



**Anna Freud**  
National Centre for  
Children and Families

Reflective Parenting  
Group

[annafreud.org](http://annafreud.org)



## Introduction

The Reflective Parenting Group offers a highly collaborative approach for parents in order to promote family relationships, sensitive parenting and reduce the number of conflicts, bringing about behavioural changes and greater harmony.

The core thread of the group is to promote mentalizing in parents (i.e. the ability of a parent to understand the thoughts, feelings and needs of both themselves and their children).

There is extensive evidence about the importance of understanding the intentions behind your child's behaviour, and also getting a greater sense of your own mind (mentalizing) in human relationships and its relationship to attachment (for review, see: Fonagy & Bateman, 2016; Fonagy & Luyten, 2009; Fonagy, Luyten, & Strathearn, 2011). Research also suggests that understanding the thoughts, feelings and intentions behind your child's behaviour and your own reaction (mentalizing) can act as a buffer against difficult behaviour.

## Group-based work with parents

Reflective Parenting group work is an 8-week manualised group. The topics and themes that the groups cover are:

1. What is Reflective Parenting? Why is it helpful?  
Research background, outcomes related to Reflective Parenting and making the approach meaningful to your parenting.
2. How the state of mind of a parent affects parenting  
Thoughts, feelings, beliefs, past history, the impact of emotion. A tool called the Parent Map is used to help parents reflect on their own minds; for example, what triggers strong emotion and how their mind influences their relationship with their children.
3. Thinking about what goes on in children's minds  
Promoting different perspectives and ways to understand the

meaning behind behaviour. It helps parents take a developmental perspective (e.g. what behaviour is common and to be expected), and helps parents examine their own assumptions about their child's intentions.

#### 4. Keeping Reflective Parenting going

This theme helps parents to look at what influences children to cooperate and examines different ways of disciplining children. Its aim is to promote the idea that empathic parenting and ways of holding a child's perspective in mind reduces the chances of coercive parenting approaches, which can be destructive and lead to an escalation of behaviour. The group approach takes parents' own examples.

#### 5. Taking a Reflective Parenting approach to the future

How to maintain a Reflective Parenting stance in times of difficulty and when disciplining your child in order to maintain a connection and sense of security in the relationship, as well as holding an authority as parents.

### Expected benefits to the group

Parents can expect to develop a better understanding of their child's emotions and behaviours, whilst increasing the connection both they and their children feel towards each other. The programme helps parents to connect with their child's inner world, helping them feel understood and of value. It also helps to deescalate difficult situations and reduces behavioural and emotional outbursts.

### How to find out more

For further information about the Reflective Parenting Group, including the timings of the groups, our fees, or for referral information, please contact Danielle Bentham by email ([Danielle.Bentham@annafreud.org](mailto:Danielle.Bentham@annafreud.org)), or speak to Reception on 020 7794 2313.





# Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

## Out of hours or emergency contacts

The Centre does not offer any out-of-hours or emergency services for children, young people and families. If you require urgent assistance please contact your GP or visit your local A&E department.

## Other languages and formats

If you would like this leaflet in a different language or format please ask at reception or contact us at:

Email: [Info@annafreud.org](mailto:Info@annafreud.org)

Telephone: 020 7794 2313



Hampstead site:  
12 Maresfield Gardens, London NW3 5SU  
Tel: 020 7794 2313 Fax: 020 7794 6506

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## How to give feedback

We really want to hear from the parents, children and young people who use our services. If you have any comments or suggestions about your experience of coming to the Centre we would love to hear from you. Please get in touch by emailing [feedback@annafreud.org](mailto:feedback@annafreud.org)

## How to find us

Buses:

No.46 – stops on Fitzjohn's Avenue

No.13, 82, 113, 187, 268 & C11 stop on Finchley Road

Underground:

Finchley Road – Jubilee & Metropolitan Lines

Swiss Cottage – Jubilee Line

Hampstead – Northern Line

Overground:

South Hampstead

Finchley Road & Frognal