

Dr Pooky KnightSmith

Practical Insights, Lasting Impact



About Pooky

Pooky is a prolific keynote speaker known for inspiring change with her engaging, straight-talking style and next-day practical ideas. As well as drawing on a wide evidence base; Pooky's talks weave in elements of her personal journey, where a late autism diagnosis took her from a psychiatric hospital bed, at imminent risk of death from anorexia, to a leading voice in mental health with a passion for climbing and paragliding.

Pooky has a PhD in child mental health from the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London. She is the author of several books, a former chair of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition and she has had the privilege of working with and learning from hundreds of schools and settings across the UK and around the world.

What to expect

No matter what the topic, you can expect the following from Pooky:

- 1 - Your needs and ideas woven into a tailored (or brand new) talk
- 2 - Increased reach and impact for your event via Pooky's 45k followers
- 3 - Guiding principles and new ways of thinking to inspire top-down change
- 4 - Next-day practical, high-impact ideas that enable bottom-up change
- 5 - An evidence-inspired talk brought to life with personal experience
- 6 - On time, to time and a valuable use of your attendees' time
- 7 - Brilliant visuals that say a lot in few words (and you can keep them)
- 8 - Recommended resources for attendees to continue their learning
- 9 - A talk that gets people talking

Conference Experience

Having spoken at hundreds of conferences all over the world, as well as having organised a few, Pooky is easy to work with and will endeavour to provide everything you need, when you need it. On the day, she'll help you keep to time, have a close handle on the tech and keep a smile on people's faces.

Online? No Problem

Pooky is an established online speaker where her energetic and interactive speaking style ensures that attendees remain engaged and inspired throughout. As well as being able to keep a recording of the session for future use, many people book additional sessions to develop learning further after a successful first event.

All the Resources...

Pooky always shares her slides and a range of related resources including worksheets, videos and podcast episodes so that attendees can consolidate or build on what was learnt on the day.

Book Pooky for Your Next Event

Email - ellie@speakingofbooks.co.uk

Ellie Powling is Pooky's agent and will make the magic happen. She'll take the time to explore your requirements in depth before arranging for you to meet with Pooky. Ellie will support in all aspects in the run-up to your event so you can be sure things will run smoothly. She also represents other fantastic speakers who could support your event.

Testimonials

Pooky is an inspirational speaker. From the minute she started, everyone was hooked and the engagement continued well after the session, with colleagues continuing to discuss what they had heard.

Hannah Easthope, Headteacher St Luke's C of E Primary School

From the start, Pooky had the audience gripped. Her qualifications, knowledge and personal experience place her well for such events but it is not just what you know it is how it is delivered and, on both counts, Pooky scores top marks.

Mr Mike Piercy, Headteacher, New Beacon School

Pooky exudes passion and also plans well and ensured that her talk was directly related to the target audience. She has a wealth of experience, is amazing at engagement for large audiences and is personable.

Sarah Johnson, President, PrusApp

Pooky's passion for supporting young people is thoroughly infectious... partly due to the depth and breadth of her knowledge and also due to her ability to relate theoretical knowledge to real, tangible examples.

Gray Foster Felton, SEND lead, Girls Day School Trust

After a number of visits to Gibraltar, Pooky has become very much part of the family with colleagues requesting numerous follow-up visits in support of our strategic vision. Her life experiences and expert knowledge provide an ideal platform and she's a pleasure to work with.

Wayne Barton, Practice Lead, Government of Gibraltar

Popular Talks

A Whole School Approach to Mental Health

Determine how well your school is currently meeting the mental health needs of students and staff and explore practical next steps to build on current strengths and address areas of challenge. Designed to act as a springboard for school improvement, this session works best when leaders come with an open mind ready to celebrate what's working well and challenge what isn't.

Self-Care Skills for Exhausted Educators

You already do so much for your students and their families; so this session is all about you. We'll be exploring skills and habits you can develop to promote your own wellbeing whilst remaining realistic about the amount of time and resources we can each dedicate to looking after ourselves.

Heard, Held, Healed: Enabling Today's Children to Flourish

Drawing together guiding principles of inclusion and trauma-informed practice, this session answers the question 'Who do I need to be?' for all leaders and practitioners hoping to enable children to thrive in the current context. With themes including listening, belonging, safety and pride you'll go away with a framework of best practice and a range of ideas to make it happen.

Getting to Why

Whether we're seeing self-harm, eating difficulties, attendance issues or other challenges, unless we understand the drivers for a child's behaviour, it's hard to provide sustainable support. During this talk, Pooky will share a range of strategies for 'getting to why' which will instantly boost your skills and confidence in listening, connecting and getting to the heart of the issue with the children and young people in your care.

Maslow's Toolbox: Ideas for Inclusive Classrooms

Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a scaffold for inclusive practice, Pooky will walk you through a toolbox of ideas to transform the experience of every learner every day in your classrooms. Leaders will leave with a framework for change and practitioners will be able to cherry-pick from a range of next-day practical ideas.

Neurodivergent Friendly Schools: Lyra & Pooky's Guide

Step into the shoes of neurodivergent pupils and understand the school experience from their point of view in this session developed and delivered by Pooky and her daughter Lyra who are both autistic. We'll explore the day-to-day challenges of life in school, both in the classroom and beyond and consider why and how we can make simple adaptations to our daily practice, culture and environments to enable neurodivergent students to attend, enjoy and succeed.

Promoting Resilience: Using Pooky's 4Ps Framework

During this session, Pooky will summarise a simple, evidence-based approach to promoting resilience, developed by exploring what enables some children to thrive in the face of adversity. Exploring each of the 4Ps in turn, you'll learn why Positive adult relationships, Peers, Problem-solving and Passion matter and how we can use the 4Ps as a framework for promoting resilience in children that both builds on existing strengths and develops areas of challenge.

Behaviour that Challenges

Take a fresh perspective on behaviour that concerns, distresses or challenges by stepping into the shoes of the child with Pooky during this keynote talk. You'll learn how to respond calmly during crisis moments before getting curious about the 'Why' behind behaviour. We'll explore a wide range of 'what next' strategies for sustainably supporting children and we'll end by considering how to turn the moments when it all goes wrong into opportunities for role modelling and relationship building.

Breaking the Cycle of Self-Harm

Self-harm is increasingly prevalent, yet many colleagues report not really understanding it and worrying they'll make things worse if they try to support a student. During this keynote, Pooky will answer the many questions you have about the 'What', the 'Why' and the 'What next' of self-harm, whether you're looking to lead an organisation-wide approach or you have an individual in mind you want to make a difference to.

Recognising & Responding to Eating Disorders

During this session we'll explore the world through the eyes of children with eating disorders to gain an understanding of why they develop and why they persist. You'll learn when to worry (and when not to) and discover a range of practical steps you can take to prevent the onset of eating disorders or support recovery. You'll leave the session empowered, informed and enabled both to support individuals and develop your whole school approach.

Anxiety: Helping Students to Help Themselves

This fast-paced talk will deepen your understanding of anxiety. You'll learn how to spot it, how to break rather than reinforce the cycle and how we can support students to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to support themselves. A wide range of next-day practical strategies will be shared as well as a framework for cascading understanding and practice across whole staff teams.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Opt for a single session which provides a practical overview of understanding and responding to EBSA, or deep dive with Pooky's 4 part series:

- Session 1: Prevention
- Session 2: Early Intervention
- Session 3: Reintegration following absence
- Session 4: Autism and ADHD

Online or face-to-face delivery. Each session can stand alone.

SEND: Promoting Positive Mental Health

Mental health issues are highly prevalent, but under-recognised within our SEND population. We'll consider why this is and the simple steps that we can all take to create an environment and culture that prevents rather than exacerbates mental ill health for our more vulnerable students. By the end of the session, you'll have the tools and practical ideas you need to write and enact simple child-centred action plans for individual students as well as a wealth of ideas that could be applied universally to enable every student to thrive.

Sensory Regulation in the Classroom

Work with Pooky to better understand your neurodivergent learners' sensory needs and how to meet them with small changes to your everyday classroom practice. With your new understanding, you'll feel more able to recognise and respond to your students' sensory needs before they reach a state of hyper or hypo arousal (meltdown or shutdown) as well as having a range of ideas and strategies to make your classroom and approach more inclusive for every learner.

Bespoke Talks

In addition to her listed talks, Pooky can develop a talk bespoke to your event. Every one of her regular talks started as the brainchild of a conference organiser and she's highly skilled at taking your hopes, aims and challenges and turning them into a high-impact talk.