

Transcript – Dilys Daw

03'00 : Why does Dilys Daws stand by the baby weighing scales in the James Wigg baby clinic in Kentish Town, North London?

My first paper was in fact [Standing Next to the Weighing Scales 1985](#) Standing by weighing scales is a useful place to be – I am visible to the doctors, health visitors and noticing me helps them to notice which parents might need help with the emotions of being a new parent.

I don't see patients on the spot but I'm there for referrals to see them later. Careful observation of parents means you can see a lot of the relationship between parents and infants in things like dressing and undressing, how they put them on weighing scales and I can point it out to the Health visitors.

04'39 : Being an outsider in organisations

It is difficult– I told Sebastian Kraemer that you need to have a thick skin to come into organisations and do quite difficult work on the inside.

05'30 : The importance of child therapists being bold in our clinical work.

I have deliberately encouraged other child professionals to be braver in their work. I have particularly helped other professionals not to immediately react to the problems that parents bring but to wait and ask them to tell them more about it. This provides a thinking space.

06'35 : How has Dilys helped families?

They have come with problems about excessive crying, feeding, sleeping and bonding. It's parents who haven't been able to use the ordinary good advice from clinic staff, who refer them on to Dilys.

07'40 : Why did Dilys Daws work at a baby clinic?

It was something very personal – I was experiencing difficulties in my first marriage and with feeding my second baby and getting help for that inspired me to work in a baby clinic. Parents often don't need much help – just a bit of understanding can help them sort out the problems.

09'20 : Dilys's role models.

I had a particularly good mother and tried to be as good as her. My GP father's work was exciting, and he also did a psychiatric training with a lot of psychoanalysis which meant Freud was on the dining table growing up and influenced me. Previous experience at the Institute of Community Studies in Bethnal Green was useful. This is where you find star people such as influential sociologists like Peter Townsend, Peter Maris, Peter Wilmott run by Michael Young.

This was good training and helped me to think of the context [of babies being a part of a family and a family being a part of wider society].

13'05 – 13'48 : Why did Dilys Daws decide to break the taboo of child psychotherapists speaking to the media about child mental health?

The media don't know what you don't tell them, and we had a lot of knowledge we were circulating in our profession and weren't telling people outside – particularly politicians and civil servants. They were delighted to hear about it.

13'55 – 14'53 : The importance of acknowledging the emotional turmoil that having a new baby can provoke in parents.

Negative emotions are just as important as positive ones and just as universal. You miss out the meaning of relationships if you don't acknowledge the conflicts. Things get repressed and a dimension of relationships doesn't happen.

15'00 – 15'40 : Importance of psychoanalysis to Dilys's thinking.

The unconscious and importance of early experience and relationships are for the rest of one's life

15'40 – 16'57 : Relevance of psychoanalytic ideas for parents to know about – such as Too Good Mothering ([See Juliet Hopkins discuss this idea on MINDinMIND here](#)) and Good Enough Mother (Winnicott)

17'00 – 17'43 : The discoveries parents can make by observing their babies Babies are trying to communicate – it's preverbal but you can see it if you look.

17'50 : Value of not knowing and bearing with difficulty.

18'19 – 20'09 : Importance of including fathers in Parent Infant work and creating a 'triangulation'.

Where there are two parents, the creativeness of having two different points of view of the baby helps the baby as long as they aren't hostile. It is important for babies and parents to have different views. Daniel Stern's work shows that a baby realises around 12 months of age that there are other minds. Parents need to respect that babies have a different mind and views on things.

Single parents need to have different people around for the baby as well as for themselves.

20'10 : Challenges new fathers have when they have a baby.

Sometimes fathers cope by working longer hours or going out to do something else. They go to a job where they might be more respected.

21'13 – 24'23 : Ghosts in the nursery: connections between baby's problems and parents' early trauma.

Dilys discusses this in her paper, ['The perils of intimacy: Closeness and distance in feeding and weaning' \(1997\)](#).

Two kinds of feeding difficulties – feeding too much and too little are often connected with early difficulties of the parents. A child fed too little sometimes has a parent who has been neglected and wasn't fed enough and doesn't have the resources for their baby. They need more support to be looked after and nourished by a professional which they can then pass on to their baby. Feeding too much – those parents have often suffered a separation or loss themselves and they feel they are neglecting their baby if they stop or say no. Helping them make the connection themselves often changes the behaviour without them having to decide to do so.

As described by Selma Fraiberg's 'Ghosts in the nursery' – it can really impair relationships if parents aren't helped. Just telling the story is sometimes all that's needed. It's surprising how little help is necessary often.

How do you approach parent's early traumas?

By asking 'how was it for you?'. Sometimes even in a first session they can trust you enough to tell you. It helps them to remember consciously to tell the story to themselves sometimes for the first time.

24'25 – 26'20 : Controversies and taboos of breastfeeding.

It's a very sensual activity and some people feel afraid of it because of that. Sometimes not wanting to let the baby latch on because of difficulties managing closeness of the baby. John Bowlby first spoke about the importance of baby being close when feeding, which leads to love.

26'20 : Earliest intervention to help with difficulties such as feeding.

Dilys set up the Association for Infant Mental Health which draws in the professions helping babies at earliest stages [such as early feeding].

27'10 : Importance of connecting with the wider professional network, spreading ideas to help them extend their work.

28'00 : Dilys involved in getting funding for child psychotherapist training from NHS in the 1980s.

I managed to help the NHS to understand that Child Psychotherapists needed funding like doctors.

29'00 : Under-funding of child mental health services and children not being offered treatment when they should be, at an earlier stage which is more effective.

30'00 – 30'42 : After 60 years of clinical work what would Dilys most like to pass on to others working with children?

Always think of children within the family context. Never see a child for psychotherapy without someone seeing the family as well. You don't get very far helping a child to change without supporting the parents.