

...with Uta Frith

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One person who inspired you

Margaret Dewey, the mother of an autistic son who is now in his fifties. I have only met her once, about 20 years ago. She is now over 80, and I still correspond with her. She has given me a unique insight into the condition, especially what it means for a family when the child grows up to be an adult. Margaret has read all my books as drafts and has edited them. She enabled me to understand another point of view, not just the scientist's point of view. She also personified for me the heroism that is involved in bringing up a child with a severe developmental disorder, not having illusions about the true extent of the problems, and succeeding in providing the best possible outcome.

One alternative career path you might have chosen

Art historian.

One journal article or book that you think all

psychologists should read
Making up the Mind by Chris Frith (Oxford: Blackwell). My husband's new book.

One moment that changed the course of your career
Meeting Beate Hermelin and Neil O'Connor and discussing one of their seminal papers. This led to their offer of a PhD place.

One great thing that psychology has achieved
Behaviourally and cognitively based therapies for mental disorder and disability.

One challenge you think psychology faces
Understanding the causes of the huge individual differences in degree of handicap and ability to cope and compensate.

One thing that you would change about psychology
Be more adamant about the scientific foundations of psychology. Non-scientific folk-psychology and

psychobabble are doing a lot of harm.

One nugget of advice for aspiring psychologists

Get a good grounding in maths and science.

One cultural recommendation

Visiting the Victoria and Albert Museum, because it is a memory store of cultural artefacts that shaped our everyday life.

One hero/heroine from psychology past or present

John Morton, for not being satisfied with empirical research and always pushing for theory. Lila Gleitman, for being intellectually sharp as well as very funny, and for continuously producing new ideas and never getting stuck.

One thing that 'organised psychology' could do better

Raising quality and status of psychology teaching in secondary schools.

One hope for the future

An integrated understanding of mind and brain. Moving from correlates to causes in understanding links between neural and cognitive processes.

One problem that psychology should deal with

Education. How can we improve and manage learning

throughout life? Everyone agrees that eventually education should be based on evidence from research in cognitive neuroscience.

One more question

Another question about education, learning, creativity and intelligence that has always intrigued me is 'interest'. How do you awaken a child's 'interest' in something? We all know that we love to learn the things we are interested in, and we are interested in the things we love. But what comes first? If we had techniques to evoke interest in frequently disliked but truly useful skills, like number skills, then we could

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resource

Frith, U. (2003). *Autism: Explaining the enigma*. Oxford: Blackwell. 'It summarises a lot of my thinking not just on autism, but also on the brain and on social intelligence. But, sadly, it does not actually explain the enigma.'

coming soon

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