinking like that. So I'm realising that -- sorry, I just want to take off my jacket.

P1: Sure.

P2: Um, I don't want him to grow up thinking that he would be in trouble making mistakes.

P1: Yeah.

P2: I don't want him to ever think.

P1: Yeah.

P2: I don't ever make mistakes and look...

P1: Yes, so I mean, is that how your mom was? She would just get angry if you made a mistake?

P2: Um, I don't think she would get angry. I think she would say she had disappointments. I was highly sensitive to other people's emotions and if I couldn't read them, I would ask.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Um, but I don't think she would get mad as much as I would. I think I had a very harsh -- because I'm very negative on myself...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...I'm very harsh on myself. I would put it on myself that I made the mistake and that wasn't acceptable. I think I would punish myself to a degree...

P1: Okay.

P2: ...but, yeah, realising now that how I'm reacting I'm enacting the same thing on my son that I would do to myself and I don't think that was



Amy 2

there. So, I think in this exercise I've gotten a lot of perspective and it's helped me to -- because of the anxiety now touching on that and then seeing to how that might be affecting, you know, on me.

P1: Yeah.

P2: It has definitely made me more aware of how I mustn't react out of my anxiety but rather address it and then respond differently because it's not useful.

P1: Okay.

P2: So, I think it's changed my mothering way...

P1: Yes.

P2: ...since our last interview.

P1: Okay. I'm really happy that, um, you've gotten something from this as well. That's really nice to hear, yeah. Because I remember you saying -- sorry I have to admit. I say I remember, I literally just read our interview. I read it again this morning just to like review it. But you said, your mom is quite passive aggressive. I think that is the way you described her. Um, so did that mean like a lot of silent treatment and or like sighing slamming ~~cabinets~~ ^{cabinets}, that type of thing? How did she express her disappointment?

P2: She would -- like her demeanour would change.

P1: Okay. Right.

P2: You would see that she was angry, but she wouldn't actively display it. There were a few times she would have outbursts where she would yell at us or swear...

P1: Yeah.



Amy 2

P2: ...but it was very few far between. I would -- so I wouldn't say that she's that extreme passive aggressive. I would just say that she would be very passive, but I could sense her disappointment. I could sense, uh, that she was angry.

P1: Yes.

P2: And I didn't like being in that space.

P1: Yeah, it reminds me a little bit of like, uh, like a turning away, I guess, is the way -- the words that are coming to my mind. Like turning away from you. And it's not a big gesture but in some way it communicates something to you that you've displeased me or you've upset me now or something. Yeah.

P2: It give -- that very well, because you've put into thoughts or words for me.

P1: Okay.

P2: Um, and I think that's true that I do that sometimes to do that to ~~myself~~ and I don't think that's fair.

P1: Right. Right.

P2: Um, I think I do but as a way to rather not, um, shut or react in anger. So, it's more giving myself a pause.

P1: Right -- right.

P2: Just walking away for a bit just so that I don't react to the moment, I think maybe he might interpreted it as that.

P1: Okay. Um, because I was thinking what you said as well about yourself punishing yourself because feeling as if you had, um, you were quite harsh on yourself and it's something heartbreaking about a little girl punishing herself for having done this mistake. Um, I wondered if when your mom did that, [00:10:00] express her disappointment if it made you



Amy 2

feel ashamed, I guess. If there was shame involved, like ah, you know, I'm bad. How could I have done this?

P2: Yeah.

P1: Okay.

P2: Definitely.

P1: Okay. It's such a hard emotion, isn't it? It's such a physically painful emotion, shame it's quite awful, yeah.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Okay. Um...

P2: And I think that's made [inaudible 00:10:28] talked our last interview is I did feel quite ashamed.^{crying here}

P1: Okay. Um, okay. And what's coming up for you now? I mean, this conversation is obviously quite upsetting.^{long pause} Is it around thinking about your mom or is it around thinking about yourself or your little self?

P2: Yeah, all of it.

P1: All of it yeah.

P2: Not so much about the problem. More just me.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Reflecting on how I have been. I don't like how I have been.

P1: Yeah, okay. Yourself, you mean, yourself as a mom, I guess?

P2: Yeah, myself as mom and how I've been reacting and also you know, as a little girl, like I didn't know those things about being ~~unpretty to my~~^{im pretty sure} mom didn't know that I was beating myself up like that either. Um, yeah, there's an exercise where, you know, one of my friends encouraged me to do is take a photo from every year since you were born up until now. And



Amy 2

so it caused me to go back through albums and look and in doing that, I had a different perspective. I looked at pictures of myself and thought how disappointed this little girl would be to know of how she treats herself today.

P1: Uh, okay. How she's still -- how you as an adult still beats herself up, um, yeah. Gosh, but it's just a cycle of shame, because it feels like the little girl felt so much...



Amy 2 part 2

P2: I do have moments where I would say, um, in my -- in my playing with my son, that I would reflect and say, "Truly I am a good mom."

P1: Yeah.

P2: And that's been nice...

P1: Okay.

P2: ...to have those moments.

P1: Yes -- yes.

P2: Um, and that's the thing, in one my therapy sessions is that -- and what my therapist was trying to point out to me is that, um, she was trying to get me to have fun. So, she has given me a little bit of challenge each week to do.

P1: Yeah.

P2: And one of them was to have an hour or two of play with my son once a week. Where I would stop being the parent and I would do whatever he asked. And we would just have fun. No rules, no nothing. And she said, "Just watch and see how you are and how he would -- if he would correct his behaviour if he knows he's doing something wrong and see how it goes."

P1: Yeah.

P2: And so it was a huge challenge to not always be the mom. To not say, "Be careful don't do that. You know, you can't do that." [laughter] So, that was hard and it did bring up a lot of anxiety for me. I think it has made me a little bit more fun. And I think in those moments I've realised I



Amy 2

actually am a good mom and I'm trying to create a little bit of those spaces...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...everyday.

P1: Yes, that's so nice. Because that sounds so good for ~~her~~ and also quite healing for yourself as well. Um...

P2: Yes, definitely.

P1: Yeah, because I've also just thinking about how shame despite the -- not despite, like in addition to being such a physically painful emotion, it also takes you away, right? Like it removes you from being present in the moment. Um...

P2: Right.

P1: ...so, yeah, so I guess in that moment you are less present with ~~her~~ or less in the -- yeah, I don't know whatever it is.

P2: Yeah. I do get like that. I stare often to the distance. I'm not mentally present. Um, when my husband can see, he will be like, "What's on your mind? I can see you're not here." And I think when I got shame or anxiety on my mind, I tend to switch off and I disengage and I think that that's also could have been the reason why I have been, um, engaging in a lot of organising behaviours. So, I feel like it's outward physical manifestation of what's going on in my head. So, I'm trying to physically organise everything around me, you know, because there's so much turmoil inside my head that I can't get out. And it's in those spaces that I'm processing inside and outside.

P1: Yeah -- yeah -- yeah. Okay -- okay. Does it help, the organising?

P2: It does. When I complete the project, I do feel pretty good. But then I look around me I see [inaudible 00:02:50]. [laughter]. And it looks like I

so interesting that
this comes up
again- i thought
there was
something i was
moving away from
earleir. was it the
hint of shame that
i was picking up on?
did i turn away like
her mother?



Amy 2

never get on top of it, so then I do feel a little bit defeated after a week of doing everything...

P1: Okay. You're making me feel like I need to go home now organise my ^{cupboards} cabats. I'm like, "I should really do that." [laughter]. Okay. But I can hear that, um, I don't know, it's really been a process for you. And actually even when we spoke, you had already started that process, because I think you had already started therapy but, um, yeah, I can hear you're right in the middle of it. Um, and it's quite hard work it sounds like.

P2: Yeah, it is hard work.

P1: Yeah.

P2: It takes courage to, you know, hold the mirror up to myself and deal with this stuff and not beat myself up along the way to really stop doing that.

P1: It's quite a toll order, is it? [laughter] Yeah, um, Amy I want to ask what do you think the anxiety is about?

P2: I think situations that I feel that are out of control.

P1: Okay. Oops, sorry.

P2: So, also it's been centred around the fact that my family don't understand why we choosing to isolate. Um, why we are not, um, breaking lockdown rules and socialising with them and letting them see ~~Amy~~ or play with him.

P1: Mm-hmm.

P2: Um, like we let them see him, you know, we won't deny that if they come to our -- so we're just not going to open the gate, because we're not really allowing visitors. But they can talk to us through the gate and they can see him, but we don't allow them to physically touch him.

P1: Yeah.



Amy 2

P2: So, there's a lot of anxiety around that because there's unspoken, um, assumptions -- or assumptions are unspoken but, um, there's no conversations around it with my family. So, there's a lot of assumptions flying around.

P1: Okay.

P2: And, you know, ^{confrontations} computations that, you know, I put a hold on because I can feel it's going to become a fight.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So, I just scooch around the topic all the time. So, the anxiety is centred around the fact that my family don't understand why we're choosing to do this because of my husband's condition.

P1: Right.

P2: They think that's nothing more than just the flu, and that we're being a bit ridiculous. Um, so, a lot of the anxiety centres around having those thoughts that I can't help change the way they think about this, how they think about us. I don't like being thought of this way.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Um, that I can't change the situation that we're in.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Yeah.

P1: I wonder -- I mean, it's interesting that you said that because, um, it was actually something that you had said earlier and I meant to come back to it, but this idea that your thoughts or your behaviour is irrational, um, and is that something that bothers you a lot that other people might think you're behaving irrationally?



Amy 2

P2: Yeah, it does, um, but I think after speaking to, you know, my therapist and I spoke to a pastor who now retired and lives overseas, you know, we had a conversation about this with him. And, you know, those are two people we respect very much and they've said that not in any way is that position, um, irrational. We're actually doing the right things, you know, for us. And that's what's important and if they don't understand, you know, that's okay. And I think it's [inaudible 00:06:33] because I would love for them to understand, um, but we're coming to that realisation that not everyone is going to agree with you. That you have different opinions. Um, so you have to wrestle and come to accept that, you know, I can still have a relationship with my family even though they disagree or we disagree with each other around this topic.

P1: Yeah, it's difficult because I think when someone suggests that you're behaving irrationally it makes you feel as if your emotions are out of control or they're not valid. Um, and that's very difficult to sit with.

P2: Yeah -- yeah, it is difficult to sit with.

P1: Um, yeah I was just wondering, I was just listening to you talk about like respecting that your family has different opinions and it sounds like it's easier for you to respect that they have different opinions but much harder for them to respect that you have a different opinion.

P2: I think that maybe the way I feel...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...um, my mom has come to the point where she's stopped, um, questioning us about it or bringing it up. She's said that she doesn't understand but she respects that but she's made no effort to ask us why.

P1: Okay.

P2: To have a, you know, nice conversation about it. So, you know, I used to be upset with them for their stance, but I've come to get the



Amy 2

reasons why they might be thinking or behaving that way. And I've learned that I can't change that. So, it is what it is. It does put a bit of an estrangement on our relationship because we don't see eye to eye on stuff. And so the thing that we can talk about are very narrow compared to things they want to talk about which is very **[inaudible 00:08:20]** yeah.

P1: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I wondered are you generally someone who avoids conflict quite a bit? Um, is that like between you...

P2: Yeah.

P1: ...and your husband for example?

P2: Um, so with my husband I'm not afraid to, you know, have robust conversations with him. Um, because I know that he knows who I am and he still sees the **[inaudible 00:08:44]**...

P1: Right.

P2: ...and we can be adults about it because we understand each other. But we kind of want to avoid those kinds of conversations with my mom, um, because if we don't just agree on something it becomes a secondary or tertiary fight after that and I don't like that and I don't like confrontation with my mom just because it doesn't go very well between the -- the two of us. And I think it's because we are similar in that regard.

P1: Mm-hmm.

P2: Um, but -- and it comes to a topic that I'm passionate about, I'm not -- I'm not afraid to back down. But it doesn't mean that sometimes, um, I can be very direct or assertive or blunt with my word choice.

P1: Okay -- okay.

P2: And I think that I want to avoid that, because in -- in those kinds of instances, I'm not gentle and that too could lead to the, you know,



Amy 2

secondary or tertiary confrontation with them.

P1: Right.

P2: I think that's why. So often, now if my mom has come around, so when it was my son's birthday, she wants to drop a present for ~~Aaron~~, so I said to John, "You need to come with me to the gate." Because I know she's been feeling emotional that it's his birthday, because she was present at his birth, and, um, I was [00:10:00] wondering if she would maybe try, you know, push the boundaries and try and get a hug from ~~Aaron~~, which we wouldn't normal allow. I said, "I need you to come with me at the gate, just to keep me accountable and so that if I feel like I can't be assertive with my mom, that you would step and help me here."

P2: Yeah -- yeah.

P1: And so I've had to put up those measures just to make sure that I keep myself in check because I don't want to engage in conflict with my mom on those topics.

P1: Mm-hmm. Are ~~Aaron~~ and her close? Does he like her? Do they get along well?

P2: Yeah. She's very good with him.

P1: Okay.

P2: I think she struggled more so with lockdown because she can't be physically with him. So, she's resorted to buying him lots of presents as a way to, um, show love for him. Which I understand, um, but she struggles with the virtual -- the virtual getting together with him and...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...playing with him and try and talking with him, because he also doesn't have much attention span to engage in that way.

P1: Of course. Of course.



Amy 2

P2: So, I understand it's hard for her, but I think her quality time is the good understanding of her love language and how she would express it with him.

P1: Yeah -- yeah -- yeah -- yeah. And how about him? Does he -- how does he react to the whole gate situation? Um, because it must be hard for him to understand what's going on as well.

P2: Yeah, so we explained to him that, you know, you can't touch grandma or, you know, if someone comes to the gate to drop something, because there's a ^{bad} bug.

P1: Right.

P2: So, you can't hug, you can't kiss, um, but you know, she's bringing a present for you. And so he understands that very much. So, often what will happen is he will take, come to the gate, say hallo, get very excited. And see her and he will want to take the toy and go back home. [laughter]

P1: Right.

P2: So, instead of wanting to hung out at the gate. He just wants us to go home and play now.

P1: Yeah.

P2: But sometimes we will stand at the gate and he will talk to her and you know, it is nice for him. It is sad to see that there's a barrier between them, but it's just like I -- he doesn't understand that that physical boundary. Um, so, it lets you not get involved in their conversation. So, I rather having a gate between them so that I'm not constantly having to interrupt saying, "You can't touch. You can't touch. You can't touch."

P1: Yeah -- yeah. And how is he afterwards?

P2: Um, he's fine. He's not sad in any way.

P1: Okay.



Amy 2

P2: Um, actually he gets excited and then he wants to go play on the jungle gym as we walk past the park on the way home.

P1: Right.

P2: Um, so, he's not in any way depressed, but I must say the first time that he saw her at the gate, she came with a mask and a shield and that did a [inaudible 00:12:56] he didn't understand but he's getting used to the idea now that we wear masks and there's a bed bug. So, he gets it. So the conversations around it have been a lot easier with him.

P1: Okay. All right. Um, it is -- I was just wondering because it's such a weird way to interact for kids, isn't it? I mean, for adults it's a weird way to interact but for kids it's especially odd, yeah. Um, and has -- so I can't remember was he at playschool previous to lockdown?

P2: No, he was, um, going to Moms and Tots with me once a week.

P1: Okay, yeah.

P2: We were going to put him in -- in the playschool that was going to be run by the Moms and Tots teacher, because she's the own -- so we were going to plan to put him in that actually when he turned three, but obviously we can't do that anymore.

P1: Okay. Yeah. All right.

P2: So, it is hard for him because we do do online, um, Moms and Tots classes with her twice a week. So he does like to -- she doesn't want to say goodbye at the end of the meeting which is quite sad, because he can't actually go see her or touch her. So, he gets quite depressed after those kinds of meetings.

P1: Okay.

P2: Yeah.



Amy 2

P1: Okay. No, that makes sense. Um, and I was also thinking it's a lot on you, isn't it? Because, um, you're with him all the time, basically. You're together 24/7 just about?

P2: Yeah, we are.

P1: Um, when -- when do you get time off?

P2: Um, now, when he has a nap.

P1: Okay.

P2: And then when my husband finishes at half past three...

P1: Okay.

P2: ...because he starts work early in the morning.

P1: Okay -- okay.

P2: Um, so, when he gets out at half past three, if he sees that I've had a bit of a -- a rough day, he will just take ~~me~~ to a walk or to the playground or he will tell me to just, you know, go and do what I need to do...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...to get space.

P1: Okay. So your husband is going into work, because before he was -- oh, is he still at home? He's still working from home?

P2: Yeah, he's still working from home, so...

P1: You just said that.

P2: ...at half past three, then he's...

P1: Sorry.

P2: ...then he helps me.



Amy 2

P1: Yeah. You did just say that.

P2: But he also sometimes helps me in the middle of his work day.

P1: Right.

P2: Um, if he can see that, um, ~~Aaron~~ and I are having a rough time with each other. He will step in and say, "~~Aaron~~ come stay upstairs for five minutes. Come sit with daddy." And then he will give me just five minutes to just breathe and then I go back up and I fetch him.

P1: Okay -- okay. All right. It sounds, um -- some of it sounds intense, and some of it sounds like just a day with a three-year-old, I guess. [laughter]

P2: Yes.

P1: Yeah, um, I mean, when we spoke you had a whole list of activities, is that still happening or has that sort of fallen away?

P2: It's kind of fallen away, because he's very much wanting to do his own thing now.

P1: Okay.

P2: Um, so, like today, um, you know, I will just randomly suggest things to do and I let him choose what he would like to do. So, sometimes he will say, "Mommy I want to paint," or, "Mommy, you know, I want to go jump in muddy puddles outside," and we go make mud and then he jumps.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Or, like today he just wanted to dig holes with a stick, and then then he helped me cut some crops from the garden.

P1: Okay.



Amy 2

P2: And then he also wanted to -- I suggested baking, and he said, "Yeah, let's go bake." So, not always a yes, but sometimes, you know, I make suggestions. You know having a routine, you know, I kind of let him decide what he would like to do.

P1: Okay. And has that been easier? Oh...

P2: Yeah.

P1: Okay.

P2: Yeah, it's been easier. It's taken a load off my shoulders. I don't have to sit at night prep for what we're doing the next day.

P1: Yes.

P2: You know, there are days when I feel like I maybe should have had something planned because he's a bit bored and a bit naughty, but, um, you know, I do feel like there's less pressure on me and I think that's helped a lot in being more relaxed with him.

P1: Yeah. I mean, do you think there was a fear -- you had a fear before of boredom that he would be bored or you would be bored?

P2: Um, no. I think I just want to help manage the -- the situation because he would -- he wouldn't know what to do and then he, um -- because he struggled from the beginning with lockdown.

P1: Yeah -- yeah.

P2: And I could see he needed structure with his day.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Um, so, I thought having a program to do each day helped a lot and something to look forward to. Um, that helped him -- and then once he got over the fact that he's, you know, he's adjusted to lockdown and there's the day-to-day, then he started to not want to do the routines that



Amy 2

we had. He wouldn't ask anymore, "What's next mommy?" He would just say, "Let's build puzzles," or...

P1: Yeah.

P2: "Let's go play outside. I want to ride my bike."

P1: Yes -- yes.

P2: So, I then noticed that it had shifted and then I stopped.

P1: Okay. Because I remember I was reading over -- um, it sounds like in the beginning, the routine, um, all the activities sometimes they were useful but sometimes they could create quite a bit of conflict for you guys. Hello.

P2: So, I think you froze.

P1: Oh, sorry. There you go. You're back. Sorry.

P2: Yeah, I'm back.

P1: Um, I was just saying I remember in the first interview, I think it sounded a bit like in the beginning, the routine on some ways it was useful, but in other ways it created a bit of conflict for you guys. Um, maybe because it made you more anxious about getting through the day, or he wasn't doing -- or he wanted to do something, you know, something that wasn't on the list or whatever.

P2: Yeah, so if he wanted to deviate from, um, what we were doing or he didn't do it like properly [laughter] that created anxiety for me.

P1: Yeah.

P2: But I think, you know, after realising that for a toddler it's not the end result that he wants to get to. It's the process that he enjoys and coming to the realisation, you know, it's helped me -- it was certain activities. So, instead of saying, no we have to make the elephant without foot prints or



Amy 2

whatever just let him do what he wants and...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...so what that we didn't do the activity for today? It's okay.

P1: Yes. Or the activity did not go as planned and, yeah. Now that's just a big mess, yeah.

P2: And it's okay.

P1: Yeah, [laughter] um, it's interesting because it sounds a bit like lockdown in some way has helped you -- I don't want to say help you to relax, because I don't think that that's true. But it's almost like **[00:20:00]** eventually the anxiety runs out and you can just be more with him. Um...

P2: Yeah, so I think it's definitely helped, um, bring issues to the fore and helped me deal with them and then to get to a better space as a mother and then in my relationship with my son.

P1: Yeah -- yeah. Do you think he has noticed a difference in you?

P2: Yeah, I think he has.

P1: Okay.

P2: I think he's -- my husband is a lot more relaxed.

P1: Okay.

P2: And I'm able to notice that if I'm not paying attention, um, I can see it when he starts to act out, but that's more like jumping on me or, you know, trying to push whatever is on my hand, off my hand. So, I'm like a lot more aware, so I think he's a lot more aware of where I am at, and how our relationship has changed. So, I feel like when I default back to how I was before when the anxiety kicks in, I can see that he gets it because then he starts to act out more.

P1: Okay. So, yeah, he's noticing that you are more present basically?



Amy 2

P2: Mm-hmm.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Um, it's interesting because it makes me wonder what did he see before? Um, what is he seeing in you before? I know we spoke a little bit about it in the first interview, um, sorry I'm looking back for my interview notes.

P2: Yeah. To be honest I'm not sure, um, what he -- what he saw when I was not present. Yeah, I -- sorry, were you -- you froze, can you hear me?

P1: Oh, no I can hear you. I can hear you sorry, yeah.

P2: Okay. Yeah, so I'm not entirely sure what he would have seen before when I wasn't present.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Um, you know, I'm not entirely be able to reflect on his position. I can only say what I've seen in his behaviour in terms of how he would act out or have more tantrums and what [inaudible 00:22:14] maybe he was just feeling overwhelmed but I can't say for sure what he would see when he saw me being like that.

P1: Yeah -- yeah.

P2: I would guess and say that he was just -- he could see that I was disengaged that I wasn't present and, um...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...yeah and I must say when I realised the certain behaviours that he's been doing, I've been actually been to get my attention, um, and then relaxing around those times then I've noticed a change in him.

P1: Right.



Amy 2

P2: So, for example, at their bath time whenever I would take him out the bath, um, he would always want to hug me when he's soaking wet, you know, and wants to play instead of get dry and my goal is just to get him dry because of the cold.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Um, and so after speaking to my therapist about it, she said to me, I sense that he knows that those kinds of things that he was doing hurts you, so he's doing it anyway to get a reaction out of you because he wants to play with you.

P1: Right.

P2: Um, so, she said, I know bath time is a process for you where you just want to get him bathed and in bed.

P1: Yeah.

P2: But maybe just take a few extra minutes to actually engage with him and play, and you might find that he will be different. And my husband has said this before, that, you know, ~~he's~~ wanting to hug me while he's wet and trying to kiss me when I'm trying to clean him, and you know, [inaudible 00:23:31] wearing the clothes, he's doing it on purpose to get a reaction out of me. Like he knows the [vacancy 00:23:38] he's pushing. And so when I have -- instead of just getting him down in the bathroom, um, actually bringing him in his room and dry him and let him run around. Let him hug and kiss me, um, and then make a game of putting cream on and stuff. I've noticed that he's stopped doing those things now.

P1: Okay.

P2: And he's more responsive. So, they were right, that he was trying to get a reaction out of me.

P1: Yeah.



Amy 2

P2: So, yeah, when I disengaged from just letting it be, you know, a one, two, three process and then having fun around it...

P1: Yes.

P2: ...um, I've just -- he's been a lot more relaxed and he can see that I'm playing with him, and he's had a better demeanour with me afterwards within that sense.

P1: Okay -- okay. It's so interesting. And then what kind -- what kind of reaction do you think he was wanting, um, or why a reaction out of you? I don't know if you thought that far?

P2: I think because I was in the process in my head just saying, "Okay, we need to get out, get dry, put cream, pyjamas on and get you to bed," because you know, otherwise he's going to get overtired and it's going to become more fights. So, for me I was just trying to knock off things with off the list.

P1: Right.

P2: So, um, and like we mentioned before at the beginning where I would not be present.

P1: Yes.

P2: So, I think I was switched off, and I think he was trying to get my attention.

P1: Ah, okay -- okay. So...

P2: Right hugging me when he's wet and kissing me when I'm putting cream on him.

P1: Yes, and I wonder because I guess, even when you do get irritated in those moments, that is still you being present, right? Like it's being in the moment or like, um, even if it's being irritated being in the moment.



Amy 2

P2: Yeah.

P1: Does that make sense?

P2: He's looking for any kind of reaction whether positive or negative.

P1: Yeah.

P2: So even though he was getting negative reactions out of me but still...

P1: Getting a reaction.

P2: ...getting my attention in some way. Yeah.

P1: Okay. So, have you noticed a change in him in general?

P2: Yeah, he's much more relaxed, and very spontaneous, um, I've -- yeah, I've seen -- I've noticed like the way he's learning and I've -- my eyes have been opened and to, you know, how he wants to play and how he wants to learn instead of letting my own thought process, my own ways drive that.

P1: Yeah -- yeah.

P2: Um, yeah, so I would say react, um, being more spontaneous and relaxed and have him being more joyful has definitely been the better part. Like there's fewer meltdowns and now there are more meltdowns around the fact that he can't have chocolate when he just wakes up from his nap, now instead of it being an over-control issue.

P1: Yes -- yes. Okay, it feels to you more like regular three-year-old meltdowns.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Okay -- okay. That sounds really good. It sounds like you've put in a lot of hard work Amy and it's made a big difference, it sounds like. Yeah.



Amy 2

P2: Yes, but I think it's just shifting my behaviour and fixing my thought processes that have really made the big difference.

P1: Yeah.

P2: Yeah.

P1: I was thinking a lot about, um, and it's something I even made a note of in the first interview, something about the expectations that we have of children of three year olds and being able to get in the mind of a three-year-old and meet him where he's at, um, versus our like putting our own expectation of what we want them to do. Um, do you think that's shifted for you a little bit?

P2: Yes, I think because I've been able to figure out what's, um, making me anxious and keeping me from being present, and I've been able to, um, to shift to a more empathetic view, to understand ~~that~~

P1: Okay.

P2: And also get into his mind. So, understanding, okay it's not about the end result it's about the process. It's about having fun. He, you know, engages more of an experiential learner. He's not going to sit down and do crafts. That's not the kind of kid he is.

P1: Okay -- okay.

P2: Um, so, I think it's like you say, to help me get into his mind, and understand that this is like who he is. This is regular behaviour. This is not abnormal. You know, and I think having therapy has helped paint that for me, because it wasn't so obvious to me. And I needed someone to point this out to say this is what it really all is.

P1: Right. Yes -- yes.

P2: Which it's hard for me to be because I'm so much in my own head.



Amy 2

P1: Yes, [laughter] did that relax you, when someone said, like, "This is normal for three-year-old," were you like, "Ah thank goodness?"

P2: Yeah.

P1: Okay.

P2: It did.

P1: Okay. What were you worried it was abnormal or not abnormal but like, I don't know, not in the norm or too much or something was wrong?

P2: Um, I think I was -- I think I was worried about, um, the fact that I couldn't handle the situation or control the situation and then nothing I was doing was working. So I was trying to almost like get rid of the behaviour or talk to the behaviour.

P1: Got you. Got you. Got you.

P2: Meanwhile it was that actually how I was and how I was perceiving it, and how I was reacting was bringing out that in him and I think then my demeanour change his -- everything about him changed and it helped relax me because I realised that it was how I was being that was causing him to react too. So, it was like were feeding off of each other.

P1: Yes. I remember you were saying that in the first interview. Okay, and that's such a lovely reframe because it's the idea that you -- it's almost like someone saying to you, "You can't change it. This is how he is. This is a three-year-old." It then allows you to let go of something almost. Something in yourself and just accept that this is what they do somehow?

P2: Yeah. Yeah. It definitely has helped. And I think even before I used to get worried about being in public and [00:30:00] those things happening.

P1: Yes.



Amy 2

P2: Um, because of how people will perceive me. But, you know, at the same time it's been easier to handle all this in lockdown because I don't have the perceptions of how other people are perceiving him or me. And I could just solely just focus on our relationships and fix those things and I think it might be better that we know once we are, you know, everything has lifted, the lockdown and we come out, that, um, I would probably be less worried about what people are thinking and more focused on him at the moment.

P1: On him, yeah.

P2: Instead what people are thinking is happening and judging, you know.

P1: Yeah, um, I really hear how much you -- you beat yourself up Amy. I can hear it, like I think there's a fear that other people will think you're doing a bad job or that you think you're doing a bad job. Um, and then it's like, yeah I think it underlies a lot of things for you.

P2: Yeah, it definitely it does. And I think, you know, what I've worked through in therapy that's come up is that I've always had a perception that I'm not a good mom based on how other moms are with their kids. When we get together with them in the week, so they used to run a mom group on a Friday in our church and I would often seeing them be very gentle with their kids and I thought I was very brush and harsh with ~~Amy~~.

P1: Right.

P2: And probably overreacting and I've realised that, um, what has been leading me to think that way is the fact that I -- I've lacked that gentleness in my approach.

P1: Right.

P2: Um, and because I'm very assertive but sometimes my words come out not packaged gently, I could say that way.



Amy 2

P1: Got you. Yes -- yes -- yes.

P2: Um, and I think that is what has led me to feel like a disconnect between me and other moms and why I judge myself so harshly because I've lacked the gentleness.

P1: Okay.

P2: And so what my therapist told me to do is to, um, find a way to package the assertiveness which is a good thing in a gentle way so that I'm not perceived as harsh in an uncomfortable situation. So I think that something I'm working on that's when I felt has made me feel different to the other moms and like a bad mom sometimes.

P1: Okay. I mean, I had wondered, um, while you were speaking earlier Amy if you are -- um, are you afraid of getting angry? Are you afraid that you will lose it or be too angry and will be too much?

P2: Yeah. I am afraid -- I am afraid of my own anger sometimes and what I -- what I could do with it.

P1: Yeah -- yeah.

P2: And, um, there've been times when I've felt like I'm not good enough.

P1: Yeah -- yeah.

P2: But I think that I am too scared that I would hurt my kid.

P1: Yes.

P2: I'm afraid of my own anger in that regard.

P1: Okay.

P2: I so often thought about it and that maybe ~~As a~~ deserves a better mom.

P1: Okay. These are just such...



Amy 2

P2: And that I should probably just leave.

P1: Right. These are such painful thoughts that you've -- that you've had.

P2: Yeah.

P1: Okay. Was there anybody in your life whose anger was very scary?

P2: Um, I think everybody's anger.

P1: Okay.

P2: So like my mom's whenever it did surface or my dad. My dad was hard, um, he could be quite angry and aggressive.

P1: Okay.

P2: Um...

P1: Aggressive like...

P2: And then I had a few instances in my life when, you know, even my dance instructors would, um, get extremely angry with me at a public setting and embarrass me in front of a whole room of people.

P1: Yes.

P2: So, um, yeah, so I'm afraid of -- I am afraid of anger. I'm afraid of hurting myself and then others.

P1: Yeah -- yeah. Because I can hear -- while you're talking I can hear a real fear of getting angry, and, um, and avoiding that but then I guess, it also builds up inside and it comes out in ways that you don't really want it to, um, and you don't like in yourself, I guess. So, it's a constant battle it sounds like. Um, yeah.

P2: Yeah.

P1: And it's so hard with little kids because they just make you furious. I mean, [laughter]



Amy 2

P2: Yeah. So, you're right. It does build up for me and it does explode in ways I don't like.

P1: Mm-hmm.

P2: That makes me scared of that.

P1: Yeah.

P2: And scared of myself sometimes.

P1: Yes, yeah -- yeah. Sorry, you said your dad was aggressive, and I wanted to ask. Was he like physically aggressive or verbally did he shout and scream and that was quite scary?

P2: Yeah, um, he wasn't physically, um, aggressive. You know, he would threaten to hit us with a belt which my mom did not approve of, because my parents were separated. So they divorced when I was seven.

P1: Okay.

P2: And so whenever we would spend holidays, my dad, you know, he would threaten to hit us with a belt and then when we go back and tell our mom, she would say that, you know that's not right. Um, and so, you know, I was scared of him in that regard, and he would -- the way he would shout and get cross with us, it made me very scared.

P1: Okay -- okay. Um, you know what it makes me think of, um, I mean, I guess, we learn how to process anger from -- from watching our parents do it. Um, and I guess, I'm so aware that you held two different extremes. You know, you had your dad on one hand who would get loud and scary. Um, and then on the other hand, you had your mom who would sort of like shut it down and get passive aggressive and it's so hard for you to know where to pitch it. It feels kind of like you kind of swing in between.

P2: Between the two, yeah. It's actually a very good summary of it. I didn't realise that that's actually how I've been around anger. I didn't



Amy 2

realise it's how I've learned it from my family.

P1: Okay -- okay. Does that make sense for you?

P2: Yeah, it does.

P1: Okay, well -- okay. That's good that it makes sense. Yeah, and I mean, it's so hard to find the middle ground, isn't it? Between -- between those two. Um, yeah.

P2: Yeah. Like what's a healthy expression of anger?

P1: Exactly.

P2: I think I'm still learning to work that out.

P1: Yeah. It's difficult. It's difficult because it's quite a scary emotion I guess.

P2: Yeah, it is very scary for me. I think, um, you know when it comes to things I'm passionate about, so for example if it's with regards to ~~him~~, if it's regarding his safety...

P1: Yeah.

P2: ...and also other people around him, I can be very passionate about it and it can make me angry and assertive angry but in a good way. So, for me that's sometimes even though it may not come across as packaged gently, um, I do feel in those regards it's the healthy expression of anger and a healthy working of anger in order to protect him. But in other instances, I'm not so sure, you know if I'm allowed to get angry. And I think that's the [inaudible 00:37:38].

P1: Right -- right, that's such an interesting phrasing. Like am I allowed to get angry and that takes me back to when we were talking earlier about other people saying -- well not saying like treating you as if your feelings are irrational. Um, because then you start to question yourself I guess, and say, "Am I allowed to be angry?" "Am I overreacting?" Um, instead of



Amy 2

validating your own feelings and saying it's okay that I'm angry or...

P2: Yeah. It's a pretty good point, yeah.

P1: okay. I'm trying to think if there's anything else. Was there anything else you wanted to ask me, Amy?

P2: No, I just wanted to know if you had any other questions that came up...

P1: Let me check.

P2: ...in our last interview?

P1: Let me check because I'm sure there are that I sort of, um, forgotten about. Um, a lot of it we've covered. Sorry, I just want to see where I highlighted and um -- so we spoke about your mom. Yeah, a lot of it I had a lot of questions about your mom and the way she is with you but we've spoken a lot about her. Um, yeah, I think that that's it. I think that's it. Thanks Amy. I mean, feel like we've covered all of the -- it was so interesting and, um, I just really want to say thank you for being so honest and being so vulnerable. It's just -- it's really -- this sounds awful. I want to say it is useful which sounds terrible, but it was really wonderful to talk to you [laughter] and to hear all of this from you. It's just, yeah, so I'm really honoured that you would share that with me. So thank you so much. And good luck with the therapy, it sounds like it's a good therapy and that it's going well for you. Sure.

P2: Yeah, it's been really helpful.

P1: Good.

P2: Thank you for, you know, creating this space and not being judgmental and so I appreciate that.

P1: No, it sounds like...

P2: And I'm glad that I could help you with your research.



Amy 2

P1: Yes. Thank you. It sounds like you're doing a really good job and it's amazing to hear the changes you've made [00:40:00] so yeah. Good luck. Um, if you need anything else...

P2: Thanks Alexa.

P1: Sure, please get in touch if you need anything else, and um, otherwise, yeah look after yourself.

P2: thank you. And you don't want to have a follow-up interview.

P1: I think two -- I think two is enough. I was like toying with the idea that maybe I should follow-up with moms in like five years' time and see where they're at, but I'll let you know if you're still keen in like many years. [laughter]

P2: Okay.

P1: Yeah.

P2: All right. Well, I'm -- I'm available if you have any other questions that come up.

P1: Thank you.

P2: If you want to do a third one.

P1: Thank you so much. That's really helpful. Thank you so much. Cool. Okay. Look after yourself. All the best.

P2: It's a pleasure. Good luck with the report writing.

P1: Thank you. Thank you, yeah. [laughter] Okay. Bye.

P2: Okay.

P1: Thanks bye bye.

P2: Bye Alexa. Can you hear me?

P1: Yes -- yes. Sorry, we're cutting out, bye.



Amy 2