

DAY IN THE LIFE



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Deborah Groening MA, MFT

OCCUPATION(S):

Founder, Executive Director of Well Baby Center, Chair, Board of Trustees, Well Baby Center, child, couples, and family psychotherapist with a specialization in infant-family mental health.

AULA AFFILIATIONS:

Alumna BA ('97) and MA in Psychology ('00)

PASSIONS:

Infant-family mental health, community psychology, primary prevention, attachment research, applied psychoanalysis, neuroscience, mindfulness psychotherapy, group relations theory. I also love to sing, dance, practice meditation and yoga, make art, take long walks, read and travel. I feel incredibly fortunate that most of my intellectual passions are not only relevant to Well Baby Center's work but are the very cornerstones of its philosophy.



What is your morning ritual?

I have my own version of daily meditation – first, I lie in bed till my thoughts clear, then I have morning tea alone with only my vitamins and my resting mind to nourish me. I do this by the water's edge (I live in the Venice canals), and take in the beauty and possibilities of a new day. I pray for calmness and grace to guide me through the day.

Describe the main project or task you did today?

I facilitated two Mindful Parenting groups, worked on the coordination of a new Reflective Parenting Workshop series, and saw my psychotherapy clients.

What is the most challenging thing about your job?

In a single day, I need to shift focus from the overall administration of the center, to a more contemplative state of mind for treating clients and running groups, to managing personnel dynamics. In addition, I manage the marketing of the center. So many moving parts – but that's also why I love my work.

In a sentence, what makes you tick?

I think holistically and visually, so I'm most comfortable when I am able to take in the big picture of a problem or project first – usually in the form of a vision in my mind's eye – only then I can approach the task at hand with confidence.

What is your favorite thing about AULA?

AULA supported my particular way of learning, thinking and processing information. It enabled me to crystallize my vision for WBC and gave me the confidence, credibility and credentials to make it a reality. During my years at Antioch University, I developed



Photos: Every aspect of the Well Baby Center presents a welcoming atmosphere for visitors, from the inviting store front facade to the warm and varied interior spaces; (inset) Deborah and her son Will - one of her desk photos; (bottom left) Deborah shows off her collection of antique toys at the Well Baby front desk; (bottom right) Deborah, her husband Paul, and their dog Douglas Adams.

my professional identity and a coherent narrative of myself that allowed my legacy to emerge.

What are you currently reading?

Courage To Heal – Incest Survivor's Guide (research for my work). This is a great resource for new moms I work with who struggle with a history of sexual abuse.

Who inspires you and why?

My sons Abe and Will and my husband Paul inspire me to be the best person I can be. Thich Nhat Hanh, Elizabeth Warren, and all visionaries, spiritual masters, politicians and comedians (!) who bravely speak the truth about our human condition, our bankrupt capitalistic values, and our dire – or doomed – environmental situation.

If you were a superhero, which one would you be and why?

I try to be more and more ordinary every day.

What is on your computer desktop?

Text for a new mothers support group I'm developing, a file of updated program flyers, and an updated WBC brochure.

How did you get interested in your line of work?

As a child, I was sad and confused by my difficult family relationships – especially with my mother. I asked her if I could see a therapist, and she said they were only for "crazy people." From that moment I was hooked – perhaps because I thought "if they can help crazy people, they can surely help me".

What is on your iPod?

Joe Cocker, Kate Bush, Lauren Hill, Massive Attack, OutKast, Rye Cooder and 50 Cent – kind of all over the place in my musical taste.

What's your favorite (or most inspirational) quote?

"It's a matter of choice and chance." Told to me by my former psychoanalyst!

What are you afraid of?

I would have to say death. (I'm still working on this one.) It is so final!

If you could go back to school again, what would you want to study?

Dance and music. I love to sing – but I don't see myself changing my career any time soon, so I challenged myself to sing with a rock band on my 56th birthday this year. I found a keyboard player and a guitarist and we formed a temporary band called The Lame Ducks (in reference to my canal duck friends). When my guests arrived I surprised them with an announcement that I was the entertainment for the evening. I belted out Janis Joplin's *Piece of my Heart* and channeled my inner Grace Slick for *White Rabbit*. It was a blast. I highly recommend living out a fantasy in midlife – as long as it doesn't hurt anybody!

