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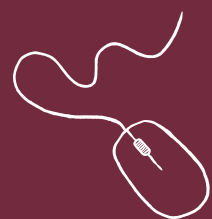
TALENT13

Heart & Soul Doctors

The Talent You're Losing: Why Parenthood is
your Blind Spot (and Opportunity)



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www.heartandsouldoctors.com



Introducing

The Heart & Soul Doctors

Dr Tara Pennington & Dr Claire Gittoes

(BSc. Hons, D.Clin.Psychol, CPsychol)



Our Expertise



Chartered & Consultant Clinical Psychologists.

(BSc. Hons, D.Clin.Psychol, CPsychol)



Trained to Doctorate level.



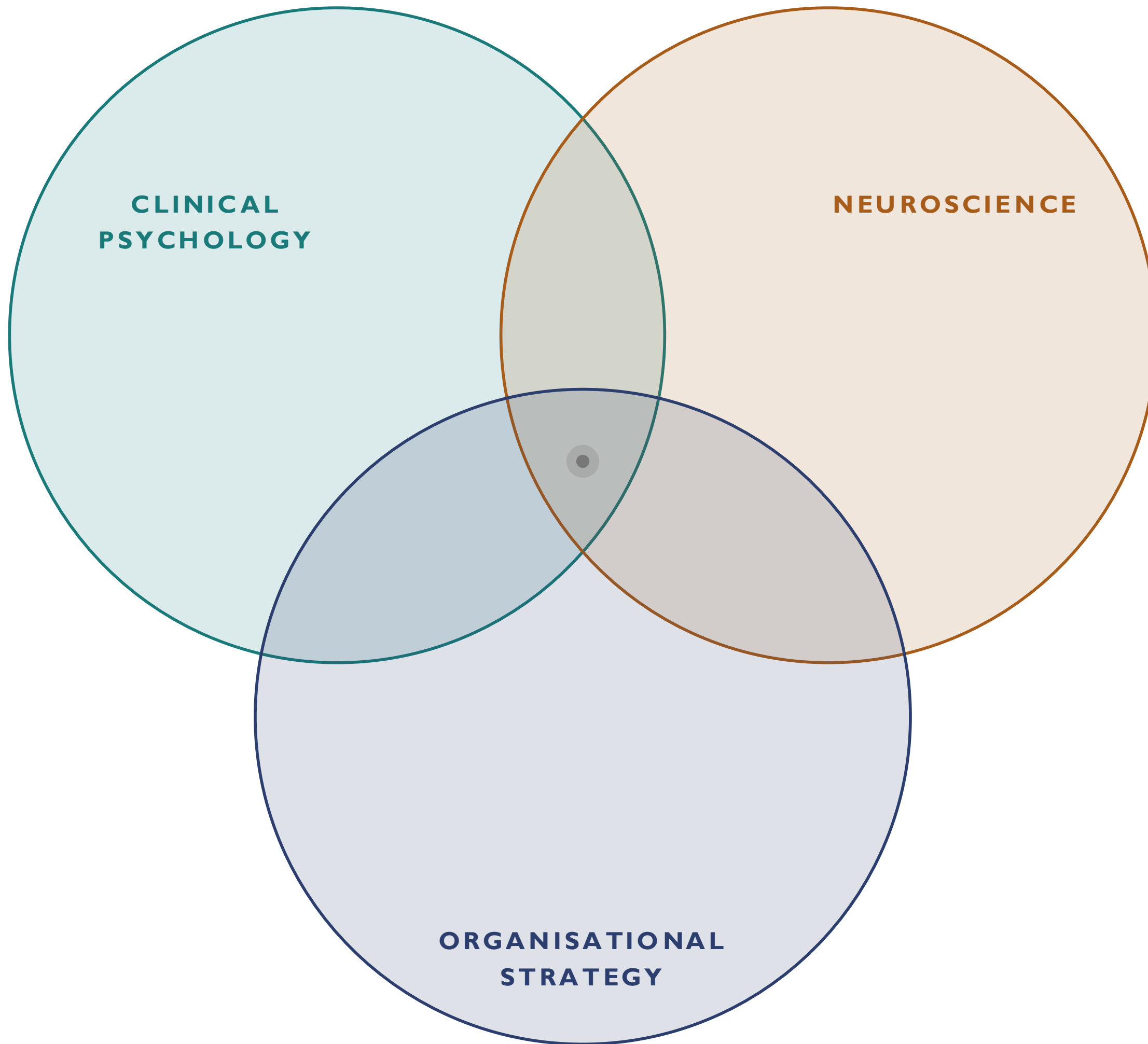
Over 40 years of combined experience, including in the National Health Service, for the Scottish Government and as Expert Witnesses in the UK Courts.



Founders and CEOs.



And, importantly, we are also working parents ourselves!

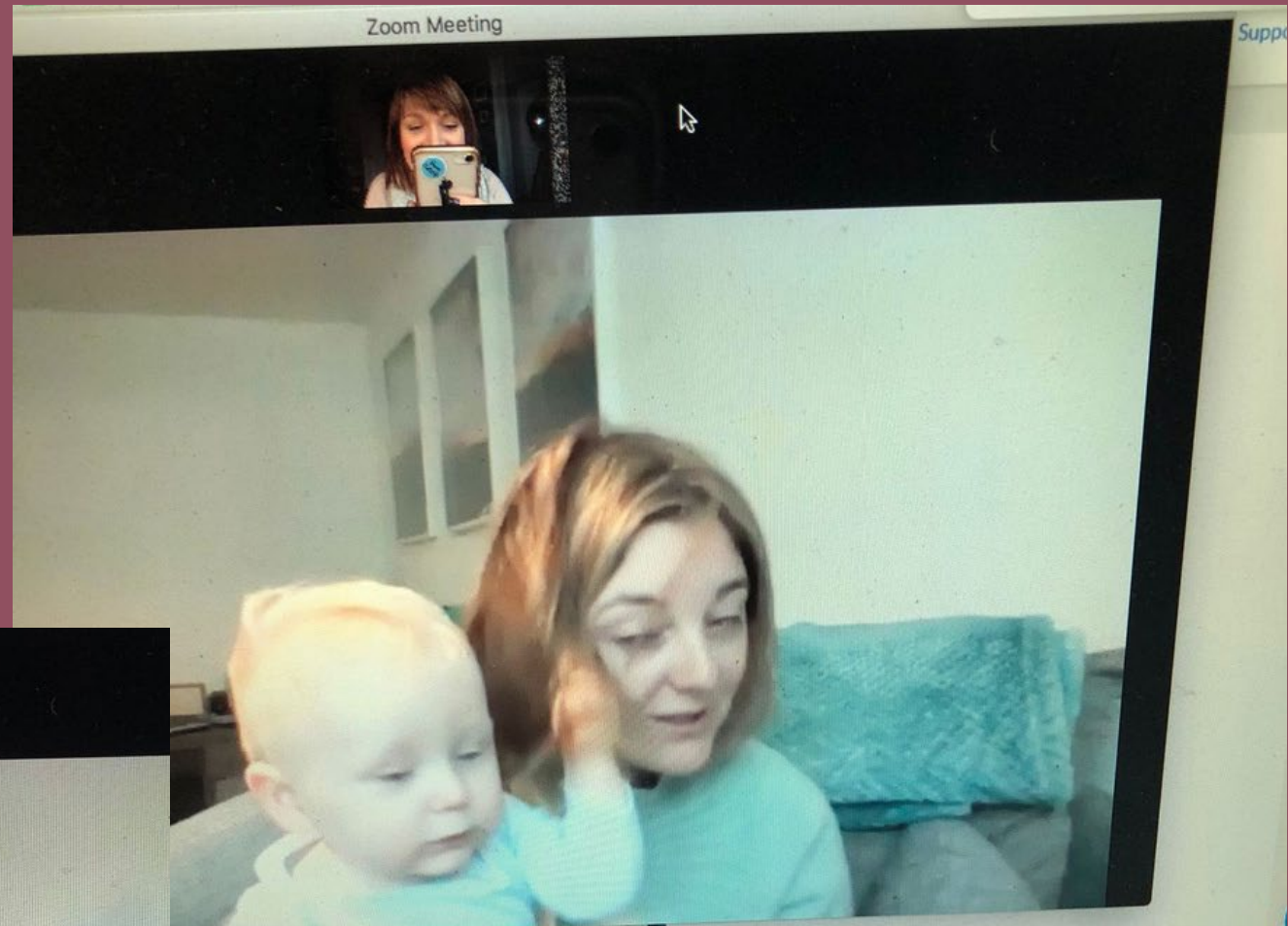


**CLINICAL
PSYCHOLOGY**

NEUROSCIENCE

**ORGANISATIONAL
STRATEGY**





Acknowledgement

Focusing on working parenthood, diversity and gender issues - not as a values debate or a feminist issue, but as a way for you to turn this into a competitive advantage for your firm.

- 1) The science
- 2) The data quantifying the commercial cost
- 3) Translated to a clear opportunity

Every data point that follows tells you something about your market that the vast majority of your competitors have not yet understood.

Most businesses are not holding on to talented and skilled women after they have children:

98% of mothers want to work.

60% of women in professional and managerial roles leave their organisation within one year of returning from maternity leave.

85% of working mothers leave the full-time workforce within 3 years of having their first child.

19% leave the workforce altogether.

(That Works For Me, 2023 / Pregnant Then Screwed, 2023 / IFS, 2023)

There are more men named John leading large companies than there are women.

New York Times

In Your Sector

Goldman Sachs

50.4% Gender Pay Gap

J P Morgan

48% Gender Pay Gap

HSB

C

41% Gender Pay Gap

Women in UK financial services earn 78p for every £1 earned by male colleagues

UK Government pay gap reporting data

The Research

**“This is the hardest time to be a mother,
since World War II” (*Dr Gabor Mate*)**

The ‘maternal mandate’

Research finds that the emotional and physical challenges of the postnatal period are ‘minimally acknowledged or simply ignored’ (Benson & Wolf, 2012) → Workplaces.

Generic wellbeing programmes do not address the unique neurobiological, emotional and psychological challenges that arise during pregnancy, the perinatal period and during working motherhood.

“Returnity” is not enough.

Introducing 'Matrescence'

The transition to motherhood (also known as 'matrescence') is characterised by huge physical, emotional, psychological, hormonal and brain based changes.

The brain changes which occur during the transition to motherhood are comparable to those occurring in the adolescent period, yet this is largely unacknowledged.

(Carmona et al., 2019)

The piece no-one is talking about...

Motherhood commonly unearths:

Anxiety

Self-critical thoughts

Sadness & grief

Frustration & anger

Childhood trauma

Unrealistic expectations

Perfectionism

Shame

Guilt

Relationship difficulties

Body image issues

Unhelpful coping

strategies

4 in 5 mothers experienced at least one episode of a mental health difficulty during pregnancy or after the birth of their child.

75% of these mothers had never experienced previous mental health difficulties, prior to becoming a mother.

(RCOG, 2017)

Suicide is the leading cause of death in the first year and accounts for 20% of maternal deaths in the postpartum period.

(Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health)

75% of mothers report feeling stressed and anxious about balancing work and home life.

Most conceal their struggles from their employer for fear of judgement and negative repercussions.

(APA, 2020)

What are these neurobiological changes?



Reduction in grey matter, changes to the surface area and decreased cortical thickness , to make the brain more flexible, responsive and efficient to care for a baby (Hoekzema et al., 2017; Orchard et al., 2022).

Neuro-imaging research shows **increased dopamine related activation in the reward circuits of the brain** in response to their own baby's face, smell and sounds (Noriuchi *et al.*, 2008)

Hormonally speaking, pregnancy and the perinatal period is 'the most drastic event in human life' (Hoekzema et al., 2017)

Fluctuations in hormones and changes to neurotransmitter systems can affect mood and leave a person more vulnerable to anxiety and obsessive -compulsive difficulties (Gavin et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2016; Koran et al., 2003).

The amygdala (involved in processing emotions and our fear response) becomes more reactive during pregnancy and postpartum - **potentially contributing to heightened anxiety** (Sanchez et al., 2015).

Working mothers have a neurological upgrade...



Brain Change	Organisational Capacity Gained
Social brain restructuring	Empathy, attunement, psychological safety
Amygdala sensitisation	Risk awareness, threat detection
Prefrontal efficiency gains	Prioritisation, focused execution
Identity disruption & integration	Resilience, values-clarity, adaptive leadership
Long-horizon thinking	Sustainable strategy, ethical leadership

And what about the dads/ partners?



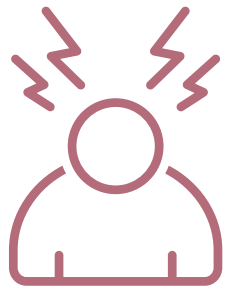
Becoming a parent also stirs up ‘the good, the bad and the ugly’ of their own childhoods!

10-20% of new fathers experience postpartum depression (*Leigh & Milgram, 2018*).



Up to 30% of fathers experience significant distress and/ or symptoms of post traumatic stress after the traumatic birth of a child (*Thompson et al., 2018*).

More than 1 in 10 fathers experience clinically significant anxiety in the perinatal period (*Leach et al., 2016*)



41% experience moderate to high stress symptoms (*Philpott., et al 2022, Gettler., et al 2011*)



The presence of brain plasticity in the postpartum period indicates that **fathers’ brains may too be changed by their parenting experiences** .

Why mindset work, generic therapy/ support programmes and coaching alone won't work...

LACK OF TRAINING

Most therapists accessed via generic employee assistance programmes and/ or coaches are not trained in (or even aware of) matrescence , let alone how the complex interplay of hormonal and neurobiological changes will be impacting that person's experience, thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

The process of becoming a parent activates our own childhood 'stuff' therefore understanding your own unique 'blue print' is absolutely crucial to navigating this period with resilience and more ease.

NERVOUS SYSTEM

If we don't address what's happening in a person's nervous system and give them evidence - based practices to deactivate their stress response, no amount of 'talking therapy' or 'learning approaches' are going to be effective.

LIMBIC SYSTEM/

PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX

The business case

The Business Case for Acting Now

5.5 X Revenue Growth

Firms investing in family support outperform peers by 5.5 × on revenue growth

(Maven Clinic & Great Place to Work, 2025)

ROI

£4.70 back per £1 invested

(Deloitte 2024 report - based on 26 studies)

Replacement cost:

150-213% of annual salary

(SMRH/ Gallup, 2024 & Centre for American Progress, 2012)

Increased Productivity

92% vs 62% Extra

Effort

Employees in parent-positive workplaces go above and beyond at significantly higher rates.

(Maven Clinic & Great Place to Work, 2025)

2 X Innovation

Employees in parent-positive workplaces are twice as likely to innovate as their peers.

(Maven Clinic & Great Place to Work, 2025)

Five actions you could take this week

1 **Ask:** Hold a listening session

2 **Audit:** Score yourself honestly

3 **Train:** Commit to manager education

4 **Signal:** Check your paternity leave uptake

5 **Invest:** Replace your generic EAP referral with a specialist resource

Audit

Does your organisation:

1. Build genuine understanding of the biological, neurological, hormonal and psychological complexity of working parenthood, at at leadership level?
2. Actively normalise and champion parenthood at every level?
3. Provide preventative rather than reactive support?
4. Provide specialist professional support - not just generic wellbeing?
5. Maintain meaningful contact and support during leave?

Audit

Does your organisation:

6. Provide specialist support before and during return to work?
7. Protect career progression through and beyond parenthood?
8. Fully integrate parental support into talent development & coaching?
9. Acknowledge and support the full arc of the parenting journey?
10. Recognise that supporting mothers, requires supporting fathers too?

Round table discussion

Round table discussion

1. What has landed with you most powerfully? What has surprised you?
1. What does your current working parent attrition actually cost your firm annually? Does anyone in this room know that number - and if not, what does that tell you?
1. Given that you are all in a network - what is one thing the LEA member firms could build collectively that none of you would build efficiently alone? What does shared infrastructure look like here?
1. What is the one thing you are going to do differently as a result of this session - and what is the single most likely reason it will not happen?

Final thoughts/ reflections

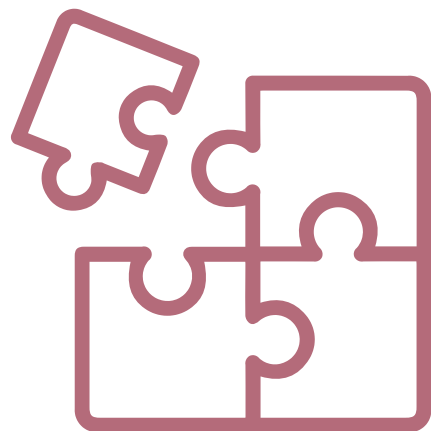
Q&A

Our work with organisations

Solutions

We are **experts in our field** and have over 40 years of combined experience.

We have **distilled the very best** of our **training** and **clinical experience** and combined it with cutting-edge **research** and **evidence-based techniques** .



- ✓ **Leadership training**
- ✓ **Specialist 1:1 coaching**
- ✓ **Specialist group programmes for working parents**
- ✓ **Webinars & Workshops**
- ✓ **VIP/ Corporate Away Days**
- ✓ **Specialist Psychological Therapy**

What our clients say

“Thank you both for organising such a thought provoking event. I am still reflecting on it this morning. It’s rare to find something that genuinely makes you think you need to do something differently in your organisation, and this was one of them.

I am not normally one to gush but I think what you are doing is incredible. It’s really different and deeply needed”.

P.A. Chief of People Officer & father of two

“I have worked in HR for over 20 years and I can honestly say I have never seen anything like what you are offering before. Especially in the current climate, your programmes have the potential to become the jewel in the crown for any organisation. I will be delighted to recommend you to my clients and network”.

Julie Cober, Executive Leadership Coach & former CHRO

“It is rare to find a safe space that is informing, fun, emotional and still focused on change for the better but with you guys it is all there. Tara and Claire take the facts and blow up the mandates, norms and inner demons in such a safe and open way that you can't help but come away feeling connected, heard and understood.

The only downside for me is not finding it sooner!”

Nicky Jenkins, HR Director & mum of two

What our clients say

— “

“You are an outstanding double act. You are both responsive, nurturing and receptive and your whip smart intelligence has underpinned our discussions each week. Your programme is research based with clear evidence of your academic expertise. You have established a remarkable rapport with us, made us feel safe and secure, so much so that together, we learned to acknowledge and share our feelings and have faith that it was OK to do so. We really needed your help to get us to where we are. Thanks to you, we have indeed moved, as you promised, from surviving to thriving”

Lucy Jukes (CBE)
CEO & Parent of four

” —

“

“That workshop was AMAZING AMAZING AMAZING!!!! I left feeling supported, understood, inspired and not alone. You two are so damn inspirational and the most glorious team. I’m so delighted I freed up the time to come and receive your magic”

”

Bronwyn Tutty *Coach & mum of one*

“

“Transformational” is a word that gets banded around in a way that often loses the true meaning of the word. There are maybe half a dozen moments in my life that stand out as being truly transformational; reclaiming my mind, through working with Dr Tara Pennington, is up right up there as a defining moment in my adult life. If you are sitting on the fence about signing up, or putting it off altogether, don’t. The double dose of healing and growth is utterly transformational... in the true meaning of the word”

”

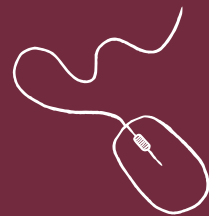
R. B. *Company Director & Parent of three*

Get in Touch

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