

## Happy, Healthy Parents - Happy, Healthy Kids with author Ann Douglas



By Sara Gottardi

On Tuesday, March 31 author Ann Douglas from Peterborough came to speak at the "Happy, Healthy Parents - Happy, Healthy Kids" presentation to share thoughts, open conversation and share advice with parents at the North Hastings Children's Services centre. She'd been away from home for the past 10 days and excitedly spoke of getting home for a little down time before jetting off again to do some more public presentations.

As a prolific writer her topics span from pregnancy, parenting and holding true to a healthy lifestyle for not only children but for parents wellbeing. She speaks out about why mental health is vital to talk about and how we can work with it rather than against its challenges. Yes, going on sites like [Stuff4tots](#), putting your child first, and finding new ways to improve your parenting style is going to make you a good parent but you also need to focus on yourself. You won't be able to give 100% if you're struggling mentally.

Douglas says, "What I love about being a writer is that you have the ability and the opportunity to sort of spark conversations about things that really matter and try to encourage people to have conversations they might not otherwise have".

Douglas strongly feels and follows issues like mental health, social justice, and parenting, she tries "to look for opportunities to encourage people to talk about those things," as she is quite open in sharing some of her own mental health struggles with others so that, "somebody who's struggling doesn't feel alone and if they have a child who's struggling, don't feel like they're a bad parent or that they have a bad kid; that it's just a challenge you've been given and there are ways to work through that kind of thing," she says.

She enjoys collecting books as it's always been in the family - having an affinity for books and writing. Reading widely for enjoyment, topics such as human interests, practical advice, politics, economics, psychology and fiction catch her attention, but she's always able to find something to read.

"If I'm on an airplane and they just have a couple magazines," she says, "I can usually find something to read because you can always find a profile of somebody or, you know, an inspiring story," she said.

Douglas loves British comedy and mentioned author Nick Hornby to be amongst her favourites, "he's hilarious and the challenge of course, is if you're reading his books in public, not to be laughing out loud so people wonder 'hmmm, that must be a really good book or...' I love fun and entertaining things," she says. She thoroughly enjoys authors like fiction novelist Alice Munro, and constantly turns to Self Compassion by Kristen Neff, which both uplifts and inspires her.

She'd never want to limit herself to one genre she says, "I don't think I'd ever want to be on a literary diet of just one because it would be just nauseating if you were only reading super sugary stuff all the time and it'd be depressing as heck if you were only reading about dooms day, so just shaking it up a little bit and reading different things," she says helps her with her writing as she learns and gets to see different ways of approaching new, fun and challenging material that way.

Many artistic people seem to be clumped into being timid and reserved, but Douglas says, "I've had to learn how to sort of come out of myself enough to speak. What I like about speaking to people is that you can have a two way conversation whereas when you're writing a book it's sort of you speaking to the reader and you don't get to hear their side of the conversation".

Douglas said, "I use to be really, really hard on myself, I use to set the bar super high, impossibly high for myself and through reading I have learned a lot about the importance of self compassion and being at least as kind to yourself as you would be to a friend who was struggling".

She collects vintage parenting, advice and health manuals as a hobby, finding it amazing to see the difference between the far more formal styles of writing then to nowadays more laid back texts. Douglas says, "I think if you're a reader that often you see the magic of the printed word and the ability to sort of spark conversations".

Her latest book *Parenting Through the Storm* about parenting children with mental health or neuro-developmental behavioural challenges is an honest and comprehensive guide for parents looking for some guidance, encouragement and mindful note that they're not alone in their challenge. Follow Ann Douglas on Twitter at: @anndouglas. Or on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/themotherofallbooks](http://www.facebook.com/themotherofallbooks).