



# London Mums

FREE – Issue 46 • Spring 2026

## *STAR MUM!*

**Megan McKenna:**  
From reality TV  
drama to nappy  
drama

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## Dear London Mums,

Spring has sprung (allegedly... it's still coat-on, sunglasses-ready chaos), and here we are - juggling snacks, dreams, and school WhatsApp mayhem.

This issue? Oh, it's a proper page-turner.

From Megan McKenna swapping TOWIE tears for teething fears, to tiramisù towers so long they need planning permission (grazie, Giuseppe!).

We've got books to soothe you, stories to move you, and colouring pages whispering, "go on... five minutes just for you."

Homes warmer, hearts fuller, kids asking *why* at 6am - and someone, somewhere, still forgetting the PE kit. Again.

We talk reinvention (because mums are basically superheroes in disguise), resilience (also known as surviving soft play on a Saturday), and creativity - the kind that turns mess into magic and leftovers into dinner.

And speaking of sweet things... don't miss your chance to be part of something deliciously historic: book your slice of the World's Longest Tiramisù, support charity, and join us at Chelsea Old Town Hall on 25-26 April. Trust me - this is one record you'll want a spoon in.

So this spring, breathe in the chaos, laugh at the spills, say yes to the joy (and maybe no to one more commitment).

You are the keeper of stories, the bringer of light - and occasionally, the finder of missing shoes.

With love, gratitude, and a slightly cold cup of tea,  
Monica



Monica Costa

Editor in chief, Founder of *London Mums* & mum of 19-year-old Diego  
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**Megan McKenna**

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# STAR MUM! MEGAN MCKENNA: FROM REALITY TV DRAMA TO NAPPY DRAMA

By Monica Costa

Singer-songwriter, reality TV star, and now a first-time mum - Megan McKenna's life has been a whirlwind of spotlights and plot twists. But since welcoming baby Landon, the *X Factor: Celebrity* winner has traded tabloid headlines for bedtime stories. We sat down with Megan for a gloriously honest chat about mum-bods, forgotten nappies in handbags, and why life is sweeter (and messier) on this side of the spotlight.

**Monica:** Megan, congratulations! Let's start with the real stuff. What's the most gloriously chaotic moment you've had as a new mum that made you laugh, even while sleep-deprived?

**Megan:** Oh, it's always the same! I'll spend ages dressing, feeding and making Landon look so perfectly fresh. Then I'll look in the mirror at myself while we're out and think, 'How am I in public like this? I look like I've rolled out of bed... Did I even brush my hair!?'

**Monica:** We've all been there! If you could give your pre-baby self just one piece of brutally honest advice about motherhood (no sugar-coating), what would it be?

**Megan:** Watch every TV series and enjoy rotting on the sofa as much as you can

before the baby comes, because you won't get free time for a very long time! (haha)

**Monica:** Speaking of advice, people love comparing babies. What's the most ridiculous or unexpected piece you've been offered so far?

**Megan:** Those 'expected' developmental milestones. Some mums love to shame others about how ahead or advanced their baby is. Every baby develops at their own pace and that is OK.

**Monica:** Now for the gold - any "secret parenting hacks" you've discovered that make life feel slightly less chaotic?

**Megan:** Clean the baby highchair straight away! It's an easier job when the food is still soft and wet. Leaving it is a nightmare!

**Monica:** How do you carve out little moments for yourself amidst the whirlwind?

**Megan:** A bath every night once Landon is down. I relax by doom scrolling, edit my content and just enjoy a quiet moment to myself. I love Johnson's Baby Bedtime bath - even for myself.

**"I STILL FILM IN THE SAME WAY... I DON'T THINK THERE'S HARM IN BEING REAL AND POSTING OUR LITTLE LIFE."**

**Monica:** Your life has always been so public - has having a baby changed what you share online?

**Megan:** Not really. I still film in the same way. If the videos feel appropriate for sharing, I don't think there's harm in being real and posting our little life.

**Monica:** Has becoming a parent changed how you 'do' Christmas?

"IT'S ALL ABOUT  
LANDON NOW  
AND I WOULDN'T  
HAVE IT ANY  
OTHER WAY!"



## "I SING TO LANDON ALL THE TIME"

**Megan:** Completely. It's all about Landon now and I wouldn't have it any other way! Who wants a hangover on Christmas day anyway?!

**Monica:** Any quirky new family traditions you're starting?

**Megan:** Not quirky... but go to bed earlier!

**Monica:** How do you survive the festive frenzy without turning into a Christmas Grinch?

**Megan:** Be appreciative of what you have around you. Then all the small

things that go wrong won't matter so much. You gotta let it go!

**Monica:** Does your experience of motherhood influence your music?

**Megan:** 100%. Writing sessions are in my diary to begin a really special project... so keep an eye out.

**Monica:** Would you ever consider writing a lullaby album?

**Megan:** Never say never. I sing to Landon all the time and it's his way of shutting down at night-time listening to me sing.

**Monica:** How do you balance your career ambitions with family life?

**Megan:** Don't over think it. Your baby life will naturally fall into your work life.



I never wanted to stop working when I had Landon; he comes along with me, but I also take full days off with no work. The best thing I've learnt is to not be too hard on yourself. They're only a baby for a small time, so soak it all up.

**"THE BEST THING I'VE LEARNT IS TO NOT BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF. THEY'RE ONLY A BABY FOR A SMALL TIME, SO SOAK IT ALL UP."**

**Monica:** If Landon could choose one of your songs as his personal anthem, which would it be?

**Megan:** *Feels Like Hallelujah* because I played it on repeat over Christmas and he always bobbed along to it.

**Monica:** What's the most surprisingly 'Megan McKenna' moment you've had since becoming a mum?

**Megan:** My community of followers falling in love with Landon. It's been so special.

**Monica:** Finally, please share one spectacular parenting fail that almost deserves a reality show cameo.

**Megan:** I walked around with a filled nappy bag in my baby bag all day and kept smelling something funny. When I got back I realised the dirty nappy was at the bottom of my bag the whole time!

**Monica:** Last year JOHNSON'S® Baby released a one-of-a-kind white noise album, 'Soothing Sounds' - how useful has this been in your first year of motherhood?

**Megan:** Very, I love a wind down playlist for our bath time routine and for when I'm getting Landon in his pjs before bed. Music is very important in our house.



# Find your calm: The new Colouring Books giving busy mums permission to play

Let's be honest. When did you last do something just for you? Between the school runs, activities, and endless mental load, creative time often feels like a distant memory.

Enter Jayne Belinda Allen, a Coventry-based artist who has just released *SLIK ART* – ten bold new colouring books for adults who have forgotten what it feels like to play.

Jayne's inspiration struck during an art class. While students were handed photocopied images to fill in, she saw limitation, not invitation. She wanted to create artwork without rules. Drawing on decades of experience – from embroidery and pottery to life drawing – she developed a signature style blending fluid, oil-slick shapes with expressive linework.

The result is *SLIK ART*: ten books, zero rules.

Whether you're drawn to flowing patterns in *SLIK DRIP ART*, whimsical creatures in *SLIK BUGS ART*, or intricate details in *SLIK PETAL ART*, there's something for every mood. The collection includes *SLIK CAR ART*, *SLIK FACE ART*, and *SLIK TIDE ART* too. Grab felt tips, watercolours, or gel pens – these pages are a playground, not a test.

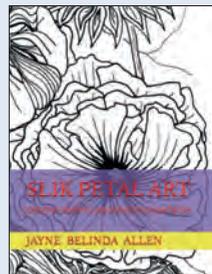
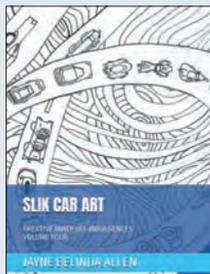
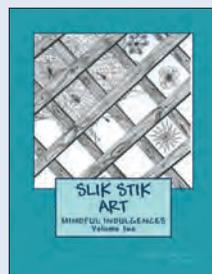
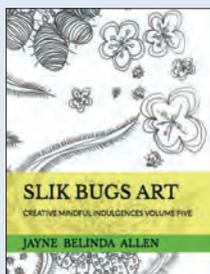
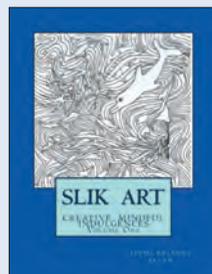
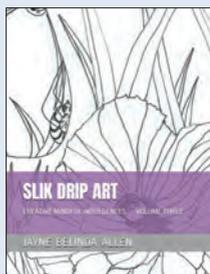
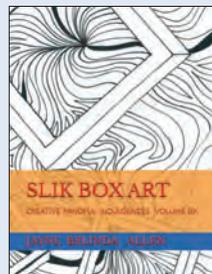
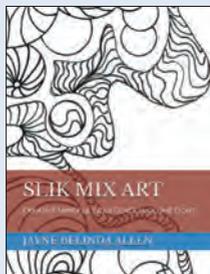
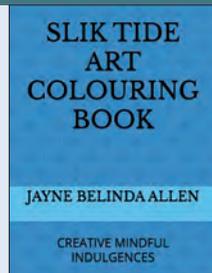
"Art has been my whole life," Jayne shares. "I wanted people to experience that same sense of freedom. In *SLIK ART*, there are no rules. Just colour, experiment, relax, and most importantly, enjoy."

Early readers agree. One reviewer said: "The illustrations are so exciting to colour in. My book only arrived this morning and I am already colouring."

Adult colouring offers real therapeutic benefits – quieting the mind and reducing anxiety. Jayne's own journey, from swapping dolls for crayons as a child to winning multiple arts awards, is woven into every page.

So next time you have a moment, pour a cuppa and see where your imagination takes you.

*The full SLIK ART series is available on Amazon UK. Search "Slik Art Jayne Belinda Allen".*





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# Resuscitation Guidelines: What London parents need to know

By Emma Hammett, Founder of [FirstAidforLife.org.uk](http://FirstAidforLife.org.uk)

Every five years, resuscitation experts review the latest scientific evidence to update life-saving guidance. The 2025 Resuscitation Council UK guidelines – aligned with European and international recommendations – introduce important changes that will shape first aid and CPR training from January 2026. Here's what matters most for families.

## Start Early: CPR from Primary School

One of the biggest shifts is a strong focus on education. Children should begin learning about resuscitation as young as four to six years old, with annual refreshers throughout school. Training should be practical, hands-on and engaging, using mannequins and real-life scenarios.

Why? Because early CPR dramatically improves survival. Around 115,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur each year in the UK. Survival rates are significantly higher when bystanders are trained and act quickly. Put simply: the more people who know what to do, the more lives are saved.

## Call 999 First – Then Check Breathing

A key update in adult basic life support is simple but crucial: if someone is unresponsive, call 999 immediately before checking breathing. Call handlers will guide you through what to do next.

Abnormal breathing can be misleading – gasping or seizure-like movements are common in cardiac arrest. When in doubt, start chest compressions.

## Updated CPR Advice

- Chest compressions: 100–120 per minute
- Depth: 5–6 cm
- Minimise interruptions
- Give rescue breaths if trained

If you're untrained, you'll be guided through compression-only CPR. However, evidence shows that combining compressions with breaths improves survival when performed correctly.

If someone collapses on a bed, begin CPR there rather than wasting precious time moving them. Remove pillows and kneel firmly to improve compression depth.

## AEDs: Don't Be Afraid to Use One



Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) can be used on adults and children – even infants. Follow the pad diagrams carefully. Early defibrillation can double or even quadruple survival chances.

## Drowning and Children: Important Changes

For drowning victims, give **five rescue breaths first**, as lack of oxygen is usually the cause.

- In paediatric CPR (for those specifically trained):
- Start with 5 rescue breaths
- Use a 15:2 compression-to-breath ratio
- Baby CPR now uses the thumb-encircling technique instead of two fingers

## First Aid Gets Greater Focus

For the first time, first aid is formally recognised as the first link in the chain of survival. The structured assessment is now **ABCDE** (Airway, Breathing, Circulation, Disability, Exposure).

Life-threatening bleeding is prioritised. Direct pressure remains the first step, but tourniquets and wound packing may be needed if bleeding is severe.

## Other updates include:

- A second adrenaline auto-injector (for anaphylaxis) should be given in the opposite leg
- Half a teaspoon of sugar under the tongue can help conscious children with hypoglycaemia
- An amputated finger should be wrapped in damp cloth, sealed in a bag and placed on ice

## Everyone Has a Role

The message is clear: you don't need to be a medic to save a life. Quick action, confidence and basic training can make all the difference. For parents, carers and schools, keeping first aid skills up to date isn't just advisable – it's empowering.

## A new way to celebrate your body: Turning precious moments into 3D Art

Pregnancy is fleeting, powerful and deeply personal. For London-based entrepreneur Laura Cope, preserving that moment has become both a creative calling and a heartfelt mission. Through her business, Form 3D Studio, Laura creates bespoke 3D sculptures of the human body – specialising in pregnancy keepsakes that transform a temporary chapter into timeless art.



Laura, originally from Essex and now living in East London with her husband Peter and their two cats, previously worked in resource and project management. Although successful, she longed to build something more personal and expressive. The turning point came when she saw Peter's

architectural 3D printing projects. The blend of technology and artistry sparked an idea – and with determination, self-taught 3D modelling skills and plenty of courage, Form 3D Studio was born.

Now expecting her first child, Laura feels even more connected to the importance of capturing life's milestones. "Memories matter," she says. "Being able to create something meaningful for other people genuinely brings me joy."

Her studio is quickly becoming popular with expectant mothers seeking an empowering and artistic way to honour their changing bodies. Laura is particularly sensitive to the vulnerability many women feel. "You absolutely do not need to be naked," she reassures. "Your comfort comes first. This is about celebrating yourself in whatever way feels right."

Appointments last around an hour and begin with a friendly consultation. The scan itself takes just three minutes and is entirely contact-free and safe for both mother and baby. Many clients bring partners or friends, turning the session into a shared memory. Laura also offers home visits across London and South Essex where possible.

While pregnancy sculptures are her speciality,

# FORM

3D STUDIO



Laura welcomes anyone wanting to celebrate a milestone – from fitness achievements to personal journeys. "You don't need to be pregnant to see your body as art," she says.

After the scan, clients choose their preferred size and finish. Files are securely stored for 12 months should they wish to order another piece.

Clients often describe the experience as unexpectedly emotional. One mum shared, "It was the loveliest experience." Another said, "It was so special just spending time appreciating my bump."

What truly sets Form 3D Studio apart is Laura's warmth and sincerity. Her work is not simply about 3D printing – it's about reflection, confidence and preserving moments that pass all too quickly.

To find out more or book a session, visit [www.form3dstudio.com](http://www.form3dstudio.com).





## GIUSEPPE DELL'ANNO: WHEN ENGINEERING MEETS TIRAMISÙ (AND ITALY TELLS ITS STORY WITHOUT STEREOTYPES)

By Monica Costa

From the precision of aeronautical engineering to the delicacy of a mascarpone cream: Giuseppe Dell'Anno, chef and winner of *Bake Off* 2021, recounts a journey built on rigour, passion, and Italian identity. Between world tiramisù records, family memories, food as a cultural language, and a gentle pushback against clichés, this interview is an authentic portrait of what it means to bring Italy to the world today - with seriousness, elegance, and substance.



**Monica:** For you, Giuseppe, what's more stressful: the *Bake Off* tent or a 300-meter-long tiramisù in London?

**Giuseppe:** Both come with tight timelines and deadlines. *Bake Off* is stressful because everything has to be done *against the clock*, within deadlines that are always shorter than you'd need. That's what opens the door to those kitchen "disasters" that make for good TV. For the record tiramisù, we'll have two days, but the task is monumental. The difference, perhaps, is that this will be a community effort, with so many hands helping out. Not to mention the calibre of the pastry chefs involved... I feel like I'm in good hands. I'm the one who knows the least among them. I don't have formal training: what I know, I learned from my father, a pastry chef, and from pure passion. For me, spending time in the kitchen is the most relaxing thing there is.

**Monica:** Pastry, with its precise measurements, is a bit like applied engineering. My son, when he was little, used to weigh everything meticulously. His cookies were perfect; mine were disasters. In fact, he's becoming an engineer while I'm a writer...

**Giuseppe:** I agree. It requires a precise, systematic mindset. I was exactly like that as a child. With four basic ingredients, you can make anything: the difference between a sponge cake and a biscuit lies in the exact quantities and the methodology. This is especially true in Italian pastry, which isn't as *forgiving* as the Anglo-Saxon style. They have baking powder and the "all-in-one mix" method. We don't: if your method is wrong, your sponge cake turns into an omelette. The same goes for tiramisù, the first dessert I learned to make over thirty years ago with raw eggs, just like my grandmother did. Today, in restaurants, they use pasteurised eggs or techniques like *pâte à bombe* for safety. It's simple, but it requires precise care.

**Monica:** Let's talk about the record. What are the biggest challenges for a 300-meter tiramisù?



**Giuseppe:** The sheer **quantity** and its **stability**. It's not being made in a dish: if the cream is too runny and the layer falls below the 8 centimetres required by Guinness, the record is lost. Then there's the logistics: coordinating people, ingredients, equipment. It's pure project management, an engineering job in every sense.

**Monica:** Why is tiramisù so loved worldwide?

**Giuseppe:** For the same reason as other Italian successes like pizza: **balance**. It's rich and creamy, but not cloying. The sweetness is tempered by bitter coffee and cocoa. It has an elegant richness, not a heavy one. It's indulgent but never excessive.

**Monica:** Back to you. You risked a "national disgrace" on *Bake Off* while working as an engineer for clients like Airbus. Why take that risk?

**Giuseppe:** Exactly. I thought: if I can't even make a cake on TV, my clients will think, "How can he possibly build an aeroplane?" I was staking my professional reputation. After winning, I left a great senior management job in Italy to write the book and become a pastry chef full-time. My mother didn't speak to me for months! Now I work part-time as an engineer and part-time as a pastry chef. It was a choice driven by passion.

**Monica:** Let's talk about authenticity and stereotypes. Italian elegance lies in sobriety, but the market sometimes wants something else.

**Giuseppe:** That's true. For wedding cakes,

I propose delicate, Italian flavours that people like. But if I propose a chocolate and caramel cake, it sells out instantly. It's hard to defend the line of simplicity when so few fully appreciate it.

**Monica:** Thorny question: cream in tiramisù, yes or no?

**Giuseppe:** The original recipe doesn't include it. I don't add it at home, but I don't condemn those who do for stability or taste. Cuisine, like language, evolves. We must **preserve the knowledge of authentic recipes without being pedantic**. If you like carbonara with cream, make it that way—but know how the "canonical" one came to be. Authenticity can be an elusive concept. Carbonara itself was born from creativity and necessity (eggs and bacon from American rations during the war). My father once made a "salmon pasta" using tuna and smoked hot dogs, and it was delicious. Creativity is part of a living tradition.

**Monica:** What's your first memory of tiramisù?

**Giuseppe:** I was about twelve. My cousin taught me how to make it at my grandmother's house. I remember the corner of the kitchen and the electric whisks for beating the eggs. It was the first dessert I ever learned to make.

**Monica:** And your favourite dessert, to eat and to make?

**Giuseppe:** **Pastiera**. It's my absolute love. The scent of orange blossom and homemade

candied fruit is intoxicating. It takes me back to childhood: at Easter, my father used to make dozens to give away. It's a dessert that is tradition, memory, and fragrance all in one.

**Monica:** The “Longest Tiramisù” unites Italy and Britain. How powerful is food as a cultural bridge?

**Giuseppe:** There's nothing more effective. Around a table, social barriers come down; we become more equal. It's one of the most powerful channels for creating genuine connections.

**Monica:** What do you hope people take home from this event, besides a slice of tiramisù?

**Giuseppe:** The discovery of a **serious, non-stereotypical Italian professionalism**. They'll see chefs like Iginio Massari and others, totally focused and organised with “German-like” precision. I hope it shows a competent, rigorous Italy that often works behind the scenes.

**Monica:** If a child wants to become a chef, where should they start?

**Giuseppe:** They must **try, copy, experiment**. You only really learn by doing. But be careful about your sources: what looks good on TikTok isn't always good to eat. Passion finds its path when it meets talent.

**Monica:** Rule number one if something goes wrong at the last minute?

**Giuseppe: Don't lose your cool.** Chefs are used to high-pressure environments. You have to assess, optimise the effort you've already put in, and move forward. Maybe by cutting down on the coffee! (*laughs*)

**Monica:** Final, crucial question: first slice or last slice?

**Giuseppe:** Last slice. I don't have a huge sweet tooth. I can resist. Now, if it were pizza, that would be a different story!

**Monica:** Promise that if we break the record, we'll all celebrate together?

**Giuseppe:** Of course! And maybe I'll even bring some *focaccia barese* with black olives.

**Book your slice of the World's Longest Tiramisù and support charity: join us at Chelsea Old Town Hall on 25-26 April 2026 for a record-breaking sweet event! [www.longesttiramisu.uk](http://www.longesttiramisu.uk)**



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## ***A Little Bit of Everything:* A visual and culinary feast for modern families**

**In a world of rushed meals and endless to-do lists, there's something deeply reassuring about a cookbook that gently reminds us what really matters: food, family and the simple joy of sharing both. *A Little Bit of Everything* by Lukas Baker is exactly that kind of book - warm, unpretentious and full of heart.**

This debut cookbook feels less like a polished showpiece and more like an open invitation into a real family kitchen. Inspired by Lukas's German-English heritage, it blends two rich culinary traditions into something wonderfully accessible for everyday life. Think hearty, comforting dishes alongside lighter, flexible recipes that busy families can actually manage - without sacrificing flavour or meaning.

What sets this book apart isn't just the food, but the feeling behind it. Each recipe is rooted in memory: childhood meals, family gatherings and the kind of dishes that carry stories across generations. There's a genuine sense that this is food made to be shared - not perfected.

With over 100 recipes, Lukas covers everything from slow-cooked comfort meals and classic meat dishes to fresh fish, potato staples and even simple baby-friendly options. His background as a butcher brings confidence and clarity, particularly when it comes to working with different cuts of meat - something many home cooks still

find intimidating. Helpful guidance on cooking temperatures, portioning and lighter alternatives adds a practical edge that today's families will appreciate.

But perhaps the most refreshing aspect is the tone. There's no pressure here. No perfectionism. Just encouragement. Lukas writes and cooks with the belief that food should feel welcoming, not overwhelming - a philosophy that resonates strongly with parents trying to balance health, time and enjoyment around the dinner table.

Visually, the book delivers too. The photography is warm and inviting, capturing both the dishes and the atmosphere around them. It reinforces the central message: cooking isn't just about what's on the plate, but the moments created around it.

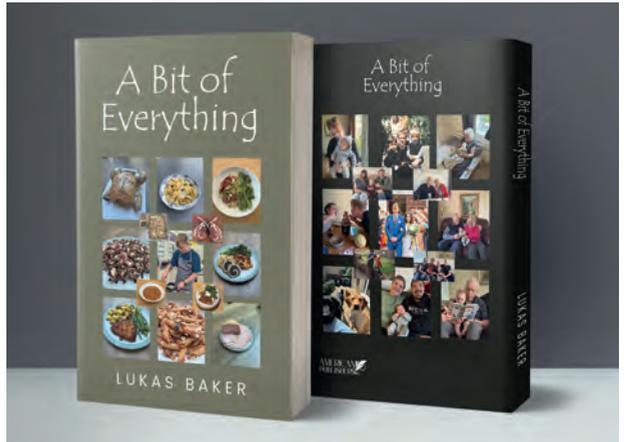
At its core, *A Little Bit of Everything* is about connection - to culture, to family and to the everyday rituals that shape our lives. Written with his young son in mind, the book carries a quiet but powerful intention: to pass down not just recipes, but confidence, curiosity and a love of good food.

For London families navigating busy schedules and diverse tastes, this cookbook feels particularly relevant. It doesn't ask you to change your life - it simply fits into it, making space for better meals and more meaningful moments.

And in today's world, that might just be the most valuable ingredient of all.

***A Bit of Everything* is available from Amazon.**

**[www.amazon.co.uk/Bit-Everything-Lukas-Baker/dp/1971228001/](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Bit-Everything-Lukas-Baker/dp/1971228001/)**



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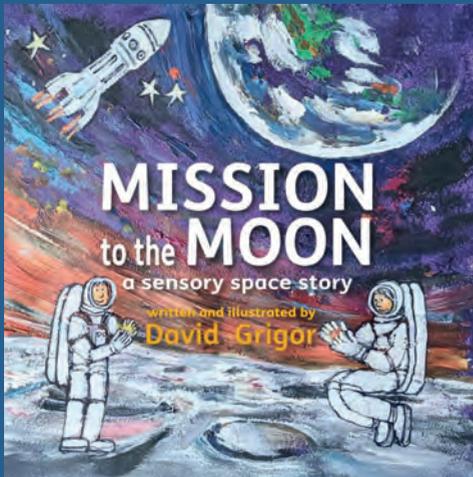


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## **Mission to the Moon: The Inclusive Children's Book Taking Young Readers on a Sensory Space Adventure**

If you have a little astronaut-in-training at home – the kind who gazes at the night sky and asks wonderfully earnest questions about life in space – *Mission to the Moon – A Sensory Space Story* may well become a new family favourite. Written and illustrated by David Grigor, a lifelong space enthusiast with real astronaut training experience, this children's book goes beyond storytelling to offer a fully immersive, inclusive experience.



At the centre of the story is Stella, a curious dreamer who longs to go the Moon with her brother Jake. When her brother draws an astronaut they're amazed when their Aunt Ava pictured in their poster un-expectedly appears and whisks them off on a mission to the Moon. What follows is a joyful imaginative journey through zero gravity, lunar breakfasts and cosmic problem solving all designed to invite children to imagine and actively participate.

What truly sets *Mission to the Moon* apart is its thoughtful, multi-sensory design. Developed in collaboration with PAMIS, the leading Scottish organisation supporting people with profound and multiple learning

disabilities (PMLD), the book has inclusivity at its heart. Unlike many sensory books aimed at narrow audiences, this one is deliberately written for everyone: early years readers, neurodivergent children, sensory seekers, reluctant readers and space-loving youngsters alike.

Each page blends visual richness, tactile ideas and playful prompts, allowing children to engage with the story at their own pace and in their own way. The result is a book that feels both educational and imaginative, without ever being prescriptive.

David Grigor's passion for space shines throughout. From childhood rocket paintings and tracking Halley's Comet to founding his school's Astronomy Society, his fascination eventually led him to attend the Educator's Space Academy in Huntsville, Alabama – twice. There, he completed simulated missions, met astronauts and earned the coveted "Right Stuff" medal. This background lends the story a reassuring sense of authenticity, with real space science gently woven into the narrative. There is also plenty of humour, including a much-loved section explaining how astronauts go to the toilet, which has reportedly caused great amusement in classrooms.

The book's inclusive ethos is deeply personal. As a dyslexic artist and father of a child with special needs, David understands the importance of accessible storytelling. His long-standing work with PAMIS helped shape the sensory elements that transform this book into a genuinely shared experience.

Early readers have responded warmly, describing *Mission to the Moon* as "beautifully textured", "fabulous" and "a great find for anyone interested in space".

Stella's adventure includes zero-gravity breakfasts, moonwalks, a cosmic treasure hunt and gentle lessons about bravery, imagination and discovery. Above all, it celebrates the idea that adventure – and dreaming big – is for everyone.

***Mission to the Moon – A Sensory Space Story* is available at Amazon (paperback £10.99, Kindle £4.99). An inclusive addition to any family bookshelf, it is a book that invites children and parents to explore the universe together.**

## PLAYMOBIL AND ESA LAUNCH NEW SPACE RANGE TO INSPIRE YOUNG EXPLORERS

**PLAYMOBIL is aiming for the stars with the launch of its new ESA Space Range, created in close collaboration with the European Space Agency (ESA). Designed to spark curiosity about science, engineering and space exploration, the range brings real-world mission concepts into imaginative, hands-on play for children.**

The launch is particularly significant as the PLAYMOBIL ESA Mars Research Rocket (72011) has been named a Hero Toy 2026 at this year's Toy Fair. The Hero Toy accolade highlights the most innovative and influential toys expected to shape the year ahead and is awarded by a panel of independent toy retailers and industry experts.

### Space exploration through play

Developed with direct input from ESA specialists, the Space Range translates authentic scientific tools and mission challenges into child-friendly playsets. From drilling equipment and sensors to docking platforms and reconnaissance vehicles, each set reflects real elements of planetary exploration while remaining accessible and fun for younger audiences.

At the centre of the collection is the award-winning Mars Research Rocket. Its modular design allows children to extend or shorten the rocket depending on the mission, encouraging creativity and problem-solving. The rocket docks with a mobile landing platform that doubles as a Martian base station, complete with movable crane arms for collecting soil samples and space for two astronauts, supporting rich storytelling and cooperative play.

The Mars Exploration Rover complements the rocket with features inspired by real ESA technology, including a drill, cameras and sensors used to search for signs of ancient life. Paired with a robot companion, the rover highlights the growing role of robotics in space missions. Completing the range are the Space Glider, an agile aerial vehicle for scanning the Martian surface, and the Astronaut with



Robot set, which promotes teamwork between humans and machines.

### STEM learning with imagination

The Hero Toy recognition reflects both PLAYMOBIL's commitment to innovation and the strength of its partnership with ESA. The range represents a clear move towards STEM-focused play, helping children explore scientific ideas through storytelling rather than screens or formal learning.

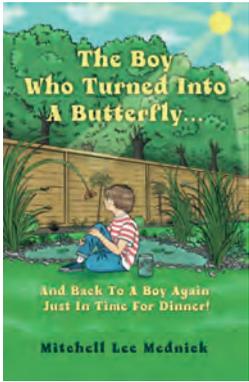
By embedding concepts such as sustainability, engineering and exploration into play, the ESA Space Range encourages children to imagine themselves as future astronauts, scientists or engineers. As PLAYMOBIL CEO Bahri Kurter explains, the goal is not just to entertain, but to inspire wonder and curiosity about what it might be like to explore Mars for real.

The PLAYMOBIL x ESA Space Range – including the Mars Research Rocket, Mars Exploration Rover, Space Glider and Astronaut with Robot – is available now and is recommended for children aged 4-10.

**For more information, visit [www.playmobil.com](http://www.playmobil.com)**



# A Caterpillar, a Boy, and a Magical Adventure



Some children's books entertain. Others quietly open a door to wonder. *The Boy Who Turned into a Butterfly... And Back to a Boy Again Just in Time for Dinner!* by Mitchell Lee Mednick does both.

Written for seven to twelve-year-olds, this debut introduces Richie, an ordinary boy whose school

nature project leads to an extraordinary encounter at his garden pond. A magical caterpillar and her wise butterfly mother soon send Richie on a soaring adventure where time stretches, flight becomes real, and imagination takes over.

## Where Magic Meets Learning

What makes this book special is how it blends storytelling with genuine curiosity. Through Richie's journey, young readers explore big questions: What would it really feel like to fly? How does transformation happen? The story doesn't force answers - it invites wonder.

Best of all, the back of the book includes full-colour diagrams explaining the life cycles of common garden creatures. Suddenly caterpillars and butterflies aren't just story characters - they're gateways to discovering the natural world outside your own window.

## Adventure, Heart and Happy Readers

The story moves fast with time travel, flight and metamorphosis, yet never loses its warmth. It's playful, accessible and perfect for reading aloud or for confident young readers tackling chapters on their own.

Parents love its innocence and imagination. Educators praise its educational value. With a five-star review from Online Book Club and consistent praise on Amazon, it's becoming a firm favourite in homes and schools alike.

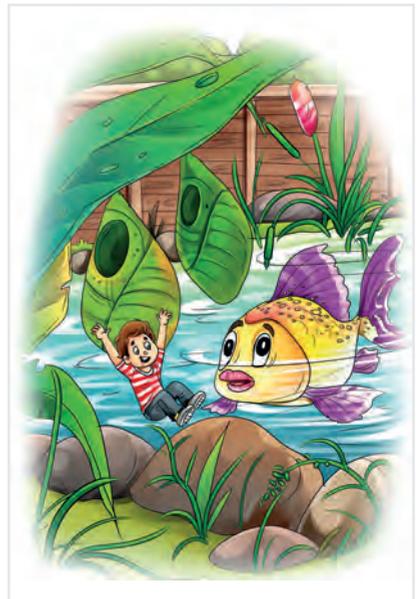
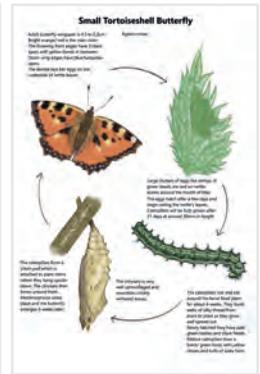
## Meet the Author

Mitchell Lee Mednick grew up surrounded by ponds, frogs and caterpillars - and that

lifelong passion for nature pours through every page. A father of two, he wrote the kind of book he'd have loved as a boy: thoughtful, exuberant and just a bit magical.

***The Boy Who Turned into a Butterfly... is available in paperback, hardback and Kindle on Amazon [www.amazon.co.uk/Turned-Into-Butterfly-Again-Dinner/dp/1739202783/](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Turned-Into-Butterfly-Again-Dinner/dp/1739202783/)***

**Perfect for bedtime, classroom reading or simply reminding children that the most extraordinary adventures often begin in the most ordinary places.**



## Star mum! *You'll Always Be My Baby*: Bestselling Poet Jessica Urlichs on Motherhood, Memories and the Words We All Feel

By Monica Costa

If you've ever scrolled Instagram while nap-trapped on the sofa, chances are Jessica Urlichs's words have stopped you mid-scroll. The New Zealand-based poet has built a global following by capturing the unspoken feelings of motherhood – the bittersweet, the exhausting, the overwhelming love that leaves you breathless.



Her latest picture book, *You'll Always Be My Baby*, began as a poem written in those hazy early days with a newborn and a toddler. Now it's a bedtime story for families everywhere. I caught up with Jessica to talk about the poem

that started it all and why she believes connection matters more than advice.

**You'll Always Be My Baby has touched millions. Do you remember the moment you first wrote it?**

I don't remember the exact moment – so many of those little pockets of writing happened during sleep-deprived nights or nap-trapped days. But I do remember holding my newborn and watching my other baby, who was just learning to walk. I remember how much heavier he felt in my arms, and how foreign that felt until I had another. It was that overwhelming bittersweet feeling – knowing that no matter how much he grew, I'd always see that little face somewhere in my son or daughter.

**The line "just heavier to hold" feels so powerful. What does it mean to you?**

It isn't just about the emotional weight we carry through different seasons. It's quite literal. I imagine holding my children at any age, and it would still feel completely natural. I think most mothers understand that.

**When did you first imagine this becoming a picture book?**

So many readers would tell me they read that particular poem to their children at night. They kept saying they'd love it as a bedtime story. I loved that idea immediately.

**You write about feelings parents struggle to put into words. Why do you think motherhood comes with so many unspoken emotions?**

We're just so busy with everything motherhood entails. It's hard to slow down and piece together the whirlwind. That's why I love seeing other mothers say "same" and "me too" – in an instant, we're seen and understood. Short bursts of poetry can be that breath, holding space for the highs and lows.

**Do you think feeling things deeply is both a gift and a challenge for a writer – and a parent?**

I think most creatives feel deeply and notice everything. I wouldn't change it, but it can be heavy. As mothers, we wear these feelings like a second skin while learning to live with constant exposure – the joy, worry, heartache, love. Writing helps me process it all.

**What's next for you creatively?**

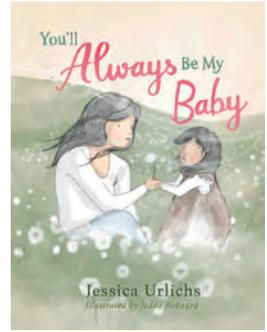
A motherhood journal called *The Years Are Short*. I want it to be something mums can leave behind for their children in their own voice, with my poetry prompts to guide them.

**Finally, what would you like parents reading this to know, right now in this season?**

I hope they know how much they gave today, how much they give every day, and that it's enough. We're all on this wonderful bumpy ride together.

***You'll Always Be My Baby* by Jessica Urlichs is available now.**

**Head to London Mums magazine online for the full interview.**



## Introducing *Buddy & Pal* (*K9: Snoops*): *Growlsville* A Sniff-tacular First Adventure

When mysterious happenings unsettle the quirky town of Growlsville, there's only one duo for the job. Bloodhound detectives Buddy and Pal are on the case. Armed with razor-sharp noses, clever teamwork and boundless courage, they sniff out clues, outsmart culprits and uncover the heart behind every mystery - proving that true heroes come with wagging tails.

In the first instalment of his delightful new children's series, Al Douglas introduces young readers to *Buddy & Pal (K9: Snoops): Growlsville*, a charming detective caper packed with heart, humour and heroism.

Set in the wonderfully eccentric Growlsville, and featuring a colourful cast of characters with playful nods to classic mystery tales, this engaging story is perfect for readers aged 6 to 10. Beneath the fun and adventure lies a touching thread: the duo's own search for a forever home. Through their escapades, children are gently encouraged to think critically, show empathy and embrace courage - all while enjoying a fast-paced canine adventure.

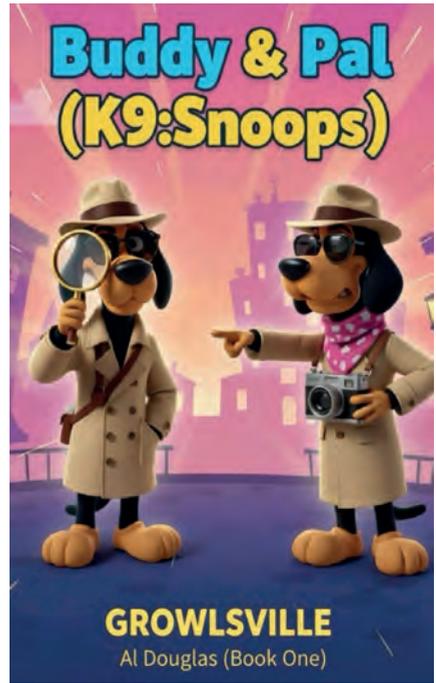
With its themes of friendship, loyalty and community, this pitch-perfect mystery is set to delight young detectives in training. It would also make a lovely addition to a Christmas stocking or birthday gift for any child who loves animals, humour and a good whodunnit.

### The Plot

Follow the tail-wagging *Buddy & Pal (K9: Snoops)* series of children's detective stories.

Meet Buddy and Pal, two brilliant pure-bred bloodhounds with an exceptional nose for trouble. These highly skilled sleuths are unmatched when it comes to tracking down missing persons and solving even the toughest cases. Yet despite their remarkable talents, these loyal companions long for a loving forever home where they can truly belong.

Join Buddy and Pal as they prove that no stone is left unturned for this lovable duo.



### The Author

Born in the village of Ystradgynlais in South Wales, Al Douglas is the creator of the *Buddy & Pal (K9: Snoops)* series. He moved to London at the age of five and, from just six years old, became involved in his father's entertainment agency, working alongside stars of stage and screen.

Al studied Dynamic Writing with Professor Stuart Browne (NYU) and later worked with renowned Hollywood screenwriting guru Syd Field (USC). He has been a member of the BBC Writers' Unit and maintains connections with several independent production companies. When not writing, Al enjoys spending time in the beautiful Welsh countryside.

**Independently published, *Buddy & Pal (K9: Snoops): Growlsville* is available in paperback (ISBN: 979-8270632854) priced at £6.99, and in Kindle format (£3.99). It is also available to purchase on Amazon.com**

**[www.amazon.com/BUDDY-PAL-K9-SNOOPS-GROWLSVILLE/dp/BOFYXSZGW5/](http://www.amazon.com/BUDDY-PAL-K9-SNOOPS-GROWLSVILLE/dp/BOFYXSZGW5/)**

## Reinvention, resilience and starting again: A memoir for anyone ready to rewrite their story

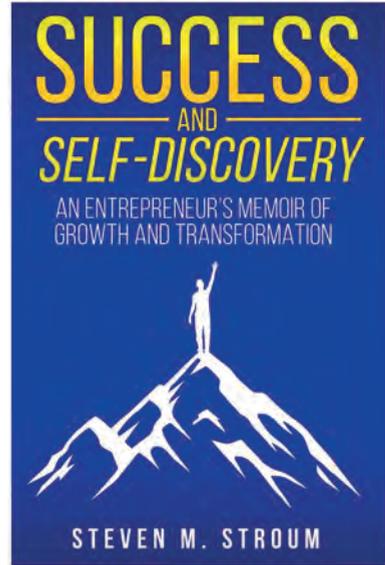
For many London mums, reinvention isn't just a concept - it's daily life. Careers pause, shift and restart alongside family, changing priorities and unexpected challenges. It's within this space that *Success and Self-Discovery: An Entrepreneur's Memoir of Growth and Transformation* by Steven M. Stroum finds its perfect audience.



Stroum has recently launched an updated website, [www.smstroum.com](http://www.smstroum.com), dedicated to his memoir, offering readers an overview, reviews and purchase links. But the book itself is the real draw - a life story shaped not by privilege, but by resilience, curiosity and the courage to begin again.

His journey starts with working-class roots in Massachusetts, followed by service in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War, a medical discharge, and a return to university. What follows is entrepreneurship built from the ground up - literally from a spare room in his parents' home with just \$300. Within a year, that venture grew to ten employees and hundreds of clients, eventually expanding to more than 2,000.

But this isn't a glossy success story. Stroum writes honestly about burnout, unexpected depression and the emotional toll of building a business. That balance - achievement paired with vulnerability - sets this memoir apart.



Readers will find practical lessons on marketing, sales and strategy, drawn from lived experience rather than theory. More importantly, they'll discover how setbacks became turning points, and how mindset - not background or age - often determines outcomes.

Critics have taken notice. *Writer's Digest* praises its honest, instructive approach, while *Midwest Book Review* calls it "exceptional and thoroughly reader-friendly," recommending it for entrepreneurs at every stage.

For London mums considering a career change, launching a business later in life, or redefining success on their own terms, this book offers reassurance rather than pressure. Its message is simple but powerful: growth isn't linear, success is personal, and reinvention is possible at any age.

In a world obsessed with quick wins, Stroum's memoir reminds us that meaningful achievement is built slowly, imperfectly, and with courage - lessons that extend far beyond business and into everyday life.

***Success and Self-Discovery: An Entrepreneur's Memoir of Growth and Transformation* is available via [www.smstroum.com](http://www.smstroum.com)**

## **Quiet Please! and Other Humorous Tales: The feel-good book that proves it's never too late to laugh**

**If you're looking for something to brighten a sunny afternoon in the garden (or a rainy one when the kids are bouncing off the walls), *Quiet Please! and Other Humorous Tales* by Denise Dumont may be the most delightful little read you didn't realise you needed. This collection of twenty light-hearted short stories arrives with all the charm of the first daffodil of spring and the warm glow of a well-brewed cuppa.**

Dumont's stories take place mostly in recognisable English towns and villages, though she's not above the occasional detour through a wizard's workshop or a time-travel mishap. Think *Midsomer Murders* meets *The Beano*, with a pinch of

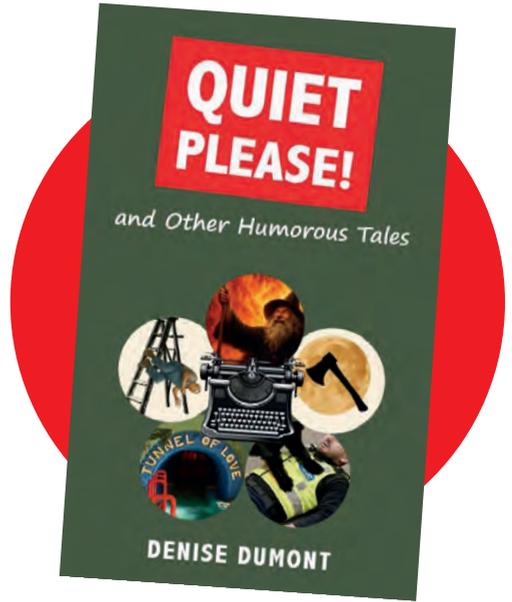


springtime magic.

Inside these pages, readers meet a puppy rescued by a lawnmower, a blackbird who becomes an unofficial family member, and a long-suffering woman pushed to the brink by her husband's endless DIY disasters. Dumont dedicates this book to all the little irritations of modern life - software updates that refuse to install, domestic mishaps that turn into epics - yet wraps them in such warmth that even a malfunctioning laptop begins to feel like a quirky family member.

The stories are bite-sized, perfect for dipping into during a quiet moment while the kids play in the garden or reading before bed when your brain is too tired for anything heavier than a biscuit. Each one ends with the sort of cosy satisfaction that feels wonderfully nostalgic - like a lazy Sunday afternoon.

What makes the book truly moving, beneath the comedy, is the author herself. Denise Dumont spent most of her working life wrangling numbers, armed



with qualifications in Maths, Statistics and Economics. It wasn't until after a major health challenge in her seventies - a cancer diagnosis and mastectomy - that she enrolled in a creative writing course and discovered, in her own words, "a new focus to keep me feeling positive." Eight years cancer-free, she decided to celebrate by publishing the stories that had grown from that moment of reinvention.

It's impossible not to feel inspired. Dumont's debut is a testament to the sheer joy of finding a new passion when life goes slightly, or spectacularly, off-script. And perhaps that's why the book feels so uplifting: it's written by someone who understands the power of small joys and the gentle magic of everyday life.

Whether you're shopping for a friend, your mum, or simply treating yourself to a fresh spring read, *Quiet Please! and Other Humorous Tales* is the kind of pocket-sized merriment that can brighten even the greyest April afternoon. Perfect for Mother's Day, Easter baskets, or just because.

Just add tea. And possibly a biscuit.

**Available on Amazon**  
[www.amazon.co.uk/dp/BOG53VMFP8](http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/BOG53VMFP8)

## What the Builder Won't Tell You: The straight-talking retrofit guide London families need

If words like insulation, ventilation and retrofit leave you feeling overwhelmed, you're not alone. Many London families living in draughty Victorian terraces or energy-hungry period homes want warmer, healthier spaces – but don't know where to start.

Judith Leary-Joyce's new book, *What the Builder Won't Tell You – The Essential Homeowner's Guide to an Energy Efficient, Healthy Home* (published 26 November 2025), cuts through the confusion with refreshing honesty and zero jargon.

### Retrofit, explained simply

Written in clear, conversational English, the book feels like advice from a knowledgeable friend rather than a technical manual. Leary-Joyce breaks down complex topics – insulation, ventilation, heating systems and indoor air quality – into manageable steps that build confidence rather than anxiety.

Importantly, she tackles the emotional side of renovation too: the fear of getting it wrong, being misled, or spending significant sums without fully understanding what you're paying for. For parents especially, the desire to create a safe, comfortable home for children can make decisions feel even more pressured. Her tone is reassuring and practical, never preachy.

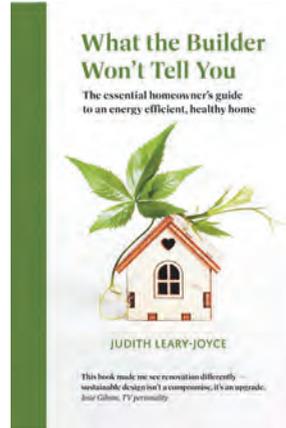
### Pulling back the curtain

As the title suggests, this is a candid guide. Leary-Joyce explains why some builders struggle to give clear retrofit advice – often due to outdated training or the fast-changing nature of energy-efficient design, not bad intentions.

She empowers homeowners to ask better questions, understand what good practice looks like, and collaborate confidently with professionals. From managing budgets to avoiding common pitfalls, the focus is on helping readers feel in control of their project – particularly relevant in London, where no two properties are alike.

### Health as well as savings

While rising energy bills are a major concern, the book's emphasis on health is a standout. Damp, mould and poor ventilation can



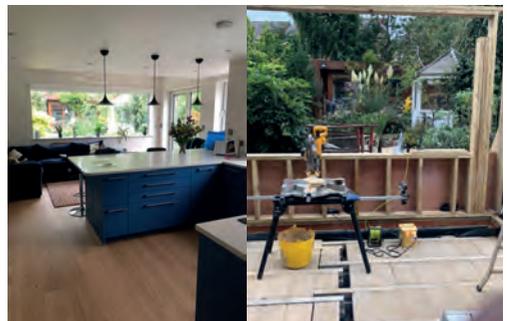
seriously affect children's respiratory health. Thoughtful retrofit choices, she explains, can improve air quality and create homes that genuinely support family wellbeing. Her approach is long-term and future-focused, encouraging sustainable decisions rather than quick fixes.

### Experience you can trust

Leary-Joyce practises what she preaches. Her deep retrofit of her own 1901 Victorian home reduced energy use by 75% and increased its value. Through her Instagram account @ecorenovationhome, she now shares accessible advice with over 175,000 followers.

For London homeowners considering improvements – whether small upgrades or a full renovation – this book offers something invaluable: clarity, confidence and practical guidance to create a warmer, healthier, energy-smart home without feeling out of your depth.

[www.ecorenovationhome.com](http://www.ecorenovationhome.com)



## What Now? Autism and Learning Difficulties: A book that speaks for families still fighting to be heard

There is a particular exhaustion that comes with parenting a child with additional needs into adulthood. It is quiet, cumulative, and deeply familiar to thousands of families who spend years navigating systems that promise support but rarely deliver it in ways that truly help.

Alicia Cook's *What Now? Autism and Learning Difficulties* is written from that lived reality. As the mother of two adult children - one with severe autism, the other with learning difficulties - Cook draws on nearly two decades of advocacy. Her book offers an honest, compassionate account of daily life when support is inconsistent, professionals change constantly, and parents are expected to fill every gap.

What makes this book powerful is its refusal to reduce complex lives to case studies. Instead, readers are invited into the routines, setbacks, small victories, and relentless advocacy required just to keep things moving. This is not a crisis narrative, but a long-term one - about adulthood, ageing parents, and the uncomfortable truth that many families are still asking the same questions years later: Who is responsible now? What happens next?

Unlike academic texts, this book speaks directly to families. Cook unpacks the



processes of seeking help - from education to health and social care - while acknowledging how emotionally draining they are. Her tone is practical, grounded, and deeply human.

For London Mums and others parenting children with additional needs, this book will feel achingly familiar. It offers reassurance: not solutions wrapped in platitudes, but the simple recognition that you are not imagining the difficulties, and you are not alone.

The book also serves a wider purpose. While awareness of neurodiversity is growing, understanding of adult SEN support lags behind. *What Now?* gently challenges this gap, calling for systems that are more responsive, consistent, and compassionate - not just in words, but in practice.

Cook explains: "After eighteen years of trying to get the right support, very little has changed. The professionals often don't truly help, and in the end, it all falls back on the parents. We hope this book helps others feel less alone."

That sense of not feeling alone is perhaps the book's greatest gift. Whether you are a parent, carer, educator, or professional, *What Now?* offers insight without judgement and honesty without despair. It is a book that does not shout, but it stays with you - quietly asking society to do better, and reminding families that their experiences matter.

***What Now? Autism and Learning Difficulties* by Alicia Cook is available on Amazon <https://tinyurl.com/3p3v6y62>**



# Why so many of us feel tired, stuck and out of balance – and what we can do about it



If you've ever felt exhausted despite "doing all the right things", struggled to shift weight after pregnancy or perimenopause, or noticed stress hits harder than it used to, you're not alone. UK data shows one in three adults now lives with metabolic dysfunction – the hidden driver behind obesity,

diabetes, heart disease and chronic fatigue.

Yet metabolic health remains a mystery. We're told to eat less, move more, manage stress – but rarely shown how these pieces connect, or why they stop working when life gets busy.

That's where Dr Sharief Ibrahim's *Your Metabolic Shift* comes in. Launching this Christmas 2025, it offers a practical, UK-focused guide to reclaiming health through realistic change – not fads or guilt.

## Metabolic health: the missing link

Metabolism isn't just about weight. It affects energy, mood, hormones, immunity and disease risk. When disrupted – by ultra-processed food, chronic stress, poor sleep and sedentary routines – the body struggles to regulate blood sugar, inflammation and fat storage.

Dr Ibrahim argues this isn't a failure of willpower, but a mismatch between modern life and human biology. His book shows how small, consistent shifts can create meaningful change – even in busy households.

## A doctor who became his own patient

What makes this book compelling is that it's not written from theory alone. Nearly 25 years ago, Dr Ibrahim – then a high-pressure hospital consultant – suffered a near-fatal metabolic collapse. Unable to walk a city block, he was forced to rethink everything about health.

His recovery was extraordinary. Through lifestyle change rather than drugs alone, he rebuilt his health and has since completed over 120 marathons, many after 60. That lived experience runs through the book, lending it warmth and credibility.

As he puts it: "Medicine can treat disease, but only lifestyle can prevent it."

## What the book covers

Rather than overwhelming readers, the book builds understanding step by step: the foundations of insulin resistance; links to conditions like PCOS, fatty liver and cognitive decline; and practical solutions on food, movement, sleep and stress – including 75 whole-food recipes. For parents and midlife women, the emphasis on sustainability over restriction feels timely.

## Why this matters now

Arriving before the festive season – traditionally a time of excess followed by regret – *Your Metabolic Shift* offers an alternative narrative. One that restores trust in the body's ability to heal when given the right conditions.

Dr Ibrahim is clear: "We've been fighting the wrong battle. Drugs manage symptoms, but only a metabolic reset restores true health."

For *London Mums* readers, this book speaks to a growing realisation: that wellbeing isn't about chasing an ideal body, but about having the energy to show up for our families – now and in the years ahead.

***Your Metabolic Shift* is available from [www.drshariefibrahim.com](http://www.drshariefibrahim.com). Paperback, hardback and e-book are on Amazon and IngramSpark. The audiobook is available everywhere except Amazon.**



# Toy Fair 2026

## Why play has grown up (and got a lot more interesting)

By Monica Costa

If you walked the halls of Toy Fair London 2026 expecting one shouty, fight-for-it Christmas toy, you'd have left confused but oddly optimistic. This year delivered something better: a market that has finally found its footing.

UK toy sales rose 6% last year, with strong growth in games and puzzles. Licensed toys - driven by *Stranger Things*, *Wicked* and *Minecraft* - now account for over a third of the market. But licensing alone isn't enough. A third of the British Toy & Hobby Association's 30 Hero Toys are priced at £15 or under, proving innovation isn't just for premium budgets.

The message is refreshing: play should last, include everyone, have no age limit, and doesn't need to be perfect to be brilliant. There may not be one toy everyone fights over - but there is something better: a richer, more interesting play landscape that reflects how families actually live now. And frankly, it's about time.

**Here's what will shape play in 2026.**

### Learning, but make it a story

Educational toys have stopped feeling like homework. The strongest products now wrap learning inside stories and characters rather than worksheets. Smart Games' *Hansel & Gretel Deluxe* combines physical puzzle play with a storybook, while LEGO launches four Education STEM sets to inspire scientific discovery at home. Children don't want to be taught; they want to be invited in.



### Imagination over batteries

One clear message was a deliberate move away from battery-powered everything. Brands are leaning into toys that last, replay well and don't need charging every six months. Manufacturers have realised that imagination is the most sustainable power source. Parents want investments, not landfill in waiting.

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## Monsters, Weirdness and the end of “Nice”

Cute had a good run. 2026 belongs to the odd and deliberately wrong. With *Stranger Things* looming large and Gen Alpha humour leaning into irony, “brain rot” characters are everywhere. Even toddler toys have attitude - Snootz ride-ons, particularly Sir Lickalot, target 18 months with a wink rather than a lullaby. Perfection is boring. Kids want personality, even if it’s a bit unhinged.

## Kidults are here to stay

Adult play is no pandemic blip. Puzzles, brain games and beautifully designed objects for grown-ups are now permanent fixtures. Happy Puzzle impressed with witty illustrated scenes, from gardening to healthcare themes. Circana data backs this up: 76% of 18–34-year-olds bought a toy for themselves last year. Play is officially ageless.



## Space is back - Smarter

Space never really goes away, but this year it felt less sci-fi spectacle and more quiet ambition. Playmobil’s Space Station focuses on curiosity and engineering thinking, not flashy lights. Imagination does the heavy lifting.



## Create, Film, Escape

Toys are becoming experiences rather than objects. Stikbot Shinies combines figures with a green screen app for stop-frame animation, while The Mystery Agency delivers escape rooms in a box. Children want to create content, not just consume it.



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