

MOTHER-BABY BONDING DURING PREGNANCY: A LEGACY OF LOVE

by Wendy Anne McCarty, PhD, RN, D.CEP

Your world and your baby's world are intimately intertwined during pregnancy at every level of your being: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. You are both held within a cocoon of moment-to-moment shared experiences, intimate communication, and a communion that goes beyond logic and reason or even conscious awareness. Like a synchronized dance, each of you is leading and responding to the other's being. The quality of your life and state of mind and the quality of the relationship you form with your baby before birth has a tremendous influence on the quality of your child's life over the lifespan. Here are some simple principles that come from a blend of leading edge science and ancient wisdom to help you learn how to ensure a life-long legacy of love for your baby.

Understanding our earliest relationship experiences from the baby's point of view and how these experiences set in motion life patterns has been the intense study of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology (PPN) for over 30 years. The new discipline of Primary Psychology uses this lens to focus on our earliest human experience from preconception through baby's first postnatal year and its role in creating children who thrive and become resilient, loving adults. What we are learning from the baby's point of view reveals more of the mysteries and secrets of mother-baby bonding during pregnancy and the life-long legacy of our first relationship, and supports the deepest mother wisdoms. Until recently, 0 to 3 years has been seen as the critical developmental period for building optimal brain development, attachment, self-regulation, emotional intelligence, and resiliency. Now PPN clinical findings reveal that the prenatal and birth period is when the core blueprint for life patterns are established. Thus, creating the optimal conditions and investing in a positive relationship during pregnancy is of the highest priority.

Babies have shown us that they are more conscious, aware, and capable of connecting with their mothers than has been previously thought in Western cultures.



Tania, 8 months (@ J. Giambrone)

From the beginning of life, their innate needs for security, belonging, love and nurturing, feeling wanted, feeling valued, and being seen as a person are present. Meeting these needs supports optimal development and positive mother-baby relationships.

Babies in the womb perceive, communicate, and learn at multiple levels: mind-to-mind, energetic, and physical-sensorial. Understanding their multilevel capabilities changes our basic notions about babies and our relationship with them. Babies are very aware and sensitive to their mother's experience and the environment. I remember one couple who went to a music concert and when the baby got agitated and was kicking mom, they realized the music was just too loud for their baby, so they left the hall and talked to their baby, "Oh sweetie, that music was too much for you. We're sorry. Daddy and I want you to be comfortable." That consideration and communication builds positive trust and security.

Babies have prenatal memory as if they are taking everything in to learn about human life and build their subconscious programming and ways of being. I've seen many parents stunned by watching their children reenact very complex series of events that happened during the pregnancy, including demonstrating how the mother was feeling. There are still many mysteries, yet it is evident that every baby is aware at a sophisticated level of what their mother and father think, feel and

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do. If you feel more pressure to be the perfect parent reading this, remember that babies seek realness and connection, not perfection. They seek tenderness, delight, laughter, and happiness. They seek the warmth of mother-love and connection.

Each mother and baby will have their own unique way of getting to know one another and being together. It's never too early and it's never too late to deepen your connection with your baby. Here are five tips:

Assume your baby is aware of everything you experience through your senses, heart and mind. Include your baby in your daily life. Trust your mother wisdom when you feel them communicate with you through your thoughts, feelings, inspirations, desires and dreams. Acknowledge the communication, respond and build the rapport. When they know you are receiving and honoring their communication, trust grows.

As a mother, your state of being—happy, sad, angry, stressed, relaxed or playful—becomes the baby's world. Most mothers can imagine positive ways of communicating with their babies, but they feel hesitant to connect when things are not great. If you are having a difficult experience or reaction, include your baby. Communicate with your baby, something like: "I'm feeling so stressed and angry today. I know you are experiencing this too. I'm sorry. I know that doesn't feel good. I'm going to deal with it so we can both feel better soon." By recognizing the potential impact on your baby, acknowledging it, empathizing with your baby's experience and moving towards effectively dealing with it, you are helping your baby. That is a legacy of love!

Ask for help and what you need from your partner, family, work mates, and friends to feel good, be happy, and to have the time and space to grow your positive relationship with your baby. This is a great time for receiving as you are giving to your baby. The better you feel, the better the baby feels!

...A LEGACY OF LOVE (CONT'D)

If you have regrets about things that happened earlier in the pregnancy, communicate with your baby directly about this. For example, although we know babies want to feel welcomed and wanted, sometimes it takes us a while to feel positive. There is tremendous healing in communicating with your baby about how it really was and how you wished it could have been. When I facilitate this type of healing during pregnancy with mothers and babies, mothers often remark upon how they truly feel the changes in the baby, themselves and the relationship afterwards.

Learn to utilize new effective energy psychology tools such as Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), Tapas Acupressure Technique (TAT), and HeartMath to more quickly help heal, de-stress and feel empowered to create what you want to create during your pregnancy. (Read my free EFT article, *EFT for Mom, Baby, and Dad*, Chapter in *15 Ways to Health, Happiness, and Abundance*, available at www.tryitoneverything.com)

Your prenatal mother-baby bonding provides a wonderful foundation for a positive birth experience. During birth, babies do best when mother feels empowered and supported, when baby is included and communicated with directly, and when your mother-baby connection is uninterrupted after baby is born.

Building mother-baby bonding during pregnancy is truly a life-long legacy of love. Best wishes to you and your baby.

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