

"No One Will Play With Me" Podcast Episode
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Helena Mooney [00:00:00]:

Hello, and welcome to this week's episode of Parenting with Play. I'm Helena Mooney, and I'm so pleased you're here because how many times has your child come home saying, mommy, nobody will play with me. If they have, how have you felt? It's heartbreaking, isn't it? My mom has told me the story of how I used to do that. I used to come back from infant school as it was then. And, so it'd be years kinder, year 1. And, I'd come home and say, mommy, nobody would play with me. And she was heartbroken. She was just so She found it really painful.

Helena Mooney [00:00:42]:

She said that was the hardest thing I would say to her because She remembered how painful it was to have nobody playing with her. And so that's what I wanna talk to you About today is how our own anxiety, our own experiences, They impact how we can then support our children. So have you ever experienced nobody playing with you? Whether it's a small child, maybe when you were older, maybe even now. Goodness. You know? Sometimes rocking up at school to do pickup, it can be a bit like, Who's gonna talk to me today? You know, it can be really awkward. And that's the thing with school is when our children go back to school or they start at school, A lot of those sort of politics that we thought we'd left behind in our own playgrounds, they come back. And so we can have that similar experience of standing there, feeling left out, Feeling the new person, not really sure what to do, feeling really awkward, seeing other groups of moms, you know, having hilarious Chats and time together, and you're like, oh, hello. Will nobody play with me? So as ever with parenting, When we encounter difficulty with our child, it's so helpful to work on how it was for us.

Helena Mooney [00:02:15]:

So how was school for you? Were you one of those amazingly popular people who always had a 1000000 friends, or did you find Playground and playtime, hard. That you're sort of there standing, going, oh, I don't know where to go. Maybe you'd hang out with the teacher just because You didn't know what to do, and you found playtime really hard. The problem when we find something really hard is that our we can't help our children in the way that they need us to help them. Because what our children really need is when they come to a problem, is then We have the confidence in them, in their situation, in our ability to help them. You know, when you're little, You go to mom, and mom makes everything better, doesn't it? Doesn't she? But there's times when we can't. And when our children are away from us, that's a really hard thing for us to navigate. Because you can't go into the playground at playtime and demand people play with them, kids play with your child.

Helena Mooney [00:03:20]:

You can't be with them even to sort of hang out with them if they

are sitting on their own. Our kids going to school brings Brings a whole extra level of anxiety for us, doesn't it? Because then we go, okay. There's a limit to what I can do. And, we can feel that you can end up feeling really powerless and helpless yourself. This is made doubly worse If you have unhealed hurts that is similar to the challenge that your child is going through. So If you were one of those children who struggled at playtime and, actually, you know, e I've talked to loads of parents about this, obviously. And, you know, even the Parents or the kids who were popular, who did seem to have lots of friends, they would still have moments of going, oh, Nobody's gonna play with me. It's such a universal, painful experience that pretty much every single person has had.

Helena Mooney [00:04:18]:

So But it can then bring up you know, your child going through something similar can sort of I don't wanna use the trauma word, but, you know, re traumatize you. It can make you bring up those Feelings are just like, oh, awkwardness and inadequateness, and it's really yucky. And then sometimes, you know, when you go back into those feelings, you can it can spiral and go, oh, gosh. You know, nobody played with me. I was so friendless. I'm not worthy. You know? I'm not enough. I'm, you know, we whatever it is, that familiar story that you tell yourself, it's actually very easy to go back in there when that, when that deep wound is charged and opened up again by your child's experience.

Helena Mooney [00:05:05]:

So the best thing that you can do when your child is having a hard time is for you to go, okay. I'm having a really hard time with this. I need to go and get support around my feelings so that I can best help my child. Now you know I talk a lot about listening partnerships, also recommend having sessions, booking time with me, you know. And Sometimes we can want to minimize how how we feel, don't we? We go, oh, you know, I felt this, but, you know, it wasn't that bad. I did have friends, you know, or First of all, problems or, you know, I wasn't as bad as other people or you know, we can really minimize Our experiences and our sense of pain and hurt and shame and that doesn't help it doesn't help you. It doesn't help anybody. It doesn't help the people who were worse off and you for you to minimize your experience.

Helena Mooney [00:05:57]:

It doesn't help anybody, so I invite you to stop doing that, to know that your experience is it matters. And it matters even more than just for you because It mat it impacts your child. When you feel underconfident about something, your child can't then work through those feelings resting in your confidence because you're all activated. So don't minimize your own experiences. Journal them. Call a listening partner. Book time with me. Work through those or if you have a therapist, Say those tiny minute things that you might just go, oh, that feels awkward, to work through it.

Helena Mooney [00:06:41]:

Because when you do that, you can then Reassess even the situation.

You know, I I I still talk about my childhood playground experiences sometimes when it gets very painful for me. You know, feeling left out, feeling that I can't do things that other children are doing. You know, I've got real key moments that I remember from when I was, like, 5 or 6. You know? And I'm 50 now, so there's an element of like, come on. Get over yourself, Helena. Move on. But those early Hurts and painful experiences, they shape us because we then just we make nonconscious decisions going, oh, well, I'm not that type of person, or I'm not lovable, or I'm not in the cool gang, or whatever it is that you've told yourself.

Helena Mooney [00:07:28]:

Those those Deep beliefs that we create about ourselves, they're formed from those childhood experiences. So it's really, really beneficial that you then go And address them and work through them for your own benefit. It will have such an impact on you now and also for your child's benefit too. Because I had a similar experience. My my youngest, George, who's, you know, he's he 4th move, very confident little chappy. And he came home one day saying, nobody would play with me, mommy. And, of course, I immediately had a flashback to my own experience and and also then my experience of my mom telling me how hard it was for her to hear my Me saying that because of her own experience. So, you know, when we work on our own experiences, we stop that being passed down or we at least reduce The severity of it being passed down through the generations.

Helena Mooney [00:08:22]:

My mom's experience impacted my experience, which could Impact my son's experience. You know? And we do this all subconsciously. We it's not, consciously knowing that what we're doing. So it's so beneficial to work on your own stuff. So, yeah, George came home to me crying his little eyes out. I hate school. Nobody would play with me in the playground, and, you know, would name these friends of his that he hates suddenly because they wouldn't play with him. Nobody would play with him.

Helena Mooney [00:08:54]:

And it's heartbreaking. He was sobbing away, and I'm like, Oh my god. This is so hard, this poor little thing. You know? Why is nobody playing with him? What's wrong with him? Gosh. Those children, they must be mean. You know, all of these childhood thoughts started to come through my head. Why are they not playing with him? What's wrong? They're horrible. I never liked them in the 1st place.

Helena Mooney [00:09:17]:

You know? All of those things would start to come up for me. And I had to really consciously go, hang on. Let what I need to do right now is I just need to listen to George's feelings because I can't fix it. I can't make let's call him James, for example. I can't make James play with my little boy. You know? We can't force people to like our children or to play with them, so we can't influence them. What we Can do is help our child. So I listened to George without saying, well, what about so and so? What about so and so? You know,

trying to fix it because I couldn't.

Helena Mooney [00:09:55]:

His experience was nobody played with him. His world felt like it was falling apart. It was all awful. He hated school. Didn't wanna go there. And I'm like, oh god. Here we go. So I listened and I listened.

Helena Mooney [00:10:08]:

And then what happened after a little while is he moved through the storm of the big feelings. And then we were talking, and he was going, yeah. I played with so and so on the monkey bars. I'm like, hang on. I didn't say this. I was like, hang on a second. Didn't you just tell me, like, 10 minutes ago that nobody played with you? And then it turned out that he played with somebody else at lunchtime and did something else. You know, it actually turned out that it wasn't true that nobody played with him.

Helena Mooney [00:10:40]:

Feelings are not always facts. So when your child comes to you really charged, really full of feelings, you know, about something that just seems so awful, and you could immediately believe them that that is actually what happened. I encourage you to allow your child to express the feelings, to say everything that they're feeling, to offload, And then just to see actually what was happening. Because in the case of my son on that time, it actually wasn't true. He did have people to play with. He did do things with some of his friends. Now my interpretation of it is that some of his key friends Didn't wanna play with him that time. And that is painful.

Helena Mooney [00:11:24]:

And but that is also his friend's prerogative. They're perfectly entitled to to say, no. I don't want to play with you right now, and they go and play with somebody else. And that is what I love about Aware Parenting and hand in hand parenting We're not snowplowing in front of our children so that they never experience anything bad or we're not sort of swooping in I'm removing them from, you know, socially challenging situations. What we can do is we can help our children so that they can navigate those situations much, much, much better. Because when children carry hurt and shame and fear and doubt, They interact differently with the children around them. I know that so clearly. You know? I've been very anxious at times.

Helena Mooney [00:12:13]:

And, you know, you know when you're anxious at times And you're with a group of people who you don't know and don't feel very comfortable with, you start to say the most ridiculous things. So afterwards you go, oh god. Why did I say that? What was I thinking? But, you know, when you're anxious, your brain isn't thinking well. You're not relaxed. You're in stress mode. So you're you're not in a relaxed state of thinking about funny things to say or interesting things or just non ridiculous things to say. So what we wanna do is we wanna help our children offload the hurt that they might be feeling so

that they can come back to feeling calmer within themselves, Become more confident within themselves, and then they will interact with the children around them in a much more positive way rather than in a fearful manner or in an overbearing trying to overcompensate manner. It actually is so powerful just to really hear your child's feelings.

Helena Mooney [00:13:13]:

So I listened to George's feelings, found out that actually he did have people to play with. He wasn't sitting on his own. I mean, there's been times when he has sat on his own, but in this instance, he wasn't sitting on his own. He was playing with other people. He was just hurt that some of the friends that he wanted to play with didn't wanna play with him. So that was his feeling. So to him, it did feel like nobody played with him. It was so overwhelming and very, very painful.

Helena Mooney [00:13:36]:

And that was his feeling, and that was his interpretation of the whole experience. But by me listening to him, it helped to shift that. But he no longer carried that belief that nobody played with me. And he could then go back to school the next day feeling more confident he wasn't carrying that fear, shame, doubt, all of those lovely things that we carry when we're not heard. So The next time your child says, nobody will play with me, allow them to just fully express what that actually means. It could mean that they hate school and they They slag off all their friends and tell them tell you how much, you know, they hate him that, you know, your child and your child hates them, and Everybody's mean and no. No. No.

Helena Mooney [00:14:24]:

Because, you know, often our initial reaction, isn't it, is to move in and to fix it, to go, okay. Well, you know, maybe I'll call the teacher And and get them to to buddy you up with somebody and, you know, and, you know, all of these things we try and fix the situation. You can absolutely do all of that. And if this becomes a persistent thing where you think, actually, my child is lonely at playground. Nobody really is playing with them. Then, of course, speak to the teacher and Ask for their feedback because, again, you know, when our children are full of feelings, they don't always say exactly the truth of it. They they Say how they feel about it. So, you know, the teacher can then observe your child and go, well, yeah, they did struggle here.

Helena Mooney [00:15:04]:

But, actually, they played, you know, with somebody in a different year perhaps or whatever. So it's and it's it's helpful for the teacher to know what's going on so that they They can facilitate friendships. They can try and encourage your child to perhaps do a class activity with a child that they haven't Don't don't normally hang out with to try and foster a friendship there. But the first the very first instance is really to help your child with their feelings. Listen to them. Allow them to fully express everything. And they're not trying to counter. Like, I didn't really say to

George, oh, you see? You see? You did have people to play with.

Helena Mooney [00:15:40]:

Don't be so you know, because you don't want them to feel like, oh, I'm ridiculous or, You know, what I'm saying is not true. If you just gently then go, oh, okay. So you did play. Yeah. Okay. You know? And allowing them to come to that realization and to feel that within themselves without us trying to impose a particular narrative on the experience. But it all in order to do that, you then need to work on your own feelings beforehand, if particularly if it's something charged. So now I have done a lot of work around feeling left out, and that's not to say I don't feel that.

Helena Mooney [00:16:16]:

You know? There's still times when I still feel awkward and, You know? Do people like me? Especially because we've just moved, you know, and all of that sort of yucky feeling, but it's much, much less. And I've been able to work through that. And it's hard. Sometimes it's really uncomfortable to feel that that shame and that That fear and that left outness that you would have felt as a child, it's it's you know, it's a good reason why we suppress our feelings because some of them are really horrible. And And not the right word now, but basically, you know, developmentally, to be excluded from the tribe is used to equate to death. You know, if you're left out of your tribe, you're not given access to food, water, shelter, you're not gonna survive on your own your own. So, actually, those intense feelings of being left out, of, of not feeling supported or having people around you, That is intensely painful for a very good reason because for so many millennia, it's meant Death, which now social death, is very painful. It's not fatal, but it's not It's not pleasant at all.

Helena Mooney [00:17:28]:

So don't minimize it from your child. I I don't think you would because you know how painful it is, but also just acknowledging that it really is. And so you can often, As I said earlier on, minimize your experience going well. Actually, you know, it was alright. I was fine. But those intense feelings, Honor them. Work through them because you will come out the other side, and you will be able to be more confident within yourself and to be able to help your child child better. And, you know, when you're listening to your child just sort of going falling apart, don't sort of try and interrupt them with pointing out what is or what isn't true necessarily or trying to get them to see on the bright side.

Helena Mooney [00:18:04]:

They will do that naturally, but they need to go through that offloading, releasing process with you. So just really hang in tight. Let them do that. They will come out the other side, and you will you will help your child at really core level by doing that. Now if you want extra help with school because, obviously, we have, you know, we need to help our children with a whole myriad of things like Homework or separation anxiety or just, you know, even settling in and having to do what teacher tells them to do. My son does not

like that. I mean, who does? But Yeah. It's hard.

Helena Mooney [00:18:39]:

So if you want to help your child, particularly if your child's getting anxious, and it could be that your child is just starting school now, Or it could be that they are just struggling. They've been going for a while, and they're having a hard time. I am running a overcoming school anxiety workshop. Now if you're listening to this before 15th February in 2024, you can come and join me live. And I'm designing it so that it's really interactive. It's not just a information podcast episode, it's you getting involved, working through some of those harder parts so that, you know, you're being supported in order to be able to work through your things to be able to then help your child. I'll also give you loads of strategies and games and things that you can do to help your child feel more confident when they're at school. So I really encourage you to come on over to helenamoney.comforward/school.

Helena Mooney [00:19:31]:

And if you're listening to this After 15th February, the recording will be available. So come on over to that same web address, helenamoney.comforward/school, and you'll be able to, gain access to it there. Alright. If you've got any questions about school, Send them to me. I would love to answer episodes on about that. Answer you in a podcast episode. If you like this episode, I'd be very grateful if you could give it a star rating, leave a comment, positive comment. If you have a negative comment, Feel free to email me directly.

Helena Mooney [00:20:09]:

And that would really help me just to get this out more to more people to help them be able to help their children. Alright. So remember, feelings are not always facts. Work on things that you have gone through so that you can then help your child. Because like I said, with my mum, the experience that she had sort of passed down to me. And I could easily have passed it down to George, and he could have, you know, subsequently passed it on and on and on. So you doing the work on yourself is stopping You're passing it on for future generations. And then know that you can help your child.

Helena Mooney [00:20:47]:

You helping them with their feelings is what's gonna help them be confident in those situations, to be able to navigate them better. And what you are doing Is helping them in the playground, you know, when they're 5 and 6, and it is hard, you're really setting them up so well for when they get to those teen years and twenties and having to navigate life. The this is such an important time, and you can really help your child. So if you want more help with a variety of other things relating to school, come on over to helenamoney.comforward/school And join me at overcoming school anxiety workshop. Alright, lovelies. Have a really good week, and I'll see you next time.