

ATTACHMENT

CAREGIVER BEHAVIORS CRUCIAL TO ATTACHMENT

Factors Crucial to Bonding

“Maternal emotional, as well as physical, messages are transmitted to the fetus. Synchrony and bonding begin during pregnancy; mother and unborn baby develop reciprocal sleep-activity cycles and styles of reactivity. Every sensory system of the baby is capable of functioning prior to birth.

...

The first embryonic cells are sound sensitive and by 4 ½ months *in utero* the fetus responds with a precise muscular movement to each of the of the phonemes (smallest unit of sound of which words are formed) of the mother and moves his or her body rhythm to mother’s speech. . . . The fetus can sense and react to love and hate, as well as ambivalence and ambiguity.

...

During the last few months of pregnancy, the increased activity level of the fetus falls into certain cycles and patterns. . . . A receptive mother interacts with her fetus in response to those patterns. . . . Synchrony is developing; the baby responds to the mother’s rest activity level, and mother responds to the baby’s. The fetus and mother are preconditioned to each other’s rhythms. . . . Almost anything that upsets the mother also upsets the fetus.

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Infants are born with the ability to distinguish their mothers’ voice and express a preference for the voice of the birth mother. . . . Newborns turn preferentially toward their mother’s breast instead of toward the breast of another lactating woman. . . . Brazelton’s pioneering study on mother-infant relationships demonstrated that they form a ‘mutually regulated partnership.’ The relationship is reciprocal, with the mother and infant moving in synchrony.

...

The following infant/caregiver behaviors are crucial ingredients to the . . . development of secure attachment:

[Eye Contact:] A newborn can focus his or her eyes 7-12 inches, the exact distance needed to make eye contact in arms. . . . Face to face proximity and eye contact are synonymous with closeness and intimacy.

...

[Touch:] All warm-blooded animals are born with an innate need to be touched and stroked affectionately. . . . Touch for the human baby serves both physical and emotional functions. . . . Human babies actually die from the lack of touch.

...

[Smile:] Smiling is a universal human greeting that signals friendliness and non-aggression. By the eighth week the infant begins to smile in response to seeing the primary attachment figure.

...

[Movement:] In humans, every time mother moves, the fetus moves, naturally rocking to the rhythms and motions of mother's body. . . . When a baby is hungry, feeding most effectively terminates crying; at all other times, rocking is the most effective soothing and calming intervention . . . when incubators were kept in motion, the infants functioned better than unrocked infants in visual tracking, auditory development, weight gain, and bodily control.

...

[Feeding:] The psychosocial experiences associated with feeding are part of the infant's emotional and relational development.

...

[The Heart Connection:] The sound and steady movements of the mother's heartbeat are an ongoing component of fetal development. After birth, proximity to the mother's heartbeat provides familiar reassurance and stress reduction for the newborn. The heart contains neurotransmitters that directly affect the functioning of the brain.

...

[In-Arms Holding:] All components of attachment—crying, touching, movement, smiling, eye contact, feeding, clinging, and the heart connection—occur within the context of the in-arms position. . . . This holding position provides a physical, emotional, and relational foundation for the development of secure attachment.”

Levy & Orlans, Attachment, Trauma, and Healing: Understanding and Treating Attachment Disorder in Children and Families (Child Welfare League of America Press 1998), pp. 27-40.