

HALF OF UK PARENTS THINK LOCKDOWNS HAVE MADE THEM A BETTER PARENT

- Parents spent 50% more time playing with kids during lockdowns versus before
- Quarter who didn't have time to read bedtime stories before lockdown, have done so since
- A third of parents say unstructured time together has improved bond with children
- Unstructured time has also seen a return to simpler family pastimes like baking and crafting
- Two in five parents say they've become better at entertaining themselves as a family away from screens in lockdown
- Kids also enjoyed the benefits – nearly half say having more play time was the best thing about lockdown
- Dr. Sam Wass, child psychologist and *The Secret Life of Four/Five/Six-Year-Olds* expert, shares [his tips](#) on how to keep up the positives of lockdown family life as restrictions ease

As children return to school this week, half of UK parents (48%) say that despite juggling home schooling, work and household chores, lockdown has made them better parents.

A study looking at lockdown parenting learnings, commissioned by toy brand [Melissa & Doug](#), revealed that pre-pandemic, weekday life was too busy for two in five surveyed families (38%) to enjoy quality time together.

But with more unstructured time in lockdown, however, the survey found parents were able to spend 50% more time playing with their children during a typical lockdown week compared to before.

On average, play time rose from 5 hours and 16 minutes to 7 hours and 53 minutes per week.

A quarter of parents of 3-10 year-olds, who were unable to read their children a bedtime story prior to lockdown, were able to do so after March 2020. Just over two-fifths now had the time to watch a family film from start to finish.

A third of surveyed parents (34%) say that unstructured time with their children has improved their bond, 36% have a greater understanding of their child's personality and needs, while 31% listen to their children more compared to before the lockdowns.

Other simpler family pastimes have also resurfaced thanks to lockdown. Two in five parents (38%) say their family has become better at entertaining themselves away from screens, with a resurgence of activities including baking and arts and crafts.

Nearly half (46%) of children say having more play time was the best thing about the lockdowns, games and puzzles were named children's most played with lockdown toys by parents.

Another third of parents (34%) vow to continue unstructured family time due to its positive impact.

The findings were analysed by Dr Sam Wass, child psychologist and expert on *The Secret Life of Four/Five/Six-Year-Olds*. Dr. Wass comments: *"Parents have been quick to beat themselves up about doing a bad job during lockdown so, it's refreshing to see how many, on reflection, can see the benefits of this unprecedented time for family life. The benefit of unstructured time has been hugely beneficial for parents and children alike from strengthening bonds through more play, story time and arts, crafts, and puzzles.*

Jacqueline Taylor-Foo, Melissa & Doug's international vice president, adds: *"It's really encouraging to see how parents have taken positive learnings out of such a challenging time. Reflecting on the benefits*

of unstructured time, creativity and important bonding experiences, these are all part of our Melissa & Doug DNA as a toy brand.

When asked about the parenting lessons lockdown has taught them, 40% of parents surveyed say they've learnt to keep things simple and not get stressed about minor issues.

38% have a new appreciation for teachers and childcare professionals, while over a quarter (27%) admit that they've learnt not to compare their parenting skills to others'.

Dr. Sam has shared his tips on how to keep up the positives of lockdown family life, as restrictions ease, on [Melissa & Doug's Facebook page](#).

ENDS

About Melissa & Doug

From classic wooden toys to role-playing games, handicrafts and games, Melissa & Doug's products provide a range that will spark the imagination of all children and give them a sense of wonder. In this way they can discover themselves, their passions and their purpose.

Since the company was founded in 1988, Melissa & Doug have provided innovative products in 19 different categories that inspire open-ended thinking and encourage little ones to see new possibilities and open up countless ways to play. The aim is to encourage children to develop naturally and to use the toys to help them explore their world and develop their full potential!

The company employs around 1,000 people worldwide, sells products in more than 140 countries, and is one of the 11 largest toy companies in the United States and has its UK office in Rickmansworth.

About Dr. Sam Wass

Dr. Wass is a child psychologist based at the University of East London and featured as the on-screen expert for the multi-award-winning Channel 4 Series *The Secret Life of Four/Five/Six-Year-Olds*. Dr. Sam gained a first-class undergraduate degree in Experimental Psychology at Oxford University, and did his PhD at the Centre for Brain Cognitive Development in London.

Dr. Sam's research examines how concentration, stress and learning capacities develop during childhood. His current research project examines how noisy early home environments affect concentration and mental health in children growing up in diverse socio-economic status backgrounds in East London.