

0.1 Chapter 3: relationships: Maturity

0.2 Maturity

1 On the Role of Teddy Bears



The English psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott developed the idea of a Transitional Object. He wanted to draw attention to the very important work done by children's much-loved teddy bears. At first a baby feels fused with the mother. But gradually a child will become independent, able to live successfully alone.

How does one manage this transition? A teddy bear can help by being a bit like the mother a source of tenderness and sweetness and comfort. And yet, it is really the child who gives the bear these qualities. So the bear is a lovely thing: a halfway house, a resting place between the utter dependency of the baby and the emotional independence of the adult. But we don't ever entirely resolve this problem. We are always, to some extent, in transition.

When we recognise that the demands of independence are getting a bit too much when we've had to be too adult, too sensible, too reliable for too long we need to let ourselves be dependent and insecure. This transitional object is named Donald in honour of Mr Winnicott, the first person to think with appropriate depth about the value such a creature might have for us. He was created in collaboration with designer Donna Wilson by a team at The School of Life.

You can find him [here](#).