

CONVERSATIONS

Letter of the week

Bravo Nathan Davies, your album reviews are excellent, your taste in music sublime. Not one dud album among your selections.

I've been a Patti Smith fan for years and I hope you get around to reviewing my favourite band The Cure.

Any or all of the following albums: *Seventeen Seconds*, *Faith*, *Disintegration*, *Wish* and *Bloodflowers*. And then the rest of their catalogue except *4.13 Dream...* it's not their finest hour.

P.S. OK, that's overkill, maybe just *Disintegration*. Bravo again!

Eddy Sicolo, Walkerville

Stop the violence

Well said Susan Metaxas (Letter of the Week, *SAWeekend*, May 9-10). Unfortunately in these times of lockdown and isolation domestic violence is becoming more prevalent.

The women (because it is nearly always women and children) have been too afraid or prevented from calling for help. COVID-19 environment plays into the hands of the perpetrators. They have a captive prey.

We as a society need to stop turning a blind eye to this practice and support the victims of domestic violence.

Gaylene Haskett, Moana

Good enough to read twice

Congratulations, last Saturday's *SAWeekend* was a tremendous read. One of the best.

Every article was of great interest. No flowery language and highfaluting phrases. Even the newsprint is better. Now light does not reflect into one's glasses.

I would like a bit of Jim Whalley's IQ and Susie O'Brien's wit plus the gumption to take on Google. And as for Vera Lynn – what a reminder. I read the magazine twice!

Peter Faull, Port Elliot

Go, Janice, go

Thanks for more great articles in last week's *SAWeekend*. The story on Dr Janice Duffy (The Woman Who Sued Google), blew my mind. What courage and commitment taking on the world's biggest search engine in the pursuit of what's right, and fair, and still the fight continues.

Janice has risked everything. The toll on her health must be enormous, along with the chance of financial ruin. Go get them, girl.

J.M. Grant, Hove

Attention deprived

In her priceless portrayal of the privileged yet isolated celebrities seeking to calm their perceived followers and fans with words of comfort and encouragement, Susie O'Brien certainly tells us how it really is (Celeb Mumbo Jumbo Causing Iso-deflation, *SAWeekend*, May 9-10).

Her exemplified individuals are obviously feeling pathetically deprived of the stage, catwalk, cameras, spotlights and attention they so desperately depend on when otherwise on show.

Neil Longbottom, Minlaton

KEEP IN TOUCH

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FIRST PERSON

Dr Sarah Hughes

Sarah Hughes was unhappy with some of the counselling she was given as an anxious child. She tells Roy Eccleston it drove her to be a psychologist and author determined to make a difference



Country roots

I live in Sydney now, but grew up in Dubbo. Before he retired, my Dad was a teacher, and my parents – both from Sydney originally – moved to Dubbo for my Dad's first teaching job. They stayed for 35-plus years and it's where I grew up and went to school. I moved to Sydney for university and have been here since.

Anxious moments

I was pretty lucky actually and knew from a really young age – probably around 13 – that I wanted to be a psychologist. I was a really anxious kid and saw a couple of school counsellors and psychologists growing up. Some were great, but some were terrible. I decided early on that I wanted to be one of the good ones, because the people I saw made such a big difference and helped me so much.

Early intervention

I work with kids, teens and adults, and really enjoy working across all age groups, but I definitely enjoy working with kids. With kids, you know that the work you're doing has the potential to completely alter a child's life trajectory. You have the opportunity to help a child avoid anxiety in adulthood for example, or develop the skills they need to avoid lifelong issues with mood or eating-related issues.

A mum's perspective

I have one son, Harrison, who's two, and being his parent in the early days was definitely a baptism by fire. But I've always worked with kids and parents, and I don't think you necessarily need to be a parent yourself to give good parenting advice. I've definitely found that I've tweaked my advice on certain things since becoming a parent myself though. Earlier in my career you probably would have heard me say things like, 'you have to stick to this plan 100 per cent, no exceptions, if you want to see any results'. It's not that that's incorrect, it's just that my

focus now is on what's realistic, and 100 per cent consistency isn't.

Nowadays my advice usually sounds a bit more like 'the more consistent you can be, the faster you'll see results, but there's days where you won't be able to stick to this and that's OK. Dust yourself off and start again'. Giving parents unrealistic parenting goals only sets them up for failure, and that's not helpful for anyone. What parents need is help and support that's practical and realistic.

Just tell me the facts

There are a lot of really great parenting books around, but, like most parents, I'm too busy to read them. I like to be able to pick up a book, have it tell me exactly what I need to do to fix whatever problem I'm having, without having to wade through lots of interesting, but not necessarily practical or helpful, information first. And that's what I've tried to achieve.

And keep it practical

It's full of really practical advice, and it also goes a step further than most books in that it doesn't just describe a strategy, it tells you how to implement them. What to do versus what not to do, what words to use when you're explaining different concepts to your kids, and it offers troubleshooting advice around what to do when strategies don't seem to be working as well. It covers the six topics I talk about most with parents – the topics all parents have trouble with.

2020's extra challenges

Change affects everyone and kids are no exception to that. As adults, we've struggled to process the events of the year to date, and kids are having a hard time with that, too. Their whole worlds have been turned upside down, and while it's easy to be dismissive of the stressors kids are facing right now when we look at them through adult eyes – it

might be hard for example to take the stress of not being able to play with friends seriously when you're facing job uncertainty and mortgage stress – it's all relative, and the stress kids are feeling is just as real and valid as the stress we feel as adults.

How parents can help

One of the best things we can do for kids right now is protect them from adult issues. That's easier some days than others. One of the best things parents can do to take care of their kids is to take care of themselves. That might mean tag-team parenting a little in the short-term, not just to allow for windows of productive work time, but also much-needed time out. Head out for a walk alone while your partner stays home with the kids, then repeat in reverse later in the day, or multiple times a day if you need to. But kids are incredibly resilient and they'll adapt.

The best advice right now

Help yourself first. Re-charge your batteries anyway you can, and make good enough parenting your goal. Try to keep what you can the same where you can – routines around bedtime for example – but also know that normal is out the window at the moment, so if you can't stick to routines as diligently as you usually would, that's OK. If you need to rely on screens more than usual right now, that's OK as well. We're in the middle of a pandemic. Cut yourself some slack. A few extra hours of screens than normal won't have dire consequences. You can bring things back to normal once normal returns, but, in the meantime, do what works. And by what works, I mean whatever helps you and your family to feel the least stressed.



Parenting Made Simple by Dr Sarah Hughes (Exisle, \$29.99), exislepublishing.com