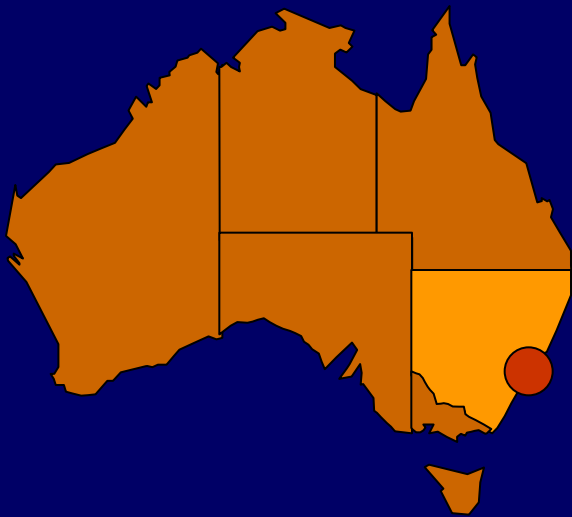


# **Watch, Wait and Wonder**

## **a modified version**

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**Michael Zilibowitz**

**Developmental & Behavioural Paediatrician  
Northern Beaches Child and Family Health Services  
Sydney - Australia**







The fathers of Watch Wait & Wonder **www** are child psychiatrists Frank Johnson and his colleagues Jerome Dowling and David Wesner from Wisconsin USA, who first coined the term **www** in an article published in the Spring Edition of the Infant Mental Health Journal in 1980.

“Non directiveness on  
the part of the mother  
is the only  
stringent requirement”.

Get down on the floor for half an hour daily and develop the presence of a “passive but gently reinforcing interest that is shown in every discrete behaviour”.

He describes how this “sympathetic effort” is “difficult for some easy for others to share the infants world as it is being explored”.

- **www** was further developed by Elizabeth Muir and colleagues in Toronto in early 90's.
- Used as a clinical method to heal troubled relationship between parents and their children.
- Well researched and highly effective.
- Original Method
  - 4 to 6 months of weekly sessions
- Modified Version
  - wide clinical application
  - universal concept

Video describes a highly effective and simple way for parents to be with their children that has the potential to help them -

- enjoy their child more
- stimulate their child's creativity and imagination
- help their child to play more by themselves
- settle difficult behaviours, especially sibling rivalries and jealousies
- foster a surge in development.

# WHO can benefit from this modified program?

- Parents and children from about 8 months to 4 years in the form described in the DVD
- Concept from birth to much older than 4 years

Modified version of Watch, Wait and Wonder **www** is not aimed specifically at difficult or troublesome parent child relationships. It is I believe a universal concept that has the potential to enrich the interaction between all children and their parents in every family.

# May not work ....

- severely depressed parents
- psychiatrically ill parents
- some children with  
Autistic Spectrum Disorders

**www** makes use of the infants innate desire for attachment and striving for development.

It allows the child to explore what they need to improve / heal the attachment relationship.

**www** uses a child led approach to enrich the relationship between parents and their children.

At first glance this approach is deceptively simple, however in practice it is often very difficult for parents to adopt the observer role if they are usually intrusive or directive.

Similarly it is often difficult for withdrawn or detached parents who have not attended to or avoided their child's activities to take on the active observer stance.

By learning to watch and not intervene the parent begins to appreciate their child's individuality and gets to read the child's signals more objectively less coloured by projections from the parent's past.

Our past history has conditioned us and became part of us.

These conditioned residues of experience lurk just beyond conscious awareness ready to jump out and react at a moments notice when the conditions and triggers are right.

The **www** experience creates the space for the parent to MINDFULLY take on the observer role.

In this place the likelihood of perpetuating past action and reaction behaviours is greatly reduced.

Stillness is the central core  
of all  
mindfulness  
practices.

# MINDFULNESS

is the capacity to become an observer of one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviours without acting them out.

In this place of non reactivity the mother develops the capacity to observe and therefore actually see and be present with her child sometimes for the first time.

In **www** the parent aims to cultivate a non judgmental presence where she can sit still and be totally accepting of whatever arises in the child. The desire for her child to be in any way different from who he is falls away -

i.e.      less needy, greedy, clingy  
             less angry  
             more imaginative in his play.

This intervention relieves the parent of the anxious need to teach, instruct or play with her / his child.

It is remarkable how given the presence of a still focused parent the child almost always plays out and communicates the major themes of the relationship. The child will often communicate quite clearly what is missing or how he feels about the relationship and most parents will get this message.

**www** increases mutual  
sensitivity and responsiveness  
and enhances true listening  
skills.

Winnicott beautifully expands in this concept where he describes that the freedom to explore while held in the safety net of the parents benign presence and attention develop into the capacity to be alone. He goes on to virtually describe **www** by saying that with too much interference from parents or too much absence a child is forced to use her mental energy to cope with her parents intrusiveness or absence instead of being free to explore herself. This mental energy and the child's thinking mind then takes over and the child feels empty.

When parents are intrusive or absent children have to remain on guard, mobilised, to respond to their parents fears and anxieties and unable to float away into their own experience to explore their own inner worlds. The capacity to be alone in ones own rich inner world is the antidote to feeling lost and empty.

It is this kind of aloneness with ones own inner world that Winnicott proposed is the foundation of all creativity. However he adds that this is not possible when one is too alone, or on the other hand too intruded upon. It can only develop when the holding environment is safe and unobtrusive.

At its best this is the space that **www** is attempting to achieve.

# My Watch, Wait & Wonder DIARY



ooOOOoo

ENJOY YOUR CHILD MORE, SETTLE DIFFICULT BEHAVIOURS such as AGGRESSION and TANTRUMS, IMPROVE DIFFICULT SIBLING JEALOUSY ISSUES, help your child to be MORE INDEPENDENT and FOSTER THEIR

**Northern Beaches Child and Family Health Service**  
Cnr Lakeside Cres & Palm Ave, North Manly NSW 2100  
PO Box 605, Brookvale NSW 2100  
Telephone (02) 9466 2500 Facsimile (02) 9938 4805  
**Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service**  
ABN 48 344 669 728

IMAGINATIVE PLAY.

**NORTHERN SYDNEY  
CENTRAL COAST**  
NSW HEALTH

# My Watch, Wait and Wonder Diary

Week 1 – Week 5

Date	Length of Time	Comments

## Week 5

Date	Length of Time	Comments

### General Comments

### Please Contact:

If you have any concerns or questions

Dr Michael Zilibowitz

Developmental & Behavioural Paediatrician

Northern Beaches Child and Family Health Service

Queenscliff Community Health Centre

Phone: 9466 2500

Or Email: [mzilibow@nscchs.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mzilibow@nscchs.health.nsw.gov.au)





Watch, Wait and Wonder  
is a universal concept that  
applies to all  
human interactions  
everywhere

# Watch Wait & Wonder - DVD

- used internationally
- wide range of professionals
- parent groups
- personally very grateful

# Demographics of Research Project

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## Children 12 months to 5 years

- 73 parents attended www parent education evening and completed Time 1 questionnaires.
- 39 parents (53%) filled out Time 2 questionnaires 4 to 6 weeks later.

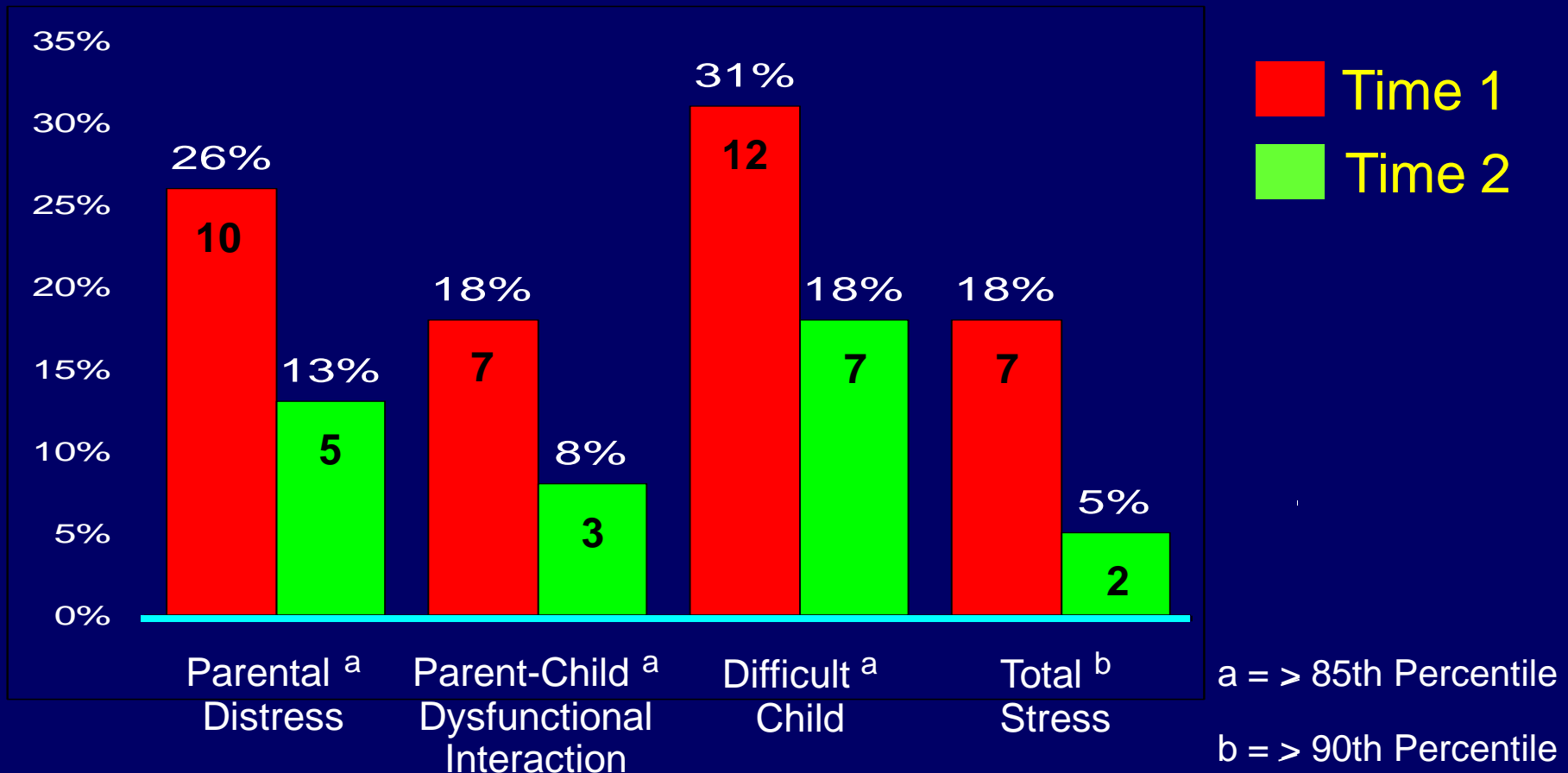
# Demographics of Research Project

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Demographics for Time 1 and Time 2 responders were very similar

- generally female (2 fathers participated)
- mostly married 85% - Time 1 90% - Time 2
- in their 30's
- 80% had tertiary education at University or TAFE
- most children between 1 and 4
- most had 2 or 1 siblings.

# Percentage of Participants at Time 1 and Time 2 at or above cut-off scores on Parenting Stress Index / SF



# Qualitative questions

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## What was it like for your child?

### +ve responses

- She bonded more closely, became more affectionate and started calling me “mama” (like a new nickname instead of mummy!).
- She loved it, she was very excited, couldn't wait to turn the TV off to spend time playing games, cards. She also loved bossing mummy around at times - used her toys that we forgot we had in the cupboard.
- I think he was shocked at first, that I wasn't going to reprimand him, then he really enjoyed me watching him, playing beside him and playing with him.

- What I found invaluable from this experience was I realised how much I instruct my children. I constantly interfere, try to teach them. However in doing this I feel I thwart the learning process. I am now able to sit, observe without judgement and need for them to do it “right”. So, for this, I am very grateful as I feel the impact on their lives will be huge. Thanks.

Did you notice changes as a result of implementing  
www with your child?

## YES responses

- On one occasion after a very moody tearful day he totally changed his behaviour.
- Plays alone for longer periods. Asks for my help in a less whining manner.
- Happier playing independently. Not hanging off me 24/7. Now likes to go into room and play more, wouldn't do that before. He has made it his quiet play zone. Takes himself there.

# Michael Zilibowitz

**Developmental & Behavioural Paediatrician**

**Northern Beaches Child and Family Health Services  
Sydney - Australia**

**[mzilibow@nscchahs.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mzilibow@nscchahs.health.nsw.gov.au)**

