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Issue 31 Winter 2020-2021



# London Mums



Edward Norton



Dara Ó Briain

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**Star mumpreneur  
Fearne Cotton  
talks about her  
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## Editor's letter



Photographer Simon Williams

Phew! The pandemic has made us all reflect on our lives and hopefully act more mindfully towards ourselves, our loved ones and nature. As this dramatic year draws to a close, we need to keep positive. To help create more happiness around us, I interviewed star mumpreneur Fearné Cotton who founded a special Happy Place which spreads joy on a daily basis through inspirational podcasts and now an album featuring original songs.

Enjoy our chat including her views on modern-day parenting and anecdotes from her family life.

Fearné's concept is the same that inspired me to create the London Mums magazine and network with the aim to provide daily comfort and positivity to parents. Since I was a little girl I wanted to edit a newspaper of only good news and I can now say that I have managed to fulfil my dream.

During the quarantine we couldn't have survived the loneliness without music, movies and art in general. Luckily, our film reporter Francesca Lombardo attended the Rome Film Fest and met Hollywood legend Edward Norton. Don't miss insightful stories about his amazing career.

In a fun telephone chat, star dad comedian and genuinely qualified space expert Dara Ó Briain told me how to send a Tik Tok to Mars, how he felt inspired to write his latest children's book *Is Anybody Out There?* and how to become a stand-up comedian.

If the lack of sunshine makes you feel blue, it's probably time to escape. So, in this issue you'll also find suggestions for happy destinations in Tuscany to get you in the festive mood.

Find out the trendiest gifts in Santa's sack in the London Mums' Christmas gift guide and shopping wish lists.

I hope you will enjoy reading this Winter issue as much as the London Mums' team have loved making it!

**Spread the word – London Mums is totally and utterly FREE!**

Monica Costa

Editor in chief, Founder of London Mums & mum

of 14-year-old Diego [monica@londonmums.org.uk](mailto:monica@londonmums.org.uk), [@londonmums](https://www.londonmums.com)

*Monica*

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**THE  
BIG  
INTERVIEW**



**FEARNE COTTON**

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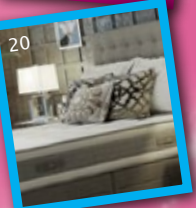
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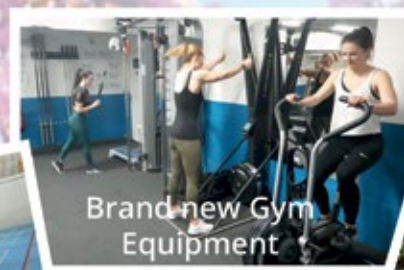
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# Fearne Cotton

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STAR MUMPRENEUR  
TALKS ABOUT HER  
HAPPY PLACE

BY MONICA COSTA

The occasion for my latest interview with the incredibly talented mumpreneur Fearne Cotton, one of the UK's most popular broadcasters, is the release of the album *Happy Place* for Decca Records that she has curated for the very first time as Executive Producer. *Happy Place* features original songs with a blissful narrative, written and recorded by a collection of inspirational artists and friends including Emeli Sande, Sam Fender, Ludovico Einaudi, Billie Marten, Amahla, Tommy Ashby, Larry Pink The Human, Luke Sital Singh, Ryan Lewis, Geejay, Kye Sones, Amelia Warner and Stephan Moccio. They have all contributed unique songs, that focus conversation and communication around mental health and well-being.

Fearne created the well-being brand *Happy Place* in 2018 as a destination for happiness & joy in the everyday, a safe space where differences are celebrated,

the extraordinary is discovered and kindness dwells at its core. *Happy Place* engages a community of 10.5 Million on social media, a frank and honest No.1 Podcast with over 32 million downloads and an emerging festival brand with over 12,000 attendees in its first year. Guests featured on these inspirational podcasts include Ellie Golding, Hilary Clinton, Russell Brand, Gary Barlow, Alicia Keys, Jada Pinkett Smith, and Elizabeth Gilbert amongst others.

Work aside, Fearne is a mother of 2 and continues to find time to support a range of charities with seemingly no challenge too big for her. She has a very warm and genuine personality and is not afraid to speak up and dare to be different. This is what I like the most about her and why I consider her a great inspiration for all mothers.







**You have co-written 'Lockdown Kittens Dancing' with GABA and music from Amelia Warner and narrated by Dame Helen Mirren. What is the inspiration behind this piece?**

**FC:** I cannot quite believe that Helen said yes. She really loved the lyrics and wanted to be part of this project, which makes it even more meaningful for me. I really wanted someone with gravitas and wisdom, so that when it's been narrated you listen to those lyrics and take heed because it's an individual with great life experience saying them. Musically, I did not have anything to do with it as I am not musical at all, although I am deeply passionate about music but I don't play an instrument. Amelia Warner gave us the gorgeous composition that floats in the background. I wanted to hear a recreation of that Baz Luhrmann's song *Everybody's Free To Wear Sunscreen* because to me that was one of the '90s most poignant piece of music. I have never heard anything like it since. That's where the idea started. I emailed my friend Adam (Martin) who hosts the podcast GABA, which I am a huge fan of and loved lyrically how he writes the meditation scripts for GABA. He luckily said yes and then we brainstormed ideas about mental health, self-esteem, social media, the important things we experienced during lockdown. That's thematically how the song was formed. I am glad people are getting something from the lyrics. For kids it could be a soothing bedtime story.

Music is fundamental in all our expressions. Musicians cannot do anything at the moment. They have been really struggling during the pandemic. This is why with this album, in particular, I wanted to champion emerging talents. It's so important to get new artists on there who this year might have been booked to do a guest slot at a festival or support another band and now cannot do any of it. We had to look at supporting them in a different way. It is crucial for everybody's expression whether you are an artist

or on the receiving end of that as a fan because music is so enjoyable. I feel even more grateful at the moment to have worked on this album because of the circumstances we find ourselves in and because we are missing the live experiences and the human connections.

The album starts with the song *Sometimes It Snows In April* by Ludovico Einaudi. I interviewed him in a mini episode on the Happy Place podcast and he said that lockdown stopped him from relentless gigging so he wrote a small song every day like a diary to remember how that day felt. How genius is that! His collection of lockdown songs encapsulates the feelings of the time we are living in. What we wanted to capture on this album is the mood of this time and how people have dealt with it and I feel really lucky that I have had the most brilliant group of musicians working on it.

Mental health and music have always been linked. It might not be immediately recognisable but music has the potency and power to help us work through difficult emotions, understand ourselves a little better and release unlocked feelings that have been suppressed. I have personally always used music to cathartically work through tough patches or to boost me when there is heaviness present.

I really hope this album envelopes the listener as each musician/artist has poured a little of their own emotion and experience into each song. Some of the tracks may elevate emotions to move through a low, others may offer up solace as lyrics resonate and melodies create movement & enjoyment.

As a massive music fan, it really is a dream come true to work with some of my favourite artists in marrying my passion for music and interest in mental health. This album will soothe on a stressful day and is a great soundtrack for meditation. It was made with 100% love.

**I particularly liked California Blue by Luke Sital Singh.**

**FC:** Everybody I am talking to says the same. Melodically, it's such a brilliant song that seems to resonate with people. Each song really tells a story so one might really leap out at you and be a song that you may listen to when you are in a thoughtful mood or others might jump out at you and you may want to play them when you feel quite joyful. That was certainly my hope for it.

**What's your Happy Place? What makes you really happy?**

**FC:** Just being outside in our local park. I also love being by the sea. That's not often, unfortunately. The older I get the more I crave being in nature. I am

currently working from home so if I have a free hour I turn off the phone and walk around and listen to the sounds. That's enough to ground me and get me back in the room if I had a tough time. During lockdown when we could go nowhere, we just went to the local park. We'd sit there for hours and my kids would play on the stream and look for newts and frogs. Simple good stuff like that is my favourite.

As you get older, you re-evaluate things and focus on the important things like family, health and the planet. You start not look so much for external cues to feel happy like buying stuff, wanting things or desiring certain people in your life. It's more about an experience of just being peaceful and that for me is definitely about being in nature. That's the biggest kick for me, always.

**How have you coped during lockdown?**

**FC:** It's been tough seeing family members going through difficult moments health-wise and I've had a lot of anxiety trying to support them. Going back to basics and making it all about love has been my coping mechanism. Expressing our love for each other has shone through. On a daily basis there have been struggles with home-schooling. We coped with that by not worry about this anymore. We just took our kids to the park every day rather than make them sit down at home to do things they did not want to do. It's been heart-breaking seeing people going through bad times globally so we tried to stay optimistic and helped people as much as we could. That always drives the work that I do. Naturally I am a hermit so I did not need to worry about going to work events. That hasn't been happening so I felt no guilt or pressure from anyone. I love staying at home. I watched my husband's documentary, read a book in bed. I have been the happiest I could be at home.

**What's your parenting style?**

**FC:** I have asked myself that question a lot. I am just trying my best every day like most people. I get things wrong and then I try again. Jesse and I have got a really good ongoing dialogue where we talk to each other about how we are feeling and how we are dealing with the stresses of parenting. My son is a real live wire and has got so much energy. He doesn't know the word 'no' very much, he doesn't like to be told anything quite frankly. When I hit a wall and I am done with him, Jesse takes over. We would do that and fresh energy would come in and tackle with whatever drama is going on. We try not to beat ourselves up if we lose our cool or if we do give in. We tell ourselves that tomorrow is another day and we can start again. We are all tumbling down this life together. I don't have set rules but I feel passionate about apologising either to each other (me and

Jesse) or to the children if we have lost our cool or if we are grumpy because saying sorry is a lesson that I want the kids to understand. As an adult saying sorry to someone is one of the hardest things to do, but is really valuable. Now my kids come to me and apologise a lot and I reassure them that we can move on quickly. Of course, life is chaos and I often forget to pack the right stuff for school. But, if you always go back to the values you want to instil in your kids then you are on the right path.

There's so much pressure on modern day parenting: you have to eat certain things and do lots of activities at after school clubs. This September we made the decision not to enrol in any after school activities because kids are exhausted. They can draw and watch TV (but they are not allowed screens like iPads). They are really creative kids. I don't need to enforce judo and cricket and tennis and all these extra curriculum activities if they don't want to do them.

I am trying to take away all the external mondaine modern-day parenting pressure and just instil the things in them that I believe in, i.e. creativity and being artistic which is getting out in nature and learning valuable lessons like saying sorry. As parents, we have to create our barometer of what's important and what's not rather than adhere to what's been imposed on us from general benchmarks. Parents should take that stress out and do what they think is right for them. It's a much less stressful way of approaching modern-day parenting which is really full on. None of us want to be stressed. I never read any parenting books because I did not want to feel any pressure. My son is not a very good sleeper so I spoke to a child therapist but he did not respond to that so we started to follow his needs instead. For me it's always been about going to reduce the stress ►



and not follow books to then feel like I am failing because I am not doing it right. The best you can do is chat to your mates because they would always give you their honest opinions. There are no perfect angels. We are all complicated humans so why are we expecting our kids to be simple and to follow rules? It's never going to be the case. I was a terrible child to my parents because I am a single-minded person, stubborn and independent. I was probably a nightmare. But that works quite well for me career.

My mum and dad never played games with me. They just let us get on with it. The most important thing which has been totally eradicated today is that our parents let us get bored. It is so important. That's how my imagination became so vivid and wild. Because I was dreaming up amazing things. Parents don't let their kids get bored today. It's all about keeping them entirely occupied, entertained, stimulated with every extra curricula, games on the iPad. Just let them get bored. There's a middle ground that we can meet which is in-between '70s -'80s parenting and modern-day parenting where we take the good lessons but we also don't occupy all kids' time and we let them get bored.

**What would you say it's the highlight of your career?**

**FC:** It's really what I am doing now. There have been great moments with Comic Relief and other charity work but Happy Place is a joy and I am so happy about that. I feel lucky to be able to interview incredible minds each week for the podcasts. It is really exciting, explorative and new.

**What do you want to do when you grow up?**

**FC:** This is an interesting question because I don't like to be bound to anything. When I was a kid I wanted to be an actress, a TV presenter and I ended up doing that. And then I changed my mind. In my thirties I started creating this Happy Place. When I grow up from now, I would love to still be championing conversations around mental health in exciting new

and surprising ways and also learning how to just be a bit more. Rather than attaching everything to gold, I would like to making more space to experience life as it is and as it comes. That's something that I haven't done because I filled all my time up. I get super busy and set myself goals. I'd like to unlearn that and open up more space to simply walk in the park and experience random things that are happening. I want to just be and feel inner peace in more moments in my life rather than stress. I want to find inner peace from being in the moment.

**Your Mood Journal** is a new activity journal for children aged 7+ publishing 26th November 2020 – Hardback – **£12.99** Your Mood Journal is a customisable engaging journal divided into seven colourful, fully illustrated chapters focusing on the different emotions of sadness, happiness, anger, loneliness, worry, fear and excitement. In this book Fearne Cotton condenses the intricacy of emotions into child-friendly, easy to follow steps designed to help young readers explore and understand them.



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# A close encounter with Edward Norton

By Francesca Lombardo

**EDWARD NORTON IS ONE OF THE BEST ACTORS OF HIS GENERATION WITH AN OSCAR NOMINATION UNDER HIS BELT FOR HIS BREAKTHROUGH ROLE IN *PRIMAL FEAR*. HE HAS ALWAYS ASPIRED TO APPROACH FILM MAKING FROM A 360 DEGREES PERSPECTIVE NOT ONLY AS AN ACTOR BUT AS A WRITER, DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER.**

In *Motherless Brooklyn*, a period film set in a highly corrupted New York in the fifties - first presented in 2019 at the Toronto Film Festival and out in cinemas now - he embodies all that as he is the lead actor, the scriptwriter and also the director. Presented as the opening film at the 14th edition of the Rome Cinema Festival, it gained great accolades and warm reception from critics and the public. Norton wears many hats and give an excellent performance of a character with a disability bringing to the screen an odd individual, which is something that is highly appealing to him.

Norton is now back on the big screen playing the role of a kidnapper in *French Dispatch* by director Wes Anderson. The film will be released later this Winter.

***Motherless Brooklyn* has been in the making for nearly two decades. What stopped you from making it before?**

Many things....mostly myself! I got the writer's block. What really interests me about this story, is that it was opening up a window to the deep corruption in the history of New York. Its setting in the fifties was perfect for that. I guess the system blocked me too. When you say "Hey I am going to make a film set back in the fifties" - they are not throwing money at you. It's not easy.

**Talking about New York, the city nearly becomes a character in this story, why is that?**

Yes, that's right. It is one of the great sets in the world and going back into the past of this city, it is historical reconstruction. New York is part of the narrative of filmmaking, and becomes a character itself.

**Lionel Essrog, has the Tourette syndrome. What generally attracts you to characters with disabilities?**

The more interesting challenge, if you have characters with any kind of condition or disability, is capturing the total humanity as opposed to just the condition.

***Primal fear* goes back to your early days as a young actor then all of a sudden you have a breakthrough role that gains you an Oscar nomination. But what you had done before was very much theatre. How did you make the transition so effortlessly to the point of bringing such a powerful character to the big screen?**

When I look at myself in that film, I wonder, who that child is. I was so young. The theatre creates a certain muscular structure in the life of an actor, maybe a way to approach the text, as you rehearse a lot the role before you bring your character on the stage. I'd compare it a football match. There is no way back and you can't stop once you are on the stage. The role of an actor on stage is more predominant and creates a stronger sense of responsibility in an actor. In a theatre as an actor you have to have the whole arc of the story in front of you very clearly and the way of acting the arch is naturally progressive. In films, you may go back and forth in time and about shooting a scene. It's the director who decides. But once you train yourself as a theatre actor, you can transpose this on a movie and keep the narrative arc in mind, it becomes an internal thing and not something that you are acting out. For me, this is the strongest technique that I transpose into film acting or onto the screen, so even if screen acting is much more fragmented you can always keep the narrative arc as a reference.

**You worked with Robert De Niro twice and also with Marlon Brando. You must have some great memories working with them...**

Yes, I remember the first scenes I was in with both of them. Marlon had to drink some water from a glass but spilled the water on his shirt, and De Niro fell asleep on the set.

**What did you learn from them?**

Brando had a strong impact and influence on the history of acting and actors. With him, there is a movie acting before and acting after Brando. He has inspired an entire generation after that from Robert Duvall, Dustin Hoffman, and many others and then he has changed our generation too. There wouldn't be today's acting without Brando.

What I found particularly gripping about Bob was his intensity, his ability to focus. He seems to capture a non-verbal and an internal condition, a non-verbal turmoil. When you act with him, you can feel him thinking and the thoughts that go through his mind behind the words. I could feel his thoughts, and over the years I always tried to capture his way of acting. ►





### Which medium do you enjoy the most?

I like them both and I love movies but in theatre, you feel more like a rock star, you are much more connected to the audience, and their energy.

**Some of your films have turned into iconic movies – *Fight Club*, for instance, did you and Brad Pitt use Chuck Palahniuk's book as a reference, or was it mostly the director David Fincher, your referent for this film?**

The inspiration to do this film initially came from the book of Chuck, which I had read. With regards to *Fight Club*, this is mostly a director's film, a Fincher's film, and it is an excellent combination of technical virtuosity, tight rhythm, and dynamism, which are things that define Fincher and that Finch got in him. I really cannot think of anyone else who could have made that film. It is an example of when a film and a director become the same thing and the acting is all part of an ensemble with that.

### What was it like to work on that set?

It was very funny. To me the really interesting lesson to share out of that, is that we all felt very close to each other on the set, as we connected with the story and with each other. It felt very personal to all of us, so this film was made by a very true place.

### But it bombed initially, didn't it?

Oh yes. I remember we showed the film at the Venice Film Festival. Brad and I stood in a room and Brad asked me: "How do you think the film is going to go?". I said: "I think it is going to go very badly" – and he said: "I think the same. Well, let's smoke a joint then." And we did (*laughs*). We were pretty spot on, the film got booed at the Venice film festival, and when it came out at the box office, it didn't do very well. But these things don't matter as the audience it was intended for was there and that audience got it and felt connected to

it. And behind the non-applauses, the best thing ever of this film, is the kind of relationships that over time it created with the audience and its fan base. It is an experience that has enriched us and it is unforgettable, we have always felt very close to the theme: it was a very intimate experience. It was a film we did it for ourselves and our friends.

### And in fact, it has reached a cult status...

Yes, somehow the film has become what we wanted it to become. Initially there was a sense of delusion but then behind the commercial success it is the intimate experience among us actors and with the director that counted for us.

**On the film *The Moonrise Kingdom*, what is the biggest lesson you learned from Wes Anderson and by working with him?**

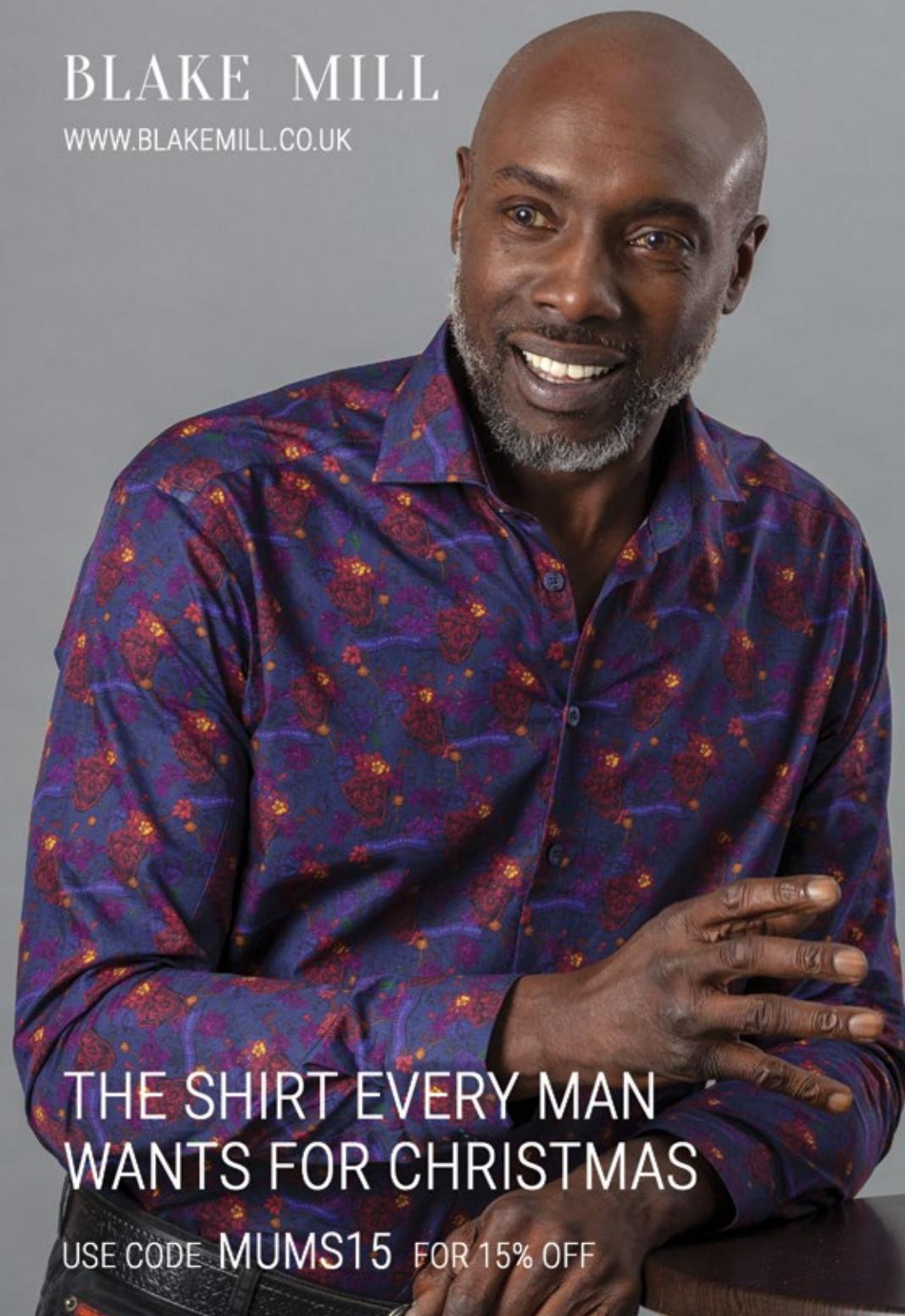
I have learned that it is fun to be a puppet. In *The Moonrise Kingdom* all the characters are Wes' and they are acting him out, including the furniture. Usually there is no other director in my life I have been happier to repeat a line that he says and happier than being a puppet. What I mean is that he is very meticulous, he has a vision and you need to fit into that vision which means you need to surrender to any idea of improvisation or changing anything he hasn't rigorously scripted in. I worked with him various times and he tends to turn the set into a family. I got a lot from him about directorial rhythm and wanting to stick to your vision as a director. That is Wes Anderson. Spike Lee and Anderson are the directors who influenced my filmmaking as a director and the making of *Motherless Brooklyn* the most.

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# COMEDIAN AND GENUINELY QUALIFIED SPACE EXPERT DARA Ó BRIAIN HELPS US SEND A TIK TOK TO MARS

By Monica Costa

The host of *Mock the Week* is one of the best-known faces in comedy, but he also has a long-standing, deep-rooted love for space. A mathematical physics graduate from University College Dublin, he fronted *Stargazing Live* alongside Brian Cox until 2017. Now he has written his third children's book – and his second on the topic. Is *Anybody Out There?* explores how life begins in the first place, how Earth was created, whether aliens might exist elsewhere in the solar system, the search for other planets like our own, and the possibility of ever meeting aliens. The book is actually for everyone from ages 8 to 80! Kids and grown-ups will enjoy it

Dara Ó Briain regularly sets up his telescope to gaze at the night sky, searching for planets, comets and distant stars. "I've exhausted my family," says the Irish comic. "Every time I try to show my daughter something on the computer, she says, 'Please, not another blurry star photo!'"

**To be honest, Dara, I was a bit anxious about interviewing you. Comedians usually outsmart most people....**

**In your latest book *Is Anybody Out There?* you explore how life begins in the first place and whether anyone is looking back at us from space.**

**DOB:** It's a book about alien life but it uses that as a base, as a jumping off point to talk about all sorts of things: How do you create a solar system or a planet? What are the chances to find life somewhere else? How many planets are there at the moment? In 1995 we discovered that there are planets outside of our solar systems: at the last count it was 4500 thousand other planets. On average there could be one planet or more for every star you see in the sky. Life is very unlikely but there are a lot of places where it could happen.

This book flows and is not like those big books about science.

**You have clearly put lots of thought in this and you must have an idea of how these aliens and creatures look like ....**

**DOB:** We don't know what environment they'll grow up in. In our planet we have managed to create everything from sleuths, to parrot to gorilla. Can you imagine how varied it might be in a completely different environment? It could be warmer, a water-based world... or if it was very cloudy, they might send things by electric pulses or eco location. We struggle to communicate with dolphins or gorillas... Life has been on this planet for 4 billion years but we

have only been able to use radio for a 100. Chances of finding another civilisation at exactly the right period of time are pretty slim.

**There's a chapter called 'How to send a greeting card to aliens'. How do we do it? I'd like to send one myself.**

**DOB:** The problem is that you might not get a response for a long time. If we find a good candidate to send out a message to space and we have done it in the past with pioneer probes, it would take 1000 years to get there and 1000 years to get a response.

**Your passions for comedy and space clearly collide in this book and in general in your stand-up work. I recently watched the *Crowd Tickler Live* show where you do the hilarious helium gag. Tell me about that Eureka moment when you decided to combine comedy and physics....**

**DOB:** Even I know people who don't want to hear about subjects they had in school in a comedy club. But when you find your own audience that gets that gag you can expand what you are doing. I do other stuff too like jokes about stupidity of SUDO science and the nonsense that people do in the name of fake health. I love that helium routine. Balloons, creepy voices, if we don't stop making it we will run out of helium which is important to run MRI in hospitals. It should be a major discouragement.

**Comedians could be quite powerful as people consciously choose to listen carefully to what they have to say. Can stand-up comedy change the world? How would you like to change the world with your comedy?**

**DOB:** We comedians would love to think that we are modern-day philosophers but actually we are just another voice in the variety of noises talking. People

complained that *Mock the Week* was very anti-Brexit because it is very difficult to find a comedian who is pro-Brexit.

But I am very happy to just make people laugh. In that moment, if something else happens, and we can do a bit of educating as well, that's great, but our ultimate service is just to make people forget, laugh and provide relief.

**What tips can you give to someone who would like to become a stand-up comedian?**

**DOB:** All my advice applies to a non Covid world. People gathering in one room is not happening at the moment. That's the key to it all. Get in front of an audience and try and do any gig you can. If you want to get into stand-up comedy, make videos and put them online or do Tik Toks and build a following that way. For me Tik Tok would have not worked because I am more







function like a normal human being. Because we get a lot out of our system on stage, we have probably less need to be a funny person at parent's evening drinks or parties. Over the lockdown parents thought my kids were lucky because I could help them with science homework but my children did not think the same. My wife is a doctor so our lives are astonishingly normal.

**What are you up to next?**

**DOB:** Mock the week is back this autumn depending on Covid restrictions. There might also be some social distance comedy gigs in the pipeline but it's all uncertain at the moment.

And Monica ... I think you are plenty funny.

***Is Anybody Out There?***  
is published by Scholastic,  
**£12.99**

a spoken word kind of person. Getting into comedy is much easier than the music industry.

**What's the secret of a good joke/gag?**

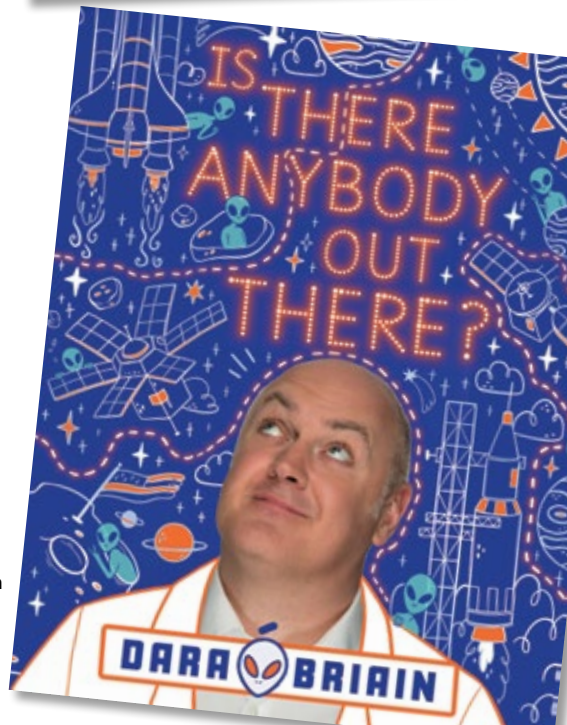
**DOB:** Surprise the audience. It's a difficult thing.

You have to sit in a room and trick yourself into this. Talk to yourself for a while and learn how to deliver. The toughest thing is to sit in a room with a blank piece of paper. The pay-off when you have a happy audience is glorious.

**Usually comedians are very serious people in real life. What type of person are you off the stage?**

**What's your parenting style?**

**DOB:** Maybe the image of the tears of a Clown is a cliché and is not true but comedians often come across as more serious because we are literally not doing the job, we are not joke joke joke all the time but we exist normally. Because we do this job and we spend a couple of hours of laughter on stage, when we are walking around not laughing doesn't mean that we are not happy. If you behaved like a comedian in real life we would be just shouting, waving your arms around. It would be really strange. You have to



## Bringing alive the magic of storytelling this Christmas with tonies®

By Monica Costa

**As children are spending a greater amount of time at home due to current restrictions throughout the UK, the Toniebox offers playful, imaginative storytelling and learning, giving parents a much needed break when they want it.**

**With many children unable to go to nurseries and playgroups, parents now have the opportunity of re-creating the fun of a classroom this autumn with Tonies and a Toniebox. This screen-free, educational portable device plays music and tells stories through hand-painted, magnetic figurines called 'Tonies' that are placed on top. There are over 60 Tonies figurines to collect and enjoy listening to. Tonies make storytelling come alive.**



The Toniebox is intuitive and easy to use - even for the smallest hands. Children simply place the Tonie figurine on the Toniebox to listen to stories and songs. There is a huge variety of Tonies to choose from - including much loved characters like The Gruffalo, Peppa Pig and The Lion King, Classic Fairy Tales and nursery rhymes to sing along to.

This soft, safe Toniebox made from sustainable material is the leading audio device for children in the UK and Europe. To fast forward or rewind, children can tap and tilt the Toniebox. To raise or lower the volume, they simply squeeze the rubber ears.

One of the outstanding features of this clever little box is the infamous Creative-Tonie that allows you



to record your own stories and music through the tonies® free app. Now more than ever, families are looking for ways to stay connected with each other and tonies® makes this simple, playful and fun.

The clever, intuitive Toniebox is London Mum's favourite gift idea this Christmas.

It is the perfect screen-free, storytelling audio device for children from as young as 3 years old.

**RRP £69.95 for the Toniebox.**  
**Each Tonie RRP of £14.99**  
Available at [www.tonies.com](http://www.tonies.com)  
and selected retailers





Sleep better

# LIVE LONGER

By Monica Costa



With so much heartache, upheaval and stress in the world in 2020, we as a nation are finding our mental wellbeing under more strain than usual. Like most people, during lockdown this year, I drastically reduced my fitness activities. As a result, I developed lower back pain which prevented me from having a good night's sleep and high productivity at work. To get better, I exercised more but fitness only helped reducing the pain.

I then came across sleep experts at Mammoth who highlighted the importance of a good mattress to boost health and wellbeing. After testing a super-king sized Mammoth Shine® mattress for a couple of days my back pain was completely gone. A luxury mattress worth £899+ is certainly an investment, but it is proven that sleep is the foundation for wellbeing. In fact, the science now shows that the human sleep-wake cycle influences practically all aspects of our lives. From memory to physical performance, stress levels to appetite, getting adequate time and quality of rest is vital to health and wellbeing. In fact, there is a strong correlation between sleep and lifespan. So, getting things right in the run up to bedtime is crucial for anyone who is serious about looking after themselves and their loved ones.



My Shine® mattress is made using a naturally cooling Medical Grade™ foam technology – which has been scientifically tested and shown to improve sleep – and Posture Cell® Comfort technology – which means the mattress absorbs pressure for motion, for ease of movement and a barrier from the disturbance of restless partners.

Personally, I have been able to sleep more comfortably than ever before, so I now wake up feeling truly refreshed and full of energy. I feel more relaxed and free from aches and pains – including excruciating back pain. I am in good company, as Mammoth mattresses are used by elite athletes and sportspeople to increase rest and recovery so that they can train longer and perform better.

The Mammoth Shine® Collection is available in three levels of comfort – firmer; medium and softer – providing an indulgent sleep system from head to toe.

Find your nearest stockist at  
<https://mammothcomfort.com>



Travel with kids

## FROM LONDON TO LUCCA

By Rita Kobrak



Four years ago, my husband and I spent a half-term break in Lucca, a stunning, walled city close to Florence and Pisa. That holiday changed our lives, as shortly afterwards we left London and moved to Italy with our then 9-years old daughter, Alessia, and 3-year old son, Sebastian. My Mum was Italian so I have always spoken Italian at home and worked in Italy as a travel guide before having children. Lucca was still new to me, though. It was supposed to be a year-long stay but we are still here four years later. Looking back, packing up our belongings, putting them into storage and leaving with just two suitcases was a bit mad. But, if you are thinking of going abroad with the family for a while, I'd say: JUST DO IT! Life is too short to live in only one country.

One of the advantages of living in Italy is a much more relaxed lifestyle. In London, my daughter used to cry during the school-run, whereas here she is calm. You never see parents and kids getting stressed out for being late in Italy. I have my children's teachers' details and there's a more "humane" approach to children's education here. Everyone is so kind to kids and this really rubs off on them. I remember our first visit to the supermarket, apologising to an elderly gentleman as my son ran onto him. He told ME off for yelling at Sebi saying: "Children are supposed to run and have fun; please don't tell him off".

I often stopped old ladies buying lollipops for Sebi at the supermarket, and always took him to the bakery as they would give us a discount or a free little pizza just because he was cute. Within a few weeks of living here, the local shop and café owners got to know our names. I once lost sight of Sebi for two minutes and found him ordering a peach juice in our local bar. The lady knew him and was happily serving him, knowing that I would eventually find him and pay for the drink. We spend more time outdoor and cycle everywhere so

a car is not needed. Lucca is the town with more bikes than any other place in Italy and you can cycle around the safe and traffic-free old walls perimeter (4.9km).

The other obvious positives of living in Lucca include the weather, the delicious food at reasonable prices and closeness to both the seaside and the mountains. We visit lots of new places at weekends. Lucca is a cultural city so there is always a festival going on about jazz or cinema, Puccini, comics and rock music (I saw Mick Jagger, the Pet Shop Boys, New Order, Roger Waters).

We run a holiday rental business, self-catering and family yoga and cooking retreats. We can arrange accommodation, transport, cooking lessons, yoga, tours and babysitting.

Please contact me for booking a beautiful villa in the stunning Tuscan countryside for your holidays, an apartment in Lucca or for family Yoga and Cooking holidays in Tuscany 2021. Or for any information about moving to Italy!

**10% DISCOUNT IF YOU  
QUOTE LONDONMUMS**

**Rita Kobrak**  
Whatsapp **00447983821282**  
**holiday-villa-in-tuscany.com**  
**mum-and-baby-experience.co.uk**  
Instagram **@tuscanfamilyholidays**



# ASTHMA AND INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Catherine Sutton, mum to Edward, who has severe allergies and asthma, talks to 'The Healthy London Partnership' about the recommendations of:



- Royal College of Paediatrics Report into Indoor Air Quality and Child Health
- NICE guidelines on Indoor Air Quality
- NHS advice on 'preventing allergies' and their relevance to asthma prevention.

## By Catherine Sutton, Director of Airborne Allergy Action:

"For those suffering from asthma causing allergens such as house dust mite allergen, moulds, tree pollen, grass pollen, cat and dog dander, the most effective way to avoid poor indoor air quality is to avoid pollutants coming into the space. Taking steps to reduce exposure to inhaled allergens is recommended to reduce symptoms and exacerbations."

Depending on the allergy/trigger and the home environment, measures which can help include:

- Washing bedding and covers (at 60°C every two weeks) or using allergen-impermeable covers.

## The NHS recommends using tested allergy-proof covers on mattresses, duvets and pillows (such as AllerGuard) covers on mattresses, duvets and pillows

- Reducing dust and dampness in the home;
- Reducing items that can collect dust such as soft toys and, if possible, replacing carpets with hard flooring;
- Avoiding direct exposure to furry pets if the child is sensitised;
- Increasing ventilation during and after activities that produce pollutants or moisture especially when using cleaning or cosmetic products, cooking, bathing, and painting, decorating or buying new furniture.

- Avoiding using ventilation without filtration during periods when the air outside is polluted, for example keeping windows closed during rush hour and opening them at different times of the day
- Vacuum cleaning is one of the simplest methods to clear dust. However, vacuum cleaners can release and resuspend dust and allergens. It is important that the bag or dust collection chamber retains the dust efficiently and is replaced or emptied regularly. Catherine's personal experience is that a Hoover with a sealed/disposable bag and hepa filter is the most effective.

## Read the full article here:

[www.healthyLondon.org/asthma-and-indoor-air-quality](http://www.healthyLondon.org/asthma-and-indoor-air-quality)

Protect yourself and your family against harmful allergens such as Dust Mites: A major cause of Allergy and Asthma, with AllerGuard Scientifically Proven Allergen Proof Bedding!

## Read more about AllerGuard and our New 20% reduced Starter Packs here:

[www.allerguard.co.uk](http://www.allerguard.co.uk)

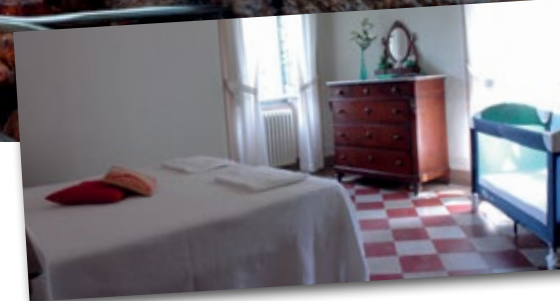


# Italian family getaway at Villa Pia for 2021



Experience the luxury of an all-inclusive Italian villa with the comforts of home at Villa Pia, the award-winning family villa described as 'heaven on earth'. Nestled between Umbria and Tuscany, Villa Pia is a spacious residence (sleeps 25 families) with amenities for all the family including adult and child swimming pools (heated year-round), tennis courts, table tennis, trampoline, kids' playroom with books and toys, children's play area with swings, rides and slides, and soft play. There's no need to bring excess baby gear as the villa provides everything from high chairs and cots to baby monitors, baby food, bottle warming and an on-site babysitting service.

Relax in a hammock on the villa's sun-soaked courtyards or indulge in massage and beauty treatments, or try an adult or children's Italian cookery class. The food at Villa Pia gets 5-star reviews, including complimentary breakfasts, sensational lunches, afternoon cakes and sumptuous 4-course dinners cooked from scratch. Wines, beers, yoghurts, juices, milk, teas and coffees are available on tap. The chefs can also accommodate all types of diets such as vegan, organic, gluten-free and other 'free from' requirements.

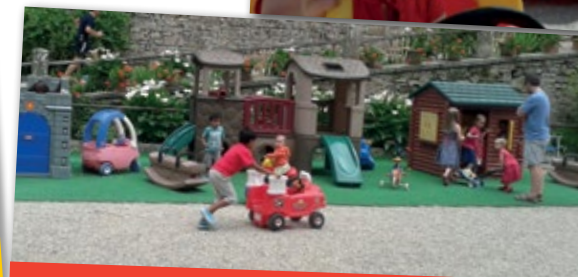


There is so much to do on the villa's 5 acres of ground you might never want to leave. However, guests also enjoy strolling to the village bar for a gelato, or a day trip to Florence, Siena, Pisa and other scenic spots. Villa Pia is a popular location for creative retreats and family celebrations such as birthdays, weddings and anniversaries. It was named one of the Top 20 Family Summer Holidays in Europe by The Guardian newspaper.

To discover more about Villa Pia and snap up one of their fabulous early-bird holiday offers, visit [www.villapia.com](http://www.villapia.com) for further details and booking enquiries.



**Coronavirus** advice for travellers: In these unprecedented times, Villa Pia would like to assure our guests that we are taking extra measures to ensure you feel safe and comfortable throughout your stay. Our renewed commitment to the wellbeing of our visitors includes an enhanced deep cleaning regime and a reduced intake of guests to comply with social distancing guidelines. Please visit the website at [villapia.com/coronavirus](http://villapia.com/coronavirus) for our latest health and travel statement.



Quote discount code **LONDONMUMS** for a £100 discount from off-peak bookings.

For bookings contact us at +39 075 850 2027 or [villapia@villapia.com](mailto:villapia@villapia.com)



# Christmas Gift Guide



## NADIYA HUSSAIN'S DELUXE BAKING SET

Three new baking sets for kids from the inspiring Nadiya Hussain. Everything a child needs to create with confidence. Choose from the Deluxe Set (pictured) at **£24.99** or the Savoury Set at **£19.99** or the Simple Set at **£14.99**. All three include all the utensils needed to make the recipes which are included.

Available to buy online from Smyths  
<https://www.smythstoys.com/uk/en-gb/search/?text=nadiya+baking+set>



## MAGNETIC RING SPINNERS – HGL

From the people who brought us all the big toy crazes from loom bands to skoobie strings, this year's playground must have are Magnetic Spinners. Play games, learn tricks totally addictive fiddle toy.

**£2.99**

Pocket money stocking filler available at [www.wowtasticuk.com](http://www.wowtasticuk.com)

## ANIMIGOS MAGIC BUNNY – TOBAR

The symbol for 2020 has to be the rainbow and the award winning Animigos range has the Magic Bunny, – Rainbow coloured plush rabbit that hops along and performs realistic rabbit actions. It raises its ears, snuffles its nose and emits a high-pitched squeak.

**RRP £16.99**

Available online from Amazon



## ATOMIC LIGHT UP TANGLES from TOBAR

Tangles are those tangly twisty bendy things that everyone loves. Great play value and now with a light up range to add some sparkle to Christmas. Science, Tech, Creativity and Fun combine.

**RRP £9.99**

Buy online from Amazon and other retailers.



## OZBOZZ MINI SKATEBOARD – OZBOZZ

Skateboards are so popular this year and these mini skateboards from outdoor specialists Ozbozz are a colourful and cost effective version.

**RRP £15.00**

Buy online from The Entertainer



## ATMOSFEAR – TOBAR

The Gatekeeper is back! Updated version of the nineties classic game sees the original video version updated with an app that can be downloaded onto android and apple. Atmosfear was a total craze when first released, this new exciting version has a time limit to completion which adds to the tension!

**RRP £24.99**

Available online from Amazon and other retailers.

## Textured Pop Blocks

Award-winning Textured Pop Blocks are ten interlinking and tactile cubes that can be used from birth. With a soft form and 3D textures, these nifty little blocks are fascinating to touch and chew, with each lightweight cube also featuring a protruding shape that fits cleverly into the next matching piece, giving plenty of play opportunities as baby grows. Little ones will love this fun, creative way to learn shapes, counting, animals and colours.

**RRP £12.99**

Available from Jojo Maman Bebe and John Lewis



## Guess How Much I Love You Tonie

Place the Tonie on the Toniebox and the magic begins: kids will love this classic tale of two Nutbrown Hares.

**RRP £14.99**

Available from <https://tonies.com>

## Halilit Baby Xylophone

The Halilit Baby Xylophone is a high quality, fun and colourful 8-note real musical instrument that has been especially designed for young children to make real music. The note bars are accurately tuned and make a delightful sound, and the chunky shape with rounded edges make this instrument safe for curious fingers! Includes a specially shaped, baby-safe mallet that clips away on the base for easy storage and a colour-coded music booklet. A great gift to introduce children to the joys of making music! Age 12 months +

**SRP £18.99**

Available from John Lewis





## TRANSFORMERS BATTLEGROUNDS



### TRANSFORMERS: BATTLEGROUNDS

BUMBLEBEE and the Autobots need a new commander to save Earth – you! Assemble your squad and roll out for battle.

RRP £34.99

Skus: Playstation 4/Nintendo Switch/Xbox One/PC Digital

Available from [outrightgames.com](https://outrightgames.com)

**Peppa Pig Tonie**  
Kids can immerse themselves in Peppa's world: simply place the Tonie on the Toniebox and the audio starts to play.

RRP £14.99

Available from <https://tonies.com>



### Rocket Ship

This amazing, multi-faceted wooden rocket ship offers your child an astronomical number of imaginative play opportunities that will take them to infinity and beyond. The Ship opens to reveal no less than 12 themed 'stations' and children can challenge their dexterity by opening and shutting the it using wooden screws and a screwdriver which also doubles up as the rocket ship's nose. We have lift off! Suitable from 3+

RRP £99.95

Available from [www.hippychick.com](http://www.hippychick.com)



### Ben 10: Power Trip

Get ready to transform into powerful aliens, battle enemies, solve puzzles and explore an exciting 3D world. It's hero time!

RRP £34.00

Skus: Playstation 4/Nintendo Switch/Xbox One/PC Digital

Available from [outrightgames.com](https://outrightgames.com)



### Seaside Soprano Ukulele Pack

A perfect choice for beginners, the Fender Seaside Ukulele Pack has everything you need to begin playing right out of the box. Compact, comfortable and easily portable, this soprano uke is ideal for beginning players or anyone looking to add its light, joyful sound to their music. The pack includes a free 3-month subscription to Fender Play\*—the easiest way to learn ukulele. New Disney songs added to the platform include Frozen's family-favourite 'Let It Go' and The Jungle Book's 'Bare Necessities'.

RRP £89.99

Available from <https://shop.fender.com>

### Zoids Wild: Blasts Unleashed

Follow Arashi and his mecha Zoid Liger as they help Team Freedom defeat the power-hungry Dark Metal Empire, in spectacular head-to-head battles!

RRP £34.00

Skus: Nintendo Switch

Available from [outrightgames.com](https://outrightgames.com)

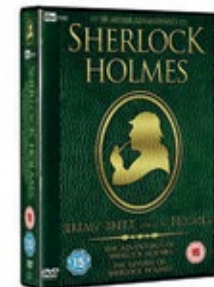
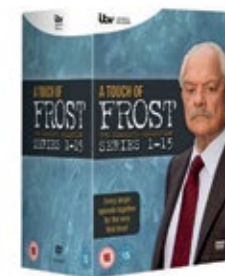


### Bing's Lights and Sounds Train with Mini Playsets

Choo choo! Bing's train features two removeable carriages with accessories; Bing's House and Bing's Garden & Playhouse. Watch as it lights up and then plays train sounds and music from the much-loved family TV show! Also includes Bing and Flop figurines. Suitable for kids 18 months+

RRP £39.99

Available at Smyths, Amazon, Argos, Very, Studio, Next and other independent distributors.



### ITV Studios

Have a host of crime titles for you this Christmas. From The Complete Case Files of Inspector Morse to A Touch of Frost The Complete Collection, from Vera seasons 1- 10 to Sherlock Holmes, there's plenty to keep you entertained!

All titles are available from Amazon.



# Pretty things



## Sleep Long Sleeve and Pants Women NATTWARM™ SLEEP TECH

A luxurious mix of Tencel and the finest Merino wool give featherlight warmth paired with breathable comfort. Merino pyjamas top with a cowl neck for extra warmth and cosy over-thumb sleeves, you stay wrapped in comfort all night long.

RRP £77.99 GBP

Same as \$0.27 USD a night for 365 nights

Available from [www.dagsmejan.com](http://www.dagsmejan.com)



## THE PADDED COAT (boys and girls)

Keep the kids cosy as we transition into the colder months, with a practical yet stylish colour-block padded jacket. With innovative water-repellent Stormwear™ technology, this lightweight design will make sure little ones stay warm and dry throughout the changing seasons.

RRP £16

Available in store and online now at [www.marksandspencer.com](http://www.marksandspencer.com)

Download The M&S App



## Unisex Organic Cotton Feminist Hoodie - Togetherness

Limited Edition Premium quality combed organic cotton hoodie inspired by the lessons learnt from these times we are living!

RRP £55.00

Available from <https://thefeministshop.com/>



## Yummikeys Engraved Ultrasound Necklace

Yummikeys Baby Scan Necklace is delicately engraved with your personal ultrasound image; a cherished keepsake of a snapshot in time.

RRP £39.50, £10 for engraving and £30 per additional disc.

Available from [www.yummikeys.com](http://www.yummikeys.com)



## Always Together Bead

The always together sterling-silver bead is excellent to celebrate your time breastfeeding. It's flexible, can be added to Pandora bracelets or worn as necklaces. The bead comes in a range of colours & you can add engravings or a piece of your child's hair.

RRP £50

Available from <https://eternallycherished.co.uk/>



# MUM and Baby essentials



## MUTU System

MUTU System, which stands for Mummy Tummy System, is a 12-module specialist core and pelvic floor online programme with 94% success rate for young and old, expectant and established mothers of all shapes and sizes, proven to remedy physical symptoms such as urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, painful sex and diastasis recti, which can lead to embarrassment, anxiety, discomfort and a lack of MUTU is approved and recommended by NHS Digital Apps Library.

**Price: £99 for lifetime access**

Available from [www.mutusystem.co.uk](http://www.mutusystem.co.uk).



## All-Year Sleeping Bag with Feet JURASSIC, Non-Slip Soles and Detachable Sleeves, 2.5 Tog

Innovative design: Feet covers with a non-slip sole so children can walk around safely. They also keep children's toes warm.

**RRP: From £31.99**

Available from <https://www.slumbersac.co.uk/all-year-sleeping-bag-with-feet-non-slip-soles-and-detachable-sleeves-2-5-tog-in-different-designs.html>



## Metanium Everyday Barrier Ointment

Metanium Everyday Barrier Ointment is formulated to protect and moisturise your baby's skin to help prevent nappy rash. Suitable for use at every nappy change from birth.

**RRP £3.25 (40g) / £5.49 (80g)**

Available from [www.metanium.co.uk/](http://www.metanium.co.uk/)



## Doddl toddler cutlery set

Doddl is the award-winning, ergonomic baby and toddler cutlery brand. This set includes a knife, fork and spoon in

Lime Green

**RRP £16.95**

Available from [www.doddl.com](http://www.doddl.com) or if direct to the product [www.doddl.com/product/doddl-cutlery-set-green/](http://www.doddl.com/product/doddl-cutlery-set-green/)



## Cot Bed Canopy – Canokee

Available in 3 variants: Snow White, Ocean Aqua, Stone Lilac.

**RRP: from £99 to £109**

Available from

<https://en.mokee.eu/products/cot-bed-canopy-canokee>



## The moKee Foldaway Play Pen

Available in 5 variants: White, White Beech, Stone Teal, Stone Blue, Dusty Aqua.

**RRP: £79**

Available from <https://en.mokee.eu/products/play-pen>



# Book Wish List



## Mika & Lolo – Spanish/English

Mika & Lolo is a bilingual children's book written in English and Spanish. The book invites kids and their parents to question the gender stereotypes that we find in everyday life and encourages them just to be themselves, no matter whether they are a girl or a boy.

**RRP £10.00**

Available from [Thefeministshop.com](http://Thefeministshop.com)



## How to Spot an Artist

Help kids discover and nourish their inner artist with this vividly illustrated, funny and endlessly encouraging book of positive reinforcement. Author Danielle Krysa uses her playfulness, lively illustrations and humour for kids who think that artists all live in cities, art has to look like something familiar or painting and drawing are the only way to make art. Includes a page of ideas for art projects.

**RRP £11.99**

For stockists visit [www.prestel.com](http://www.prestel.com)

## Mamma Makes ebook

Mamma Makes is an e-cookbook comprising of over 55 recipes and stories of migration from some of Britain's chefs and home cooks inspired by their mums and grandmas. Each cook provides a mouthwatering recipe that is wrapped up in a brief story of how they and their family migrated to Britain. Its aim is to donate all proceeds to One Million Meals which has a target to feed one million nutritious meals and drinks to NHS doctors, nurses, paramedics and key workers at the frontline keeping Britain alive.

**Donation required**

Available from [www.mammamakes.org](http://www.mammamakes.org)



## The Green Baby

The Green Baby offers fifty practical tips inspiring parents to implement a more ethical and sustainable lifestyle from birth to 12 months.

**RRP is £7.99p Ebook is £5.99**

Available from Amazon Books



## GOODNIGHT SONGS FOR REBEL GIRLS CD ALBUM

Goodnight Songs For Rebel Girls CD Album, a collaboration between Decca Records and Rebel Girls book series, features tracks from some of the most inspirations and recognisable female voices in music.

**RRP £10.99** Available at [shop.decca.com](http://shop.decca.com)

&

**Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls: 100 Immigrant Women Who Changed the World** Featuring 100 impressive immigrant women who changed the world, from Chef Asma Khan to Rihanna. **RRP £25**







Gifts that will last for generations

Use exclusive code LONDON20 for 20% off everything,  
including the Trybike you see below!

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

@hippychickbaby

01278 434440

