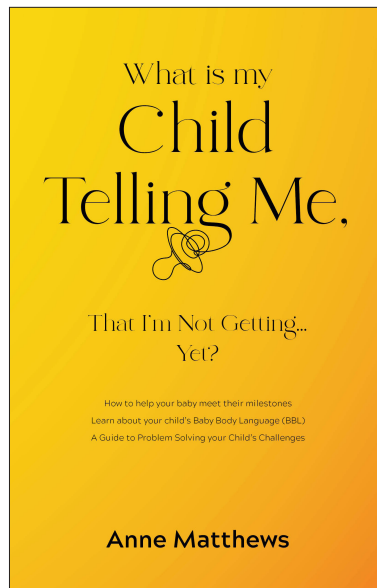


AUTHOR REVIEW

What is My Child Telling Me, That I'm Not Getting... Yet?

Anne Matthews



Introduction to the Journey of Understanding

Birth is a universal experience, and parenting is one of life's most privileged journeys, filled with moments of joy, learning, and challenges. In my book, *What is My Child Telling Me, That I'm Not Getting... Yet?* I offer an insightful guide to help parents better understand their babies and young children by focusing on what I call Baby Body Language, reflecting my expertise in the somatic disciplines. I guide readers through childhood challenges by decoding a child's Baby Body Language. This approach helps address underlying issues affecting a child's development, and offers parents an enlightening opportunity to read and interpret a baby's preverbal communication cues. With over four decades of experience working with families, I blend personal anecdotes, clinical insights, and practical exercises to offer a powerful approach to parenting. The focus is on fostering parental self-awareness, nurturing compassion and empathy, and emphasizing the crucial role that pre- and perinatal experiences play in shaping a child's development.

The book is grounded in the belief that, by closely observing children's non-verbal cues and behaviors, parents can uncover underlying issues that may be impacting their development, emotions, and overall wellbeing. The book serves not only as a guide for parents, but also as a companion on the journey of self-discovery and healing for both the growing parent and child.

The Essence of Compassion and Empathy in Parenting

The core of my approach to wholesome parenting centers on nurturing compassion and empathy. I emphasize that true understanding and connection with a child begins with the parent's ability to be present and aware of their own emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations as they adapt to moment-to-moment changes in their physiological states. Cultivating self-awareness is crucial, as it enables parents to better interpret their child's behavior and respond in a way that is intuitively attuned to their needs, fostering co-regulation of both their nervous systems. As I explain, the cultivation of compassion and empathy is not merely about understanding what a child is feeling in the moment. It also involves recognizing, adapting, pausing, and being sensitive to the subtle cues and signals that children, especially babies, give through the subtlety of their body language. This empathetic connection is essential for creating a nurturing environment where a child's nervous system can feel safe and secure, and thrive.

I encourage parents to move away from reacting to symptoms or behaviors with a "fixing" mindset and instead adopt a curious approach to understanding the child's journey. This shift is significant when addressing issues that may stem from the cumulative impact of pre- and perinatal experiences, from conception to birth. By doing so, parents can become more intuitive and confident, offering holistic, compassionate support that is deeply attuned to their child's inner needs.

Decoding Baby Body Language: A Window to Understanding

The central concept in my book is Baby Body Language. I explain that babies and young children primarily communicate through physical movements, facial expressions, and behaviors. These nonverbal cues offer a window into the child's internal experiences, helping to rebalance and heal restrictions or compressions. Whether it's an expression of discomfort, stress, emotional needs, or memory crying, these signals reveal essential insights into what the child is experiencing. For example, a baby who is consistently fussy or has trouble sleeping may be trying to communicate an underlying issue or restriction that needs attention. I equip parents with tools and techniques to decode these signals, teaching them to observe the child's movements, facial expressions, and other nonverbal behaviors to understand what they might reveal about the child's physical and emotional state. Parents can better support their child's overall well-being by learning to read and respond to Baby Body Language. This skill helps address immediate concerns and fosters a deeper emotional connection between parent and child.

Pre and Perinatal Experiences: The Foundations of Development

Much of my book is dedicated to exploring the impact of pre- and perinatal experiences on a child's development. These early experiences, which occur in the womb, during birth, and in the first few months of life, can profoundly affect a child's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being.

I explain that these experiences shape a child's nervous system, influencing their behavior, development, and overall health. For example, a challenging or traumatic birth

might leave a child with heightened sensitivity and difficulty in self-regulation. Understanding these connections allows parents to consider the potential root causes of their child's challenges rather than merely addressing the symptoms.

I emphasize the importance of compassionately addressing any stress, trauma, or challenges that may have occurred during these early stages from both the baby's and the mother's perspectives. By doing so, parents who practice self-awareness become more resourceful as their child develops at their own neurodevelopmental pace, allowing the nervous system to regulate in a healthier, more balanced way. I offer practical strategies for supporting this co-regulated healing process, including therapeutic touch and other techniques parents can use at home.

Exploring Past Traumas: A Path to Connection

Healing past underlying issues and emotional traumas for the child and the parents is another central theme in my book. I explore how unresolved trauma from a parent's past can impact their ability to connect with and support their child emotionally. These traumas may stem from their own childhood experiences, pregnancy, or even the birth process itself.

I encourage parents to engage in self-reflection and personal self-development to navigate these issues. This healing process benefits the parent, and creates an opportunity to foster a more nurturing and supportive environment for the child. The book offers guidance on recognizing and addressing these blind spots and traumas, including self-care exercises and techniques parents can use to support their own healing and growth.

One key message is that healing is possible at any stage, and can lead to a more authentic connection with oneself and one's child. I emphasize that the body remembers these early experiences, and by exploring them, parents can help themselves and their children move toward a balanced, co-regulated nervous system and optimal well-being.

The Power of Nonjudgmental Communication

Effective communication is a cornerstone of my approach. I advocate for a nonjudgmental, empathetic, and compassionate communication style, which I reflect in my writing. This approach is essential for creating a safe and supportive environment where child and parent can express their needs and emotions without fear of judgment or criticism, and be heard without shame.

I offer practical tips for parents on communicating with their children, and setting boundaries that foster understanding, connection, and appropriate pacing. This includes guidance on active listening, responding empathetically, engaging in reflective conversations, and avoiding common pitfalls like making assumptions or jumping to conclusions.

Parents can help their children feel genuinely seen, heard, and understood by adopting a nonjudgmental communication style. This, in turn, strengthens the parent-child bond, and creates a foundation of trust and respect that nurtures resilience and builds emotional confidence as the child develops into their teenage years.

Therapeutic Touch: A Powerful Tool for Wholesome Connection

One of the practical tools I introduce in my book is therapeutic touch. I explain how parents can use permission-based touch and massage to help their child naturally re-

lease physical and emotional tension, improve sensory regulation, and enhance overall well-being.

I provide step-by-step instructions on performing these techniques, and tips on adapting them to the child's specific needs. For instance, I explain how certain types of touch can soothe a fussy baby or calm an overwhelmed child.

Therapeutic touch and somatic-based therapies are not just methods for addressing physical issues; they also serve as powerful ways to connect with the child emotionally. Like pediatric practitioners, parents can "listen" with their hands, developing a deeper understanding of their child's needs, and offering comfort and support in ways that words alone cannot achieve.

Case Studies and Personal Stories: Real-Life Applications

Throughout the book, I share case studies and personal stories from my decades of research-based clinical practice, reflecting my ongoing commitment to honing my hands-on/off therapeutic skills. These real-life examples illustrate the effectiveness of the neurodevelopmental and pre- and perinatal – focused somatic disciplines that I integrate into my treatment sessions. I provide practical insights on how parents can collaborate with professionals and apply these concepts in their parenting journey.

The case studies cover a wide range of issues, from common developmental challenges to more complex emotional and behavioral problems. Each story is accompanied by a discussion of the underlying issues and the strategies used to address them. These examples bring the concepts to life, and offer parents hope and encouragement as they navigate their own challenges.

The relatable stories also emphasize the importance of grounding, commitment, and patience in parenting. I show that while challenges can sometimes feel overwhelming, with the proper support and a problem-solving approach, both parent and child can adapt and grow, becoming emotionally stronger and more flexible.

Practical Exercises for Parents: Applying the Concepts

I include a series of exercises at the end of each chapter to help parents implement the concepts and techniques discussed in the book. These exercises guide parents through self-reflection, observation, and interaction with their child. They offer a practical framework for applying principles like compassion, empathy, nonjudgmental communication, and empathetic touch in everyday parenting.

The exercises are tailored to distinct stages of a child's development, from infancy to early childhood, and are designed to be flexible and adaptable. This allows parents to customize them to meet the unique needs of their child and family. I emphasize that these exercises are not a one-size-fits-all solution, but tools that parents can use to deepen their understanding and connection with their child while also seeking additional support as needed.

Advocating for Your Child: Navigating the System

I emphasize the importance of parents becoming strong advocates for their children's needs. This includes developing greater confidence when collaborating with healthcare and educational professionals to ensure their child receives the necessary support and care.

The book offers guidance on effectively communicating with professionals, asking the right questions, and navigating the often complex and underfunded worlds of health-care and education. I encourage parents to educate themselves about child development, understand their rights, and proactively seek their child's best care and educational opportunities.

Being an advocate also means being informed and empowered as a parent. I stress the importance of staying grounded and curious, asking questions, and being prepared to challenge the status quo regarding your child's well-being.

Understanding Family Dynamics: Breaking the Cycle

Finally, I explore the role of family dynamics in a child's development. I examine how patterns of behavior, beliefs, and emotions can be passed down through generations, indirectly influencing a child's growth. The book introduces strategies for recognizing and addressing these patterns to create a healthier and more supportive family environment.

I also delve into the concept of transgenerational trauma, which involves unresolved issues from previous generations that can impact the current family dynamic. I provide practical advice on becoming aware of and intentionally breaking these cycles to foster a more positive and nurturing environment for the child and immediate family.

By understanding and addressing these family dynamics, parents can help their children avoid repeating the same patterns, creating a legacy of emotional health, flexibility, and resilience for future generations.

Conclusion: A Journey of Transformation

What is My Child Telling Me, That I'm Not Getting... Yet? is more than just a parenting guide; it offers an authentic transformation journey for both parent and child. I provide a wealth of practical advice rooted in compassion, empathy, self-awareness, and a deep understanding of the impact of pre- and perinatal experiences on a child's early development.

Parents can build a more connected and supportive relationship with their children by learning to read Baby Body Language, heal past traumas, and engage in nonjudgmental communication. This book is an invaluable resource for any parent who seeks to navigate parenting challenges with compassion and confidence, adopting a problem-solving approach to ensure their children grow as self-regulated, healthy intelligent individuals, regardless of their neuro-developmental abilities and outcomes.



Anne Matthews, BSc Hons Physio, DC, Dip Biomech, FBCA, CST, PPNE, is a holistic chiropractor with 38 years of clinical experience. Her professional background includes physiotherapy, chiropractic care, biomechanics, craniosacral therapy, as well as pediatric neurodevelopmental training

and pre- and perinatal education. Anne established the Belfast Chiropractic Clinic & Complementary Therapies in 1986, where she works with babies, young children, and pregnant mums. She focuses on the resolution of prenatal, birth, and early trauma by interpreting a child's Baby Body Language cues, which a child expresses physically, developmentally, and emotionally. During a child's trauma healing session, Anne will facilitate parents connect more compassionately and empathic way with their child. Anne guides parents in fostering a deeper connection with their child in a more compassionate and empathetic way.

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