

PREGNANCY MATTERS!

FORMING HEALTHY, HAPPY AND THRIVING HUMAN BEINGS



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“There is no other way into the
world except through
the body of the woman.
Woman is the portal
to the universe.
She is also the womb of Being.”

Philosopher John O'Donohue

INTRODUCTION

How to welcome loving, thriving and conscious human beings into our world

Welcome to the engaging universe of prenatal life and prenatal parenting! The term prenatal englobes the 9 months prior to conception and the months of pregnancy leading to the baby's first breath.

Whether you are planning a family or are already pregnant, whether this has been a planned pregnancy or not, it is undeniable that you are experiencing - or about to experience - one of the deepest transformational journeys ever.

During pregnancy, the mother becomes a manifestation of Mother Nature. This is the time in a woman's life when, for about ten lunar months, she forms, protects and nurtures the body of a new human being, providing materials for his physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development. As she conceives, goes through pregnancy, gives birth and holds her baby in her arms, the mother undergoes numerous transformations.

Pregnancy is the time for the couple to create their child's foundation of self-worth, trust and connection. The mother is a true educator and holds the power nature has given her to form and nurture in her womb a baby who will grow into a healthy adult, capable of self love, towards others and our planet.

Every father was once a baby in his mother's womb, and the imprints from that time awaken during the pregnancy of his companion, when he has the tremendous opportunity to share in the pregnancy by protecting and nurturing her environment – thus also benefiting his own child.

By his presence, he can weave a powerful and extraordinary space, while she performs a most mysterious and grandiose task. This leads him to transform their companionship, as he finds inner resources to inspire her with his thoughts, feelings, actions and caring deeds.

You might think this knowledge is new, and it may be so for contemporary science, but ancient traditions from countries like India, Egypt, Greece, China and Japan regarded this very important time with respect and were mindful of the parents' power to transmit not only health, but virtues to their children even before birth. It might inspire you to know that ancient Chinese medicine compared pregnancy to an ocean of opportunities, considering it like life itself manifested inside the mother, as well as reverberating inside the father and beyond.

In case you are being introduced to this knowledge and your pregnancy is already well under way, it is not too late to bond ever more deeply with your baby for the aim of this book is to offer fundamental information about the impact prenatal parenting has in raising loving, thriving and conscious human beings.



PONDER THIS

- From the point of view of the baby, how would it be for him/her to be born in your family?
- What are your reasons to have a baby? Are your motivations fully centered on the baby, or on overwhelming needs of your own.
- Do you or your partner have unmet needs you expect your child to fulfil?
- Is there space in your relationship for a new person?
- Of course, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. The process of answering them is a way to identify areas for conversation with your partner.
- In case you are concerned about issues raised in this exercise, know that above all, the solution is love and the intention to create more of it in your lives.



DID YOU KNOW

- Our prenatal experiences shape our primal health!
- What we experience in the womb structures the very basis upon which we live our life, even if later on we can partly remodel our physiology and psychological traits, all thanks to life's extraordinary plasticity.
- “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Abolitionist, Frederick Douglas

STRAIGHT FROM THE FIELD OF PRENATAL PSYCHOLOGY:

Researchers at McGill University (Canada) studied the outcome of an ice storm in Quebec that left millions of residents to brave a severe power outage and freezing temperatures, for up to six weeks. Their findings show that the more severe the level of prenatal stress during the storm, the more negative its impact on the children who were tested from the age of 6 months to 6 years. The impact was assessed in terms of temperament and behavior toward parents and teachers, motor skills, IQ, attention skills, and language development. All of these were below average, when compared to children born of pregnancies that did not endure such levels of stress.

Laplante, D.P., Brunet, A., Schmitz, N., Chiampi, A., & King, S. (2008). Project Ice Storm: Prenatal maternal stress affects cognitive and linguistic functioning in 5 ½ year old children. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 47(9), 1063-1072.

CHAPTER ONE

PLANNING FOR A BABY



“Awake or asleep, the studies show that unborn children are constantly tuned in to their mother’s every action, thought, and feeling.”

Psychiatrist Thomas Verny

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PLANNING FOR A BABY

Planning for the future means making conscious decisions now. The most inclusive and effective way to protect our future babies is to ensure optimal conditions for every baby from the moment their parents start thinking about having them.

When society and parents work together and look into the realm of prenatal life and prenatal parenting, aware of the power inherent in conception and pregnancy to create and inspire new generations yet to be born, we will then invest much more in every child and by doing so create the bright future we long for. A child's right to a socially and ecologically fair start in life begins in the womb and should be the first and most overriding human right. We can grant that by starting to parent our babies before birth.

To plan a baby is often a matter of deciding when to conceive, to put into perspective what the arrival of a new member can bring not only into this specific family but also to the whole society. The project of having a baby can provoke major changes in our lives and also help awaken a new consciousness in our world: one single human being can inspire millions, but can also cause much discord. The roots of our human behavior lie in this foundational time, and in the space we have in our parents' hearts, even before being conceived.

Consciously parenting a new baby starts when parents marvel about the idea of having a child. This state of mind establishes an

"inner space" in each of them that opens a path for a new human being to arrive in their lives. A symbolic image for this phase is when a bird couple decides where to build their nest, they search for a good and safe site, with access to food and away from predators. Planning for a baby demands not only checking into one's socioeconomic situation and health conditions, but requires a deeper dive in the couple's relationship. In a marriage without children each one can freely decide to do different things when they disagree. But when it comes to decisions about another person who depends on them (a son or a daughter), negotiation skills are paramount, in order to keep the family peace and strengthen the children. Family planning is the beginning of a new phase when they have to make decisions together, make concessions, and be open to accept different perspectives in life that will surely show up.

When the decision to have a baby is the couple's greatest desire, they can send a heartfelt invitation out, asking this child to become a part of their family. It can be in writing, in prayer, in conversation or in ritual, and should reflect who you are as a couple and what you wish to offer to an incoming being.

This heartfelt invitation brings strength, energy and joy to the couple, to deal with the possible challenges of pregnancy and the sacrifices and struggles involved in having and raising a child.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- When treading a path of consciousness, it is useful to recognize and be at peace with our qualities and weaknesses, as these are related to what we have to offer our children.
- Fall in love with the idea of becoming a parent. Unconditional love is the most important and powerful force that a parent can give a child, so start practicing it.
- Browse through the Free Resource e-book “10 Golden Rules for Future Parents”, it is a wondrous source of inspiration for a couple contemplating the conception of a child. This beautiful, simple and sound document is a synthesis of prenatal psychology’s core tenets, and engages the couple in nurturing their baby from before conception right up to the birth and breastfeeding period. It has already been largely adopted in several nations, like Greece (its country of origin), Canada, Brazil, Spain and Italy.

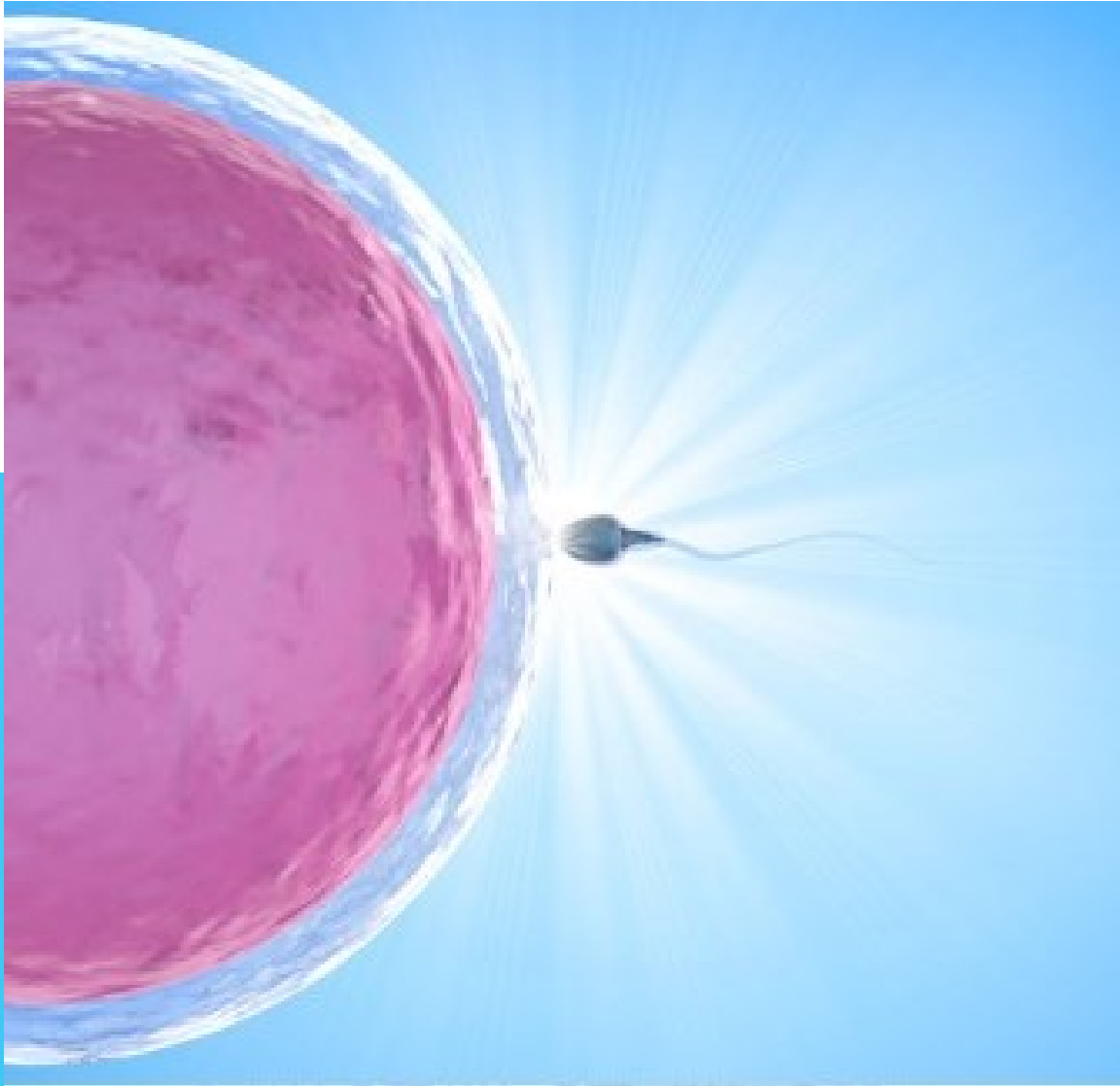


DID YOU KNOW

- Many stress factors affect fertility, they can be environmental, psychological, trans-generational and cultural.
- In a world in which fertility challenges are on the rise, it is important for couples to develop and cultivate resilience in order to be more and more equipped to surf the seas of these ubiquitous stressors.

CHAPTER TWO

FERTILITY



“Receptivity is an emotional
and physical state in which
our biological creativity
rests!”

Holistic Nurse Niravi Payne
founder of “The Whole Person Fertility Program”

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FERTILITY

Fertility and its counterpart infertility, have become important issues in the world today. Many factors have been identified as influencers and amongst them are the environmental ones, of course, linked to the enormous quantity of fertilizers and pesticides present in our food chain. These are estrogen-mimicking and can bring havoc to the hormonal system of a couple wishing to conceive. Of equal disturbing power are the plastic particles often present in the drinking water, as well as heavy metals and electromagnetic pollution ubiquitous in our daily environment. Of course, all of these only add to the emotional toxic stresses that so often permeate our lives. However we are not all the same when it comes to our vulnerability to stress, which depends essentially on our lifestyle and abilities previously developed, like resilience, self-mastery and wisdom.

According to anthropologists, some hidden factors of fertility challenges are emerging. They originate from the uniformization of women and men's roles since the end of World War II, when women started entering the workplace in order to keep the economy going. This prioritization of professional life has pushed the age of conception towards the 30s - and we see more and more women inclined to get pregnant in their 40s, which often allows for a more mature family nucleus. Anthropologists tell us about customs during many civilizations' golden age, where the average age for a first child was in the 30s. For instance, the Ancient Greeks recommended the young to wait until they would be inwardly stable, in order to attract and choose a right partner with whom becoming a parent up to the task of raising a child was present.

Changes in women's behavior brought changes in men, who became far more participative in what used to be considered feminine tasks, like housekeeping and caring for babies and children. These roles are still going through lots of revisions, but despite some great improvements for men and women to consciously understand both their masculine and feminine sides, these changes ultimately diminished the masculine in men, thus reducing this important masculine life force so necessary for fertility.

Our era invites men to develop their feminine side and women to develop their masculine side, without any of them losing their essence. However, cultures around the world often erase the feminine and end up with a weak parody of the masculine. The 21st century offers us the privilege of a better understanding of the masculine and feminine dance, however our evolutionary crisis engendered a "unisex wave," in which manhood seems to lose its grounds.

Freedom to understand and act in a feminine or masculine way is an important step to reconcile both genders in each of us and among us, but when it comes to physical fertility, it is mandatory to compose with nature's polarities.

In our modernization process, women tend to lose track of being serene and receptive, significant qualities for their body to welcome and nest a baby. On the other hand, some men tend to lose track of being dynamic and determined, which are required traits to have healthy and efficient spermatozooids.

How to restore a woman's body to its fertile femininity? It is all about nesting, preparing an inner and an outer nest. For a woman the nest is her own body and for a man it is his heart.

When they feel at home with each other, their feminine potential and their receptivity are at their best.

Fertility issues can also be connected to one's family story. It is wise to take a look into issues pertaining to your couple's ancestry, like past abortions and miscarriages, unwanted pregnancies, difficult deliveries, unlive d dreams, secrets, untimely deaths... Knowing about these facts can help to process and integrate these ancestors' lives into your own, and perhaps transform past suffering and beliefs into blessings and opportunities. According to findings of transgenerational psychotherapy, what we change in our lives benefits not only ourselves and our descendents but our ancestors, as well.





PONDER THIS

- How do you express your feminine side? Your masculine side?
- Are you comfortable in your body?
- What are the main stress factors in your life, and how do you experience them?
- “Of all the lifestyle factors studied to date, stress is the one most consistent factor that shows an effect on how long it takes to get pregnant.”

*Louis, Germaine M. Buck; Lum, Kirsten J. et al., (2011).
Stress Reduces Conception Probabilities across the Fertile Window:
Evidence in Support of Relaxation. Fertil Steril. 95(7): 2184-2189*

- It is possible to protect ourselves from the two millions tons of the ubiquitous di-2-ethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP), produced every year to render plastics flexible. Unfortunately, these organic compounds severely affect our fertility¹, as they highly intoxicate our endocrine, ovarian, testicular, hepatic, renal, nervous and cardiovascular systems, thus greatly diminishing our embryos' survival rate. In order to do so, we can avoid or replace plastic bottles, plastified shower curtains, paintings, clothes, furniture made of synthetic materials, plastified tools and all plastic derivatives containing DEHP by products with DEHP-free plasticizers or PVC-free polymers.

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16905236/> and <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/ehp.1509760>



DID YOU KNOW

- Preconception time is ideal to dream big, to get closer to your essence and reconnect to your highest ideals.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- If you are a woman, deepen the connection with your body, try to sense when you are ovulating and are the most fertile. Enter the mystery of your cycle, correlate it to the moon phases, and be aware of your various states of mind.

If you are a man, engage in challenging activities such as camping in the wild, vigorous hiking, rock climbing or rafting, in order to strengthen your dynamism and emissivity and face your fears. Australian experts from the University of Melbourne's Department of Zoology have discovered that father's obesity negatively impacts sperm, resulting in reduced placental development, smaller fetuses and poor pregnancy outcomes. They urge men to get "fit" prior to conceiving, in order not to hinder their child's fetal development.

*Gardner, David; Hannan, Natalie and Binder, Natalie (2012).
Thinking about kids? Men need to shed the kilos.*

- If any of you have had a previous abortion or miscarriage, a good idea is to name each "baby" and give him or her a symbolic burial, offering a space in your heart for each of them. This is to allow the next womb inhabitant to grow in a place free of the echoes of difficult memories of unresolved death. If this exercise brings up strong emotions, we encourage you to process them with meditative and awareness techniques, the friends, family or professional guidance.
- As a couple, you can also engage in nurturing activities like cooking together, decorating your home, gardening or caring for a pet. This starts the weaving of an inner place in both of you to welcome and embrace a new life.

CHAPTER THREE

PRECONCEPTION



“Pregnancy is a most crucial stage of parenting, however a neglected one for the last several millennia. And prior to conceiving a child, it is vastly empowering to explore the fecund universe of prenatal parenting and its impact on humanity.”

Birth Activist Laura Uplinger”

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PRECONCEPTION

Preconception is a time to dream big, a time to give wings to our highest aspirations. The more we wish for a great son or daughter, the more we allow for that to be so. At conception, we attract a being whose life purpose is akin to our inner dimensions.

Men renew all their sperm approximately every 64 days, however how they live during the months prior to conceiving a child contributes immensely to the characteristics of their spermatogenesis. The quality of their sperm depends on how they eat, feel, think and act during the months leading to conception.

As for women, they are born with most of their eggs that already carry a plethora of imprints from their feminine lineage! And the way these messages will be conveyed to the child to be conceived greatly depends on how the man and the woman have lived their life, especially the months leading up to conception.

A man and a woman who are planning to conceive a child, preparing to bring a human being into their lives, can nurture their relationship with the faith that sustains their connection to a higher purpose, the numinous, to use a term dear to Carl Jung.

To be a mother or a father is a path of self-awareness, and can be very challenging, however these challenges diminish greatly when you look sincerely at yourselves, before conceiving a child. For instance, were you dreamt of before being conceived? Did your parents wish you were a boy, or a girl? What was your family's situation at the time of your conception and gestation? Was your parents' relationship harmonious?

Issues present at the start of your own life tend to reappear when you have a child of your own, and an important part of the preconception work is to learn about your story, asking your parents or other family members about how you were conceived, gestated and delivered.

While preparing to conceive - and even during pregnancy - both of you have the power to “re-parent” and “re-pattern” yourselves from possible harmful events or lack of attention, which might have afflicted you in the womb and plagued your life thereafter with hurtful limitations. Your very dedication and surrender to the idea of conceiving a baby can do wonders in that regard.

Your intention to conceive and your preparation leading up to conception is of great relevance, as every child comes to earth with his own purpose and often looks for parents in sync with this purpose.



PONDER THIS

- What can you do in order to improve the quality of your lives before conceiving?
- What values and qualities do you want to model for your baby from this point forward?
- What kind of human being do you dream of offering to the world?
- In the Hindu Brahmacharya tradition, the couple is advised not to make love during the 30 days leading to conception, in order to convert their sexual energy into a more focused and purer energy which greatly contributes to the healthy formation of sperm and ovum.



DID YOU KNOW

- “Thought must be present at the essential moment of conception so that man and woman are workers conscious of taking part in a grandiose enterprise.”

Pedagogue and Philosopher Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Gently connect with the pre-nate you once were - still present in you - and offer him the solace and love he so wishes for.
- Long before conceiving a child, nature invites both of you to prepare your mind and body. Choose to eat healthily, get in physical shape, learn to manage your stress, nurture high ideals, avoid or transmute toxic relationships and strive to leave harmful habits behind.
- For men, it is best to stop your alcohol consumption 6 months prior to conceiving a child.
<https://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Press-Office/Press-releases/Fathers-to-be-should-avoid-alcohol-six-months-before-conception>
- As you prepare mind and body to conceive, nurture love and practice good communication between the two of you, in an atmosphere of respect for each other's journey with admiration and kindness. The beauty of your couple is reflected in the vastness of each other's gaze.
- You can send an invitation to a possible child, explaining who you are, what you admire most and live for, what inspires your hearts and uplifts your soul, and what you wish to offer to a new arrival in your lives.
- Transpersonal psychology often confirms what traditional wisdom teaches: this intimate dialogue is a meaningful key to connect with the being who will respond to your aspirations.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSCIOUS CONCEPTION



“Expecting mothers and fathers are actually genetic engineers: they are the ones who influence, by their behavior, which of their offspring's genes will be silenced or activated!”

Cell Biologist Bruce Lipton, PhD

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CONSCIOUS CONCEPTION

A sexual embrace, blessed with mutual love and conscious offering, calls upon nature's life forces, directing them towards enhancing the conception of a child. While the man surrenders his heart to the exquisite forces of lovemaking and enters the woman, she imbues him with her mind, in sheer delight. A privileged moment, when her thoughts have the tremendous power to attune the couple to a conception consecrated to their highest values and purposes for the child coming to them.

According to a quantum physics phenomenon named "sensitive dependence on initial conditions," the conception of a child—a sublime and unique event—imparts a pivotal fractal that will play a significant role in orchestrating the child's development in the womb.

It is well understood that at conception, the mother and father's genes get together in the nucleus of a single cell that will be the start of the development and growth of a brand new physical body. However, the science of epigenetics reveals that from conception onward, some of these genes will be activated or silenced, or even modified, according to the mother's inner life and how she experiences her environment.

For over a century conception was believed to be a simple race amongst sperm cells whose winner would forcefully penetrate the ovum to start a new life. However, recent findings identified several categories of sperm with different functions. The younger and faster ones forge a path for the more mature ones and unveil the protective layers surrounding the egg. Then the egg opens itself to a particular sperm, amid the more mature ones, who best

reflects who the couple is at that moment.¹

The specifics of this momentous union pertain to an array of influences ranging from the couple's state of mind to the atmosphere surrounding them. Indeed, atmospheric pressure, as well as electric magnetic fields impact cell behavior.

A conscious conception during a profound and soulful moment, when nature is at its best - like on a beautiful clear morning, or a splendid starry night - will cradle a different being than the one conceived by "accident" in a casual and joyless sexual encounter during a storm.

You might find it inspiring to know how oriental traditions reveal that during the conception of a child, the father sets in motion the energy responsible for the vitality and strength of the baby's future nervous system, lungs and bones. As for the mother, she brings the energy for the formation of the baby's blood, cardiovascular system and all connective tissues, which comprehend the majority of our body.

In the most important classical text of Ancient Chinese Medicine *Huāngdì Nèijīng* 黄帝内经, it is taught that we possess two main meridian structures: the conceptional vessel and the governing vessel. And when a couple is conceiving a child, their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual bodies merge together, so that these two vessels interconnect through their tongues and genitals, forming ONE great system. This embrace, led by the greater purpose of conceiving a child, is called the Mandate of Heavens, 天命 *tiān mìng*.

¹ John L. Fitzpatrick, Charlotte Willis, Alessandro Devigili, Amy Young, Michael Carroll, Helen R. Hunter and Daniel R. Brison, 10 June 2020 - *Chemical signals from eggs facilitate cryptic female choice in humans.* <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.2020.0805>



PONDER THIS

- What would happen to human civilization if from now on every child was wanted and consciously conceived?
- Have you noticed the utter importance of beginnings, how strongly they influence the outcome of what we undertake? Best to apply the power of this principle at the most important of beginnings, the conception of a child!



DID YOU KNOW

- “When a woman is pregnant, her baby’s organs and tissues develop in direct response to lessons they receive about the world—from mom’s diet, her behavior and her state of mind.

Mounting evidence tells us that the prenatal environment is equally as important as genes, perhaps even more important, in determining lifelong physical and mental health.”

*Marcy Axness
Prenatal Development*



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- At the moment of conception, it is advantageous for the couple to emanate love, happiness, and a wish for a being to come into their lives who will one day embody peace, altruism, wisdom and greatness of character. Such envisioning becomes a foundation for the baby's sense of self, it even favors an optimal genetic encoding, regardless of eventual lesser hereditary traits handed down from previous generations.

L. J. Gaydos, W. Wang, S. Strome. H3K27me and PRC2 transmit a memory of repression across generations and during development. Science, 2014; 345 (6203): 1515 DOI: 10.1126/science.1255023

- Right from the start, let love rule above all else, feel in your hearts that you are already a mother and a father. Father, call out for the magnificent soul attracted by the beauty of your couple's love. Mother, the sharing of your physical body, thoughts and emotions with your baby, begins at conception.
- Be aware that if you conceive a baby with the energy of love, it improves your baby's genetic expression.

CHAPTER FIVE

PREGNANCY



“The positive or negative maternal emotions, messages of love, indifference or rejection that a foetus receives from his mother, energetically and via hormones, become engrams in his cells' memory and convey their colour to his sensitivity and future personality.”

Marie-Andrée Bertin

Author of the book “Natural Prenatal Education ~ a hope for the child, the family and society”

5

PREGNANCY

The foundation of health, love and peace

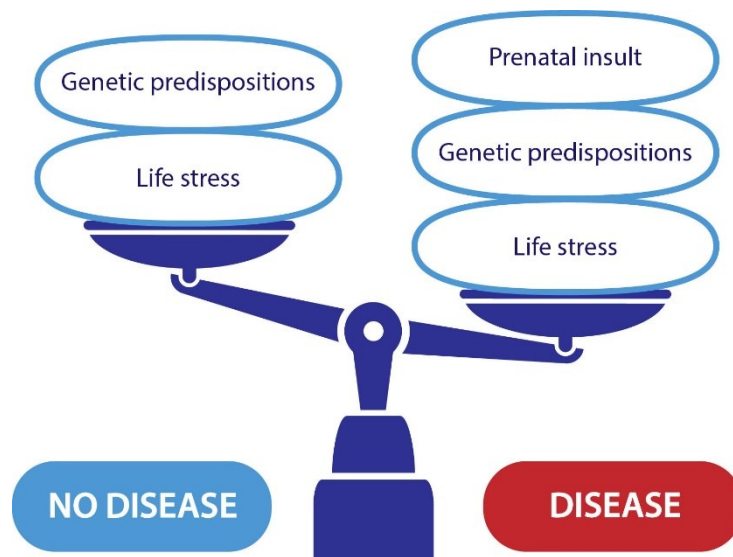
All parents wish for healthy and happy babies, and the vast majority make an effort to eat well, avoid illegal drugs, tobacco and alcohol. Everything parents do to improve the quality of their child's prenatal world, is an act of love.

There is still so much science does not understand and it is better to err on the side of caution in the face of such a miraculous moment.

For instance, studies have shown that even minimal amounts of alcohol or other toxins, can affect the movements of a prenat.

It is important however for couples to also understand the impact of toxic stress, anxiety and depression on their unborn baby. For instance, when toxic stress hormones are constantly triggered during pregnancy due to the mother's distresses - like anxiety, frustration, trauma or depression - they affect her baby, her pregnancy, labour and delivery. Indeed, intense stresses, as well as chronic mild stresses, heighten significantly the risk of preterm labor, low birth weight at term and emergency caesarean. And Post-traumatic stress disorders, as well as postpartum depression mark and compromise bonding and attachment.

Meta-analysis research has shown that what is most valuable for the formation of a healthy child and future adult is, first and foremost, whether or not the prenatal conditions that affected his time in the womb can be resolved.



Lifetime Stress Experience: Transgenerational Epigenetics and Germ Cell Programming. Dialogues Clin Neurosci 2014;16(3):297-305. Tracy L. Bale, PhD

A newborn coming from a highly stressed pregnancy and birth, is in a survival mode and might present a smaller head circumference, a smaller forebrain, a larger hindbrain and larger adrenal glands than expected.¹

These kinds of biological traits are answers to the emotional signals from the mother's experiences, designed to enhance the baby's survival in a stressful environment. The prenatate learns his mother's outside environment as he senses her experiences as if they were his own. This prenatal "learning" may explain his tendency to overreact, later in life, to the same kind of stresses.

“It’s important to try to communicate with the child from the beginning to send positive messages into the womb to talk to the baby, to sing to the baby, and of course, to have as healthy a childbirth as possible.”

Psychiatrist Thomas Verny

In cooperation with the University of Zurich Hospital and the Munich Max Planck Institute, researchers have discovered that the mother's physical stresses change the placenta's metabolism and influence the growth of the baby. When the stress lasts a long period of time, the concentration of stress hormones in the amniotic fluid makes the fluid bitter and the baby drinks less, thus hindering the formation of the digestive system. Also, the oxygen supply to the baby can diminish, resulting in low-birthweight or increasing the chances of prematurity. All of this increases the baby’s fussiness, and later on, the likelihood of attention deficit disorder and other health problems.²

We now understand that it is up to expecting parents, their families and those around them, to embrace certain dimensions of pregnancy that have been ignored for too long and are essential for the emergence of rarely seen and necessary character traits in our societies. An emergence of powerful qualities like vitality, resilience, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, trustworthiness, ethics, social intelligence, altruism, empathy, respect, environmental intelligence and connection with the whole.³

“Sensorial stimulation and affective imprints from prenatal life are our first programming. Later experiences and learning will come, but they will be an overprint. Think of the importance of such foundations!”

Marie-Andrée Bertin

Founder of ANEP France and author of the book “Natural Prenatal Education ~ a hope for the child, the family and society”

Pregnant mothers would delight in having better conditions in which to nurture their babies and surrender to their intuitive knowledge of how their thoughts, feelings and behaviours influence the future adult their baby will blossom into.

Thanks to findings of epigenetics, it will soon be common knowledge that throughout life, our health and behaviour reflect our experiences in the womb, leading us to gravitate toward situations akin to what we experienced during the prenatal period.

¹ *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: National Research Council (US) and Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development; Shonkoff JP, Phillips DA, editors. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2000.*

² *P. La Marca-Ghaemmaghami, S.M. Dainese, G. Stalla, M. Haller, R. Zimmermann, U. Ehlert: Secondtrimester amniotic fluid corticotropin-releasing hormone and urocortin in relation to maternal stress and fetal growth in human pregnancy. Stress. 21 April, 2017. DOI: 10.1080/10253890.2017.1312336*

³ *Effects of Prenatal Maternal Stress on Serotonin and Fetal Development, December 2015, DOI: 10.1016/j.placenta.2015.11.013, Joey St-Pierre, Laetitia Laurent, Suzanne King, Cathy Vaillancourt*

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PONDER THIS

- According to an Iranian study, lack of prenatal bonding affect the health of children and adults:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6192301>

- According to theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli and neuroscientist Dean Buonomano, for the human brain, time doesn't exist... Only superimposed bits of time, each of them constantly orchestrating our reality!

- For the brain, there is no linear time, our life in the womb and yesterday's breakfast coexist in this dimension we call “now”, and our daily behaviour, the decisions we make are deeply influenced by the wealth of these superimposed bits of time. What we experienced in our mother's womb takes a surprising part in how we gestate our own children, relate to them and raise them.

- Intuition is your best friend, you can develop it by daily dialogues with yourself, seeking subtle inner guidance that will hopefully prevail amidst the many comments bombarding you from family, friends, social networks and status quo. A strong relationship with your inner voice boosts your confidence and helps you feel more connected to your child.

- A study involving World War II survivors and their children shows how the epigenetic impact of stress can be passed down to the next generations. Grandchildren from Holocaust survivors were suffering from depression, anxiety, addiction, eating disorders, and it did not appear that these gene expressions had been mediated by adversities experienced during their own childhood, they could only be attributed to their parents exposure to the Holocaust.

Yehuda, R., Daskalakis, N. P., Bierer, L. M. Bader, H. N. Klengel, T., Holsboer, F., & Binder, E. B. (2015, August 12). Holocaust exposure induced intergenerational effects on FKBP5 methylation. Biological Psychiatry. DOI: 10.1016/j.biopsych.2015.08.005



DID YOU KNOW

- Stories abound from all over the world, of mood and behavior changes during pregnancy, denoting influences from babies. Indeed, babies aren't just a fruit of their parents, they come with their own identity, influence their mother, and even bring her gifts, dreams, atypical interests and affinities.





WHAT YOU CAN DO

- The conditions in which both of you were conceived and gestated are echoing in you as you are now gestating your child. It is very helpful to identify some of the emotions pertaining to that time. So, ask your mother, your father, a member of your family about the specifics of the time surrounding your prenatal experience.
- Before falling asleep, peacefully connect with your body, its organs and cells. Connect with their story since way back, when you were growing and developing in the womb. Marvel at their intelligence and send them your love and appreciation. By doing so, you empower yourself to soothe and heal many wounds of long ago and have more energy and freedom available for this new chapter of your life.
- There are effective support groups and treatments for stress, anxiety and depression during pregnancy. And in case you are struggling, also be aware of the well-being that can be found in the company of other pregnant women who are experiencing similar situations.
- Heart coherence with breathing and relaxation techniques, together with selfmanagement strategies, significantly reduce pregnancy anxieties, without resorting to medications.
- Meditation and prenatal yoga are excellent modalities to soothe, nurture and lead to a fulfilling pregnancy.
- Slow down several times a day to dedicate your pregnancy to the forces of life, to your high ideals, and offer your baby a restful mother, respectful of her sleep cycles.
- Take some 20-minute walks, musing with your thoughts and feelings, sharing them with your baby.
- The water element lends itself to echo what your baby is experiencing: as you float or submerge yourself under the water, you are at one with your child's prenatal world.

CHAPTER SIX

PREGNANCY FROM THE BABY'S PERSPECTIVE



“Prenatal Psychology findings reveal how our earliest experiences in the womb and during birth lay core patterns in our implicit memory, subconscious and autonomic system that profoundly shape us and set in motion life-long patterns.”

Holistic Nurse Wendy Anne McCarty, PhD

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PREGNANCY FROM THE BABY'S PERSPECTIVE

We know that the way we consider and treat our babies, infants and toddlers will impact how they develop physically, emotionally and intellectually. We also know that parents and close family members are key to their social behavior. Myriads of studies in the field of psychology convinced the world that our first five years greatly determine how we will live our life.

However, scientific breakthroughs clearly demonstrate that babies inside the womb are even more vulnerable to their environment than they will ever be afterwards.

Through their vital essence, babies influence the transformation of their mother's entire organism and mind. As a matter of fact, they play an important role in conducting its stages: from morning sickness, which leads the mother inward to start nesting, to the bliss of feeling a body moving inside her, and to the whole birthing process.

Much can be mentioned about the pre-nate, for example: few mammals experience what humans do, in the sense that the fetus can send his own cells to the mother's bloodstream in case they are necessary for their mutual well being! These fetal cells remain in the mother's body for decades. Indeed, she may carry a Y chromosome left over from a male child pregnancy.

The science of epigenetics confirms that our development doesn't unfold only in accordance with the genetic material we receive from our parents.

As already stated, it also reveals that our genes get switched on or off, due to environmental triggers, thus rewriting our genetic makeup! These triggers can be nutritional, chemical, emotional and environmental, all leading to permanent modification of our genes.

Trans-genealogy studies the unconscious transmission of ancestral patterns like certain inclinations, talents, aptitudes and virtues, as well as addictions, failures, illnesses or accidents handed down throughout generations.

Take a close look into yourself, mindful of the importance of your ancestral heritage and use all its resources, seeds and compost, to tend your inner garden and share your alchemical creativity with your baby.

Yes, for the prenatals it is a great victory that our culture has become quite knowledgeable of how a pregnant mother's physical health benefits their development. But this is only the tip of the iceberg, and it is time we further explore the full spectrum of what they actually need in order to grow and develop, as their necessities pertain to a much wider range than ever envisioned before.

For instance, a baby senses when his parents go through intense troubles in order to accept the pregnancy. The mother's hormones affect his neurophysiology, informing him of her feelings, thus starting the foundations of his high or low self-esteem, sense of connection or isolation, trust or mistrust. Many beliefs, attitudes, defense mechanisms, and problems in our adulthood, take root during this phase of our early development. Such difficult, but also common beginnings need to be addressed in order to be redirected, ideally during pregnancy or later on in life.

Transpersonal psychology and quantum biology—as in the work of Anne Ancelin Schützenberger and Bruce Lipton—have revealed that pregnancy awakens ancestral memories, as well as the fear of being stuck and bound to endlessly reproduce some limiting patterns.

Yes, every family has its greatness and hurtful dramas. We can however be proud of what we received from our ancestors, learn from their heroism, audacity, creative adaptability and also from their trials, failures and sorrows. A precious gift for your baby!

Due to your own experiences as a prenaté and baby, you may experience difficulty in connecting with others. If this is so, make peace with your own beginnings and understand that most parents are unaware they can hinder their child's development by being emotionally distant, not responding to their child's psyche and physical needs.

Now that you are starting your own parenting journey, access your inner resources and use your free will to choose different kinds of beginnings for your baby and yourself.

What would prenatés tell us, if they could speak?

Inspired by clinical observation of babies, and obstetrician Akira Ikegawa's research of children's memory of their time in the womb, let's listen to them.

Baby, would you tell us about yourself?

“Throughout my days and weeks of growth and development, I get gradually equipped to live in the world outside. Of course, during this time I influence my mother, and delight in letting her know who I am. But In this time of utmost communion, her experiences become my own experiences. What she eats, how she breathes and connects with nature, her feelings about herself and life in general, how she loves my father, her thoughts about me and the whole wide world, all that - and more - plays a major role in my development.

Her dreams about me nourish my strength, joy and enthusiasm about growing. However, the pressure of her expectations can be quite stressful for me. Her common anxieties and mental agitation about me don't bother me that much. You see, my placenta is built to filter the biochemistry produced by that kind of stress. But it's tough when I sense mom under toxic stress, especially when she doesn't soothe and reassure me. I perceive this unusual stress as a big danger to her, and in order to help her fight it, I find myself producing the same substances her body is producing.

Unfortunately, by doing so, I end up demanding too much from certain organs of mine that are involved in that specific stress. Later in life these organs will have their physiology running on overload and often making me overreact physiologically and emotionally. True, this tendency can end up empowering me, but at the expense of much energy. Thank goodness, as soon as mom consoles me the threat vanishes and I can stop helping and “parenting” her with my body's resources.”





PONDER THIS

- During the first 10 weeks of prenatal development, babies grow at a staggering speed, each and every cell being a communicating being, equipped with its own intelligence and memory! Babies' astounding beginnings teem with possibilities.
- The present can re-pattern the past, and the pre-nate you once were awakens in you the way you parent your pre-nate. When an expecting couple consciously parents their pre-nate, a profound inner healing begins within them, establishing new patterns in their psyche and re-parenting the pre-nates they once were.
- The discovery that fetuses can give up stem cells to repair their mother's heart could explain why many women who develop heart weakness during or just after pregnancy recover spontaneously.
- “Even a single glass of wine can have a potentially long-term effect on the foetus in terms of its behaviour in the womb. We observed foetuses that stopped moving for several hours.”

Peter Hepper, Emeritus Professor at Belfast Queen's University – School of Psychology Behavioural Development and Welfare

- Tobacco exposure in the womb affects the baby's brain development, having long-term effects on neural activity and development and increases the risk to develop ADHD and lowers inhibition control when the person reaches adulthood.

Holz, Nathalie E., Boecker, Regina, Baumeister, Sarah, et al. (2014). Effect of Prenatal Exposure to Tobacco Smoke on Inhibitory control: Neuroimaging Results from 25-Year Prospective Study JAMA Psychiatry, 71 (7), 786-796.



DID YOU KNOW

- “Woman is the artist of the imagination and the child in the womb is the canvas whereon she painteth her pictures.”

16th Century Swiss physician Paracelsus



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Be creative as a couple and find your own ways to bond with your child from conception onward. Babies thrive on nurturance and the earlier you start bonding, the better, more harmonious and joyous your pregnancy will be.
- Talk to your baby as you would talk to a grownup, let him/her know that he/she is loved and share with your baby who you are. Tell your baby about your family and friends, your favourite activities, what inspires you and your ideals.
- Welcome your baby's sensitivity from the very start. Babies delight when they feel worthy of your interest, as a complete being, a soul on the way.
- Explore your transgenerational resources and find the vital gems they brought you.
- Be aware that eventual transgenerational struggles and hardship inheritance can stop affecting your life, and the energy involved in it can then be used for your inner growth.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PREGNANCY FROM THE MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE



“Mothers intuitively know what scientists have only recently discovered:
the unborn child is a deeply sensitive individual who forms a powerful relationship with his or her parents – and the outside world – while still in the womb.”

Psychiatrist Thomas Verny

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PREGNANCY FROM THE MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Nowadays, being pregnant and keeping up with a busy life can be quite demanding, especially because many cultures fail to cultivate an environment of quiet introspection around expecting mothers. Both at work and at home, women are asked to be highly productive, constantly multitasking, and during pregnancy this pressure may keep them disconnected from their baby.

Fear of the unknown may cast feelings of insecurity and vulnerability in the expecting mother, as her sensitivity is enhanced. This heightened sensitivity during pregnancy is often characterized as a normal, physiological anxiety, when in fact it is an extraordinary gift from nature, enabling women to better embrace the transformation and fulfill her mothering role. It is possible for her to access her maternal nature as she enters the subtle world of connection with the baby, talking to him, listening to him, singing and reading beautiful texts to him.

Around the world, societies have changed and traditional families with mothers, sisters, daughters close to each other and sharing experiences, have evolved into nuclear families – in which women can feel lonely, unsupported and unprepared for their motherhood journey. However, it is worth mentioning that some modern couples delight in a newfound freedom, away from domineering families.

Although toxic stress and mood swings can be tough to handle, they are often indicators of valid dimensions of one's life and deserve attention. Nowadays reliable management resources are

available to help strengthen your skills in order to safely navigate inner and outer storms.

During pregnancy, the mother's physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual experiences are information she shares with her baby through her body's biochemistry. The baby then couples this information with his genetic material and it contributes to his development, orchestrating his readiness for life on earth.

Every pregnant mother will form her baby from who she is, but when she knows the importance of the prenatal period for the future of her child, a window of creativity and infinite possibilities open up in front of her. Thus, how she chooses to perceive her environment, her look on life, what she envisions, enhance the quality of her child's growth and his future capacity for self-love, love for others, love for life and love for nature. Obstetrician Michel Odent even claims: “Pregnant women should not read books about pregnancy and birth. Their time is too precious. They should rather, watch the moon and sing to their baby in the womb.”

Science used to think that the placenta would protect babies from the stresses and pressures of the mother's daily life. Nothing is further from the truth and scientists now know that the placenta faithfully transmits the biochemistry of the mother's thoughts and feelings.¹

A healthy way of life, coupled with practices that nurture inner peace, help the expecting mother to reconnect with her intuition and feminine essence, reinforcing her serenity, vitality and love for life, with beneficial effects on her baby's development - in anticipation of a healthy and meaningful adulthood.

Each and every meal is an opportunity to consciously partake in providing the best for your child. Fresh food contains biophotons,

particles of light that get stored in our DNA and whose role is to cushion stress impacts, support healing and autoregulation mechanisms in the cells. A handy way to reinforce our immune system!

Food can nourish more than our physical body, as the way we eat influences the way we receive its nutrients. For instance, when we take time to observe a piece of fruit, its shape, colour and properties, we feed our senses; and feel grateful, moved by the fact that it conveys its life to ours. Engaging in Indian age-old yoga of nutrition offers a respite to the pregnant mother, a time for minding the essential, and in her womb, the baby is imbued by her beautiful state of mind, as gratitude, admiration and wonder are health boosters.² This yoga is about how to eat and how to consider each food while absorbing their subtle and powerful life energies.³

It is a wondrous time for all mothers-to-be to discover their mighty role in the formation of their baby. This can inspire them to explore more resources and make informed decisions about their life, their body, and their babies.

“According to me, women are the ones who will save the world; they possess the key of life, and it's through them that Love's great and powerful impulse can manifest itself and give us life.”

Bulgarian philosopher Peter Deunov

¹ *The Ontogeny of Growth Hormone, Insulin-Like Growth Factors and Sex Steroids: Molecular Aspect. Article by Japanese Neonatologist Victor K.M. Han, 1996* <https://www.karger.com/article/Abstract/184761#>

² *Article written by Jayney Goddard MSc, FCMA, Lic.LCCH, Dip.ACH. President, The Complementary Medical Association - The anti-inflammatory effects of a sense of awe and wonder* <https://www.the-cma.org.uk /Articles/The-antiinflammatory-effects-of-a-sense-of-awe-andwonder-6099/>

³ *The yoga of Nutrition, Editions Prosveta*



PONDER THIS

- A human being is in the making inside you, consider this being as a soul, a promise of all possibilities, beyond gender or human attributions, harboring extraordinary potential and deserving of your most intimate trust.
- Your aptitude to give and receive love influences how your baby grows and develops. And keep in mind that every second, one million chemical interactions take place in a cell.
- Parents' indifference can be a most tragic experience for prenatals, it reverberates into their childhood and adulthood, plaguing them with low self-worth and low self-esteem. On the contrary, prenatal connection with one's parents fosters lifelong resilience.



DID YOU KNOW

- 21st Century neuroscience has revealed how much fathers contribute to their children's mental health. A man in good health, who knows how to sail the seas of his emotions and doesn't let daily stresses have the upper-hand, brings a significant gift to the child he is about to conceive.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Slow down your daily rhythm, quiet your mind and increase the awareness of who you are inwardly.
- Several times a day, take a moment to breathe deeply, calmly, surrendering to the forces of life. You will thus convey more vital oxygen to your baby.
- Make daily appointments with inner joy and peace and cultivate their fruits in your inner garden.
- Choose your food with care, according to its freshness and purity, try eating equal amounts of raw and cooked fruits and vegetables.
- Enjoy your meals in a peaceful and thankful state of mind, aware of the extraordinary alchemy that transforms what we eat into who we are.
- Envision your baby as a future adult, with characteristics like serenity, health, cheerfulness, strength, enthusiasm, kindness, honesty, courage, curiosity, intelligence, patience. This is a powerful way to start weaving a bond between the three of you - mother, father and future baby - and to further strengthen the love in your relationship.
- Sing to your baby, delight yourself with inspiring movies, sculptures, plays, paintings...
- Upon waking in the morning, greet your pre-nate with a smile, connect emotionally and spiritually with this new inhabitant of our planet.
- As you walk or meditate in nature, consciously share the beauty of these moments with your baby.
- With your loving hands on your belly, talk to him about life and about who you are and who his father is.
- You're expecting a baby, yes, but also a toddler full of wonder, a lovable rascal, a daring teenager and an adult. Envision this being all grown up, standing tall and happy, expressing the qualities you value the most.
- Be aware that mother nature has entrusted a pregnant mother's imagination with bestowing health and beauty on humanity's children.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PREGNANCY FROM THE FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE



“Mothers carry the baby in
their womb,
as fathers carry them both in
their heart.”

North American Native Wisdom

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PREGNANCY FROM THE FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Fathers are fathers from the very start of the pregnancy, and what is fatherhood at this stage? They have entrusted a woman they love with their dream of calling a being to this planet and once a child is on the way, they can partake as well in being “pregnant”, not physically but in many other ways. They can nurture their pregnant companion, and play a positive role in her environment. Even if a large number of fathers lack good role models for fatherhood, it is key for them to understand how they are the main influence on their companion's well-being which will ultimately impact their child.

The father conveys his very essence straight into the pre-nate, when singing or talking to him. Indeed, the baby receives the vibration of his father's vital force, recognizes it and will forever acknowledge it. The baby will not only learn his father's voice, but will also sense how his presence and actions deeply influence the mother and her endocrine system.

Throughout pregnancy, the expectant father remains in cellular resonance with the baby and might even feel and perceive some subtle messages from him, for instance, how he wants to be named, his life's purpose or other messages.

Being loving and understanding to his pregnant companion's needs is also a way to welcome the baby. The father of the child is a major part of a pregnant mother's environment, and he faces an important realization: it is up to him to "mother" her more than to receive nurturance from her, thus letting her be more available for their baby.

This switch of focus defines the pregnancy of the father and bestows upon him a sense of pride and satisfaction. While loving his companion, inspiring her, caring for her, he gives the very best to his child, finds his new "place" in the family, which enhances his fatherhood journey and opens a brighter space for the child to blossom.

Father, remember your honeymoon days, put your anxieties and personal needs aside and enjoy sailing in your companion's heightened intuition. Delight in the wonders of her journey. These are months when the two of you can weave a wealth of marvellous patterns of health, resilience and robustness into your baby's foundations.

Emotional and social intelligence combined are often absent from the fabric of human societies, and the advent of such a combination greatly depends on this kind of sharing among expecting parents.

Each child brings with him a fabulous innate potential into his parent's state of consciousness.





PONDER THIS

- At all ages, joy and harmony are the best triggers of good psychological and physical health.
- Your actions, feelings and thoughts deeply affect your companion's wellbeing and thus your child's development.
- Remember that as your baby grows in the womb, every phase of his development "awakens" in you the baby you once were at that exact phase. Be aware that emotions from back then can surface and soothe or trouble you.
- Statistics reveal that a father's absence increases antisocial behavior (aggression, rule-breaking, delinquency, illegal drug use, etc.). Life as a couple can be challenging at times, and it's good to know that resources exist to revive the couple's love sparkle and cultivate the wonders of their relationship. Two of the many resources that can help overcome the differences between partners are "Non Violent Communication"¹ and "The Honeymoon Effect".²
- In the last decades, the rise of single mother households made poverty five times greater, leaving youth with 40% less likely to finish high school.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VT8KGgDo6TY>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKe43Ak1y1c>



DID YOU KNOW

- The use of prenatal bonding techniques throughout pregnancy has eased the labor experience of over 4,350 women, providing them with:

- ▶ less anxiety and pain during labor
- ▶ less effort giving birth and fewer complications
- ▶ a decreased need for obstetrical interventions and c-sections
- ▶ a low degree of birth trauma

and less than 1% of them suffered from postpartum depression.

Their infants presented:

- ▶ no excessive crying
- ▶ longer and deeper sleep at night
- ▶ greater aptitude to communicate
- ▶ enhanced curiosity
- ▶ emotional stability

From Prenatal Bonding (Bindungsanalyse By Raffai)

By Gerhard Schroth, M.D.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- You too, father can talk to your baby in the womb about who you are, what makes you happy and inspires you the most. Sing to him and your companion.

- Feel as if you were “pregnant with your wife” and strive to embody the values you most wish for your family to live by.

- Schedule outings with your wife, be mindful of the power your attention has on her. Esteem and attentiveness are great ingredients in the joy you bring her, and a way for you to take part in seeding with her a lifelong enthusiasm in your child.

CHAPTER NINE

BIRTH



“It is not too late to be sure every baby is carried in a safe uterus, with a supported and happy mother, and is welcomed into the world as a sentient, conscious being. Just imagine what that would mean for the baby's future and that of mankind.”

Obstetrician Robert Oliver

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BIRTH

A major transition

The baby has spent almost ten months in a very dimmed lit environment, immersed in a temperature of 37,5° Celsius, evolving weightlessly in the amniotic fluid, a dynamic environment subject to the mother's every move, continually exposed to aquatic sounds (strong and feeble ones, rhythmic and random ones), where all his needs are taken care of.

He is now ready for life outside of the womb, his mature brain sends neuroendocrine signals to the mother's hypothalamus, which in turn, starts producing oxytocin, prolactin and other endorphins, the pituitary gland releases them into the mother's bloodstream—together with a small amount of catecholamines-, and labor starts.

“There is a hormonal balance between mother and baby. During our sexual life there are only two intervening: the women and the men. During childbirth there are only two intervening: the mother and her baby. The interaction always starts with two factors. The rest is cultural, an interference in the natural environment.”

Obstetrician Michel Odent

The uterine walls start contracting and the baby's stretches render its contractions efficient, reinforce them, which signals to the mother's brain to keep secreting more oxytocin.

Little by little, the cervix gets thinner and thinner, and starts dilating, while each contraction squeezes the placenta, and it releases a microbiome into the baby's gut - a microbiome in the

making since early in the pregnancy, in the placenta, a birthday gift, for the health of the baby's immune, endocrine and nervous systems. This very first microbiome is immensely enriched during the first minutes after birth by the surrounding bacteria whose quality and variety are of great importance for the health of the baby's future immune system.

At birth, the newborn finds himself in a totally new environment, light instead of twilight, air instead of water, and many different and new sounds. Such stimuli demand an incredible capacity for adaptation. We can do our best to soften this brusque arrival, so that it is not traumatic, but instead calm, respectful and joyous.

Such a major transition changes everything for the baby: he now receives oxygen through his own lungs, his blood flows differently, his eyes are exposed to much more light, he feels the weight of his body, perceives sounds quite differently now that air is in his auditory system, senses temperature variations... All these firsts will inform the baby what transitions are like, and later in life, when facing important changes, the memory of what happened at birth will still be influencing his choices.

Our passage from a watery womb where fluidity reigns to a static earthy environment is a momentous one. Our blueprint, until then in the making, is now established, ready to start orchestrating our organism's growth and development.

Prior to birth, we are a world of possibilities; afterwards we blossom from the roots grown during our prenatal life, until we tread a path of consciousness and take responsibility for furthering our own development once we are able.

Fear of childbirth can be overwhelming, and in their wish to fathom and somehow "master" the unknown, women generally don't know that they can instead surrender to it. A total surrender, akin to the one presiding over the lovemaking at

conception. This attitude is at the core of our inner strength. Fears thus transmuted are a preparation, a fine tuning of a mother's resources for overcoming challenges ahead.

It is about time that nations around the world discover that a woman's body is engineered to give birth. At the dawn of the 21st Century, science is just starting to understand the exquisite physiology of childbirth and its numerous and systemic parameters.

One of the characteristics of a physiological birth is its rhythmic nature: acceleration and deceleration, increase and decrease of uterine contractions' intensity, much like the waves of an ocean. Understanding rhythm is to penetrate one of the mysteries of birth. Myriad internal and external factors influence both mother and baby, helping or hindering the rhythms of labor and birth. For each birth this rhythmic flow is unique.

During childbirth, oxytocin and melatonin, in synergy with other hormones, work together flooding the uterine wall and the entire woman's body, orchestrating the contractions, requiring privacy, calm and dimmed lighting (soft orange light hues allow for an adequate melatonin release), in order to work efficiently in the absence of excessive stress hormones.

Balance occurs best in an intimate and quiet environment in which the mother feels safe and protected. Oxytocin is also released when she feels reassured, hence the importance of a serene environment when the birth is unfolding, so that the mother can tune into her instincts and intuition.

Every person present at a birth is hopefully there to safeguard its environment and protect the mother from external stimuli that may trigger her neocortex activity, like language (questions, explanations), cold, noise, bright light, feeling observed or restricted, or having people in the room who are anxious or impatient.

In fact, every night, we all enter a very similar state, just before falling asleep: in order to access the slumber dimension, our neocortex needs to be turned off, so that our limbic brain can fully take over and allow for a restful night.

The pain sensations that accompany childbirth are powerful signals, they assist the mother by alerting her body to respond instinctively to them in order to facilitate the spiraling descent of the baby. Her body knows how to do this, and she discovers her strength as she opens up while riding the waves that take her closer and closer to having her child cradled in her arms.

As her body senses the baby's messages, she needs to feel safe and comfortable in order to follow her intuition and express herself the way she chooses to, being rude or sweet, shouting or silent and even adopting unexpected positions that help her cope with the tensions of her body. Each contraction is a definite invitation for her to adopt a new position, to move, breathe and endow her child with a force that will forever be his.

The moments of pause between contractions are very meaningful as they give women a chance to return to calm and the endorphins to help the cervix both dilate and get regenerated.

Birth is the unfolding of systems created during pregnancy and activated when the baby gives the go ahead. The pressure in the birth canal allows for a natural molding of the baby's cranial bones and as the head emerges from the birth canal, its bones overlap in order to fit through the pelvic outlet. When the base of the skull meets the pubic bone, the baby feels the pressure, bends his head backwards and spouses the shape of the upward curving birth canal which some say gives the appearance of an open lotus flower. This ebb and flow pressure on the baby's head activates the vital fluid-pumping mechanisms throughout his body.

The mother is blissful, she welcomes the baby in her arms and in her heart, experiencing deep, intense feelings of joy, a never before experienced joy. She gently whispers into his ear the first word he'll ever hear, a word she alone chooses that means the world to her; its grandeur, strength and sacredness will have a lifelong subtle resonance in her child's life.

“This tenderness, this ardor, this divine ardor, is the one who animates and moves the breath. This flow of love, this light: do they come from the mother, from the child?

In truth, this flux goes from one to the other, in a perpetual oscillation... in an endless exchange.”

French birth philosopher Frédéric Leboyer
Art book “Le Sacre de la Naissance”

The baby's dilated pupils gaze deeply into his mother's eyes and a download occurs from her brain neurons into his, modelling the basis for his own brain development. A healthy and sound attachment springs from this powerful surrender and extraordinary communion they enjoy, nestled skin-to-skin in each other's arms. It is their “Golden Hour,” they deserve privacy, weighing and measuring can wait while the vernix prepares the baby's skin for the world outside, while a microbiome settles in his gut, while colostrum awaits with its blessings ready to inform the baby that sustenance is available and plenty.

Michel Odent reminds us that when babies are put to the breast within 30 minutes after being born, they know naturally how to suckle; after that, this providential “window of opportunity” closes and they have to “learn” how to suckle.

The very first latch on the mother's breast is designed to activate the baby's neurological embranchments that were primed during his intrauterine life. This interaction of the mouth to the breast is the most effective way to properly activate these

vital connections. The health of our nervous system highly depends on the quality of these embranchments and will play a significant role in mental abilities such as abstract thinking, concentration, long term thinking and empathy.¹

The father is also in awe and colors the moment with his joy and with his presence next to his new family. The extraordinary connection between mother and baby deeply moves him, he feels privileged to witness such a marvelous communion nearing a miracle. His faith in life expands. Gratitude floods his whole being.

Childbirth is over when the umbilical cord is drained of the fetal blood and the placenta has been born. It's worth respecting this elaborate process, but hospital protocols are slow to ensure that the cord clamping is done only when it has stopped pulsating, as the blood flowing from it belongs to the baby and helps prevent anemia and other ailments during childhood. It is still common practice among traditional European midwives to only cut the cord after the placenta has been delivered.

When a cesarean section is needed, babies miss that descent in the birth canal and their skull modeling, but can still be welcomed in the best possible way, through a unique birth experience, respectful and loving for both mother and baby. Then, during their first months they will benefit enormously from head and body massages.

¹ *Functional neurologist Régine Zekri-Hurstel "Des logiciels du corps aux mouvements thérapeutiques", Sauramps, 2008, Epigenetic Link between Prenatal Adverse Environments and Neurodevelopmental Disorders*
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5368708/>

Early neurodevelopmental outcomes in preterm infants: memory, attention, & encoding speed, Amanda Michelle Benavides, University of Iowa, 2017, Padovan Method Of Neurofunctional Reorganization As A Way For Neurological Recovery In Newborns
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283204266_Padovan_Method_Of_Neurofunctional_Reorganization_As_A_Way_For_Neurological_Recovery_In_Newborns



PONDER THIS

- A study published in 2014 in *The Lancet*¹, a weekly peer-reviewed general medical journal, states that: “Natural Birth Saves Lives”
 - ▶ Risk of overmedicating pregnancy, labor and birth
 - ▶ Midwives save lives
 - ▶ Maternal and newborn mortality would drop by 82%
 - ▶ Family planning could avoid 60% of the deaths
 - ▶ Global tendency to favor obstetrical interventions
 - ▶ Midwives optimize natural birth and reduce interventions to a Minimum

- According to the Joint Statement Islamabad Declaration on Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery², 2007 March 4-6, Pakistan, between the WHO and the International Confederation of Midwives:
 - ▶ Every woman has the right to receive care in childbirth from an autonomous and competent midwife
 - ▶ Every newborn baby has the right to a healthy and well informed mother
 - ▶ Every woman has a right to be respected as a person of value and worth
 - ▶ Every woman has a right to security of her body
 - ▶ Every woman has a right to be free from any form of discrimination
 - ▶ Every woman has a right to up-to-date health information
 - ▶ Every woman has a right to participate actively in decisions about her health care and to offer informed consent
 - ▶ Every woman has a right to privacy
 - ▶ Every woman has a right to choose the place where she gives birth

However, having a right and being able to use it are two different things, it often requires communication skills, self-confidence, planning and a support network.

¹ https://www.thelancet.com/pb/assets/raw/Lancet/stories/series/midwifery/midwifery_exec_summ.pdf

² https://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/files/general-files/2019/01/cd2011_002-v2017-eng-bill_of_rights-2.pdf



DID YOU KNOW

- “The baby should start breastfeeding within the half hour following birth. It's when he instinctively knows what to do. If he starts later, he'll have to learn.”

Obstetrician Michel Odent



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Surrender and trust are major keys in the birthing process. Start noticing the many times you trust and surrender to the forces of life for major daily tasks like breathing, digesting a meal, falling asleep and making love. Little by little, consciously renew your trust in your body's extraordinary knowing, and you will be ready to open up for your baby's birth, guided by your inner joy.
- Welcoming is the quintessence of birthing. Welcome your baby with beauty—at home, in a birthing center or at a hospital—decorate this place the way you would like to be received if you were the arriving guest. What would please you most? Plants and flowers? Fruits, colourful draperies, music? Inspiring pictures on the walls?

CHAPTER TEN

THE MYSTERY OF BREASTFEEDING



“Oh Mother
You are the Queen of hearts
through whom Love flows
in springs, in streams, in rivers,
giving milk to thirsty,
wide-open souls.”

Russian Philosopher Natasha Kolesar

10

THE MYSTERY OF BREASTFEEDING

After birth comes what is called the “fourth trimester of pregnancy”! These three months are a crucial link between the inner world - a womb of all possibilities - and the world out here, that demands embodiment.

The baby has developed in the womb, nurtured by his mother's blood through which he received vitality, power and strength to support his growth.

Breastfeeding is a nurturance of a different realm: milk is like a “white blood,” also designed to nurture the baby’s body, especially his fast developing brain.

The mother's state of mind plays a major role, as her milk’s composition can change according to her state of mind. And, moreover, her breasts’ areolas “read” the state of the baby’s health at each feedings, assessing his saliva and informing the mammary glands about what to produce in order to answer the baby’s needs.

Breast milk, this extraordinary liquid, carries all sorts of vital nutrients and antibodies. It is meant to impregnate the newborn brain with hormones of happiness and love, orienting it toward connection and resilience, supporting the development of its psychomotricity centers. The baby’s nervous system thrives on it and uses its wealth of custom-made substances to establish the basis of lifelong health. It also primes the child's immune system, thus preventing a vulnerability to infections or a predisposition towards allergies and autoimmune disorders.

The stem cells contained in breast milk are assigned to the particular development of the baby's brain, lungs and other vital organs.¹

These are just some of the latest mind blowing scientific findings about the wealth of benefits provided by the act of breastfeeding.

For the mother, breastfeeding is a unique experience as she feels empowered beyond measure, knowing she is capable of nurturing her child this way. It also remarkably restores her body from the pregnancy and birth journey by releasing hormones that reduce blood loss and help the uterus return to its normal size. And of course, breastfeeding helps strengthen the bond between herself and her baby, establishing a great prelude for their common journey, blessed with self-esteem and mutual trust.

During breastfeeding, the baby enters a state of total surrender. Due to the milk's opiates, his subconscious is wide open to his mother's mood, an experience akin to the profound communion he enjoyed in her womb.

The father is invited to marvel at the benefits of breastfeeding for the health and well-being of the whole family and be the peace guardian of this mysterious space in which mother and child discover and explore their golden bond. For them, his love is invaluable.

¹ *Stem Cells in Breast Milk*

<https://www.medela.ca/breastfeeding-professionals/research/stem-cells-in-breast-milk>

From Breast Milk to Brains: The Potential of Stem Cells in Human Milk

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236067165_From_Breast_Milk_to_Brains_The_Potential_of_Stem_Cells_in_Human_Milk

Even to the Brain: Yes, Breastmilk Stem Cells Do Transfer to Organs of Offspring

<https://milkgenomics.org/article/even-to-the-brain-yes-breastmilk-stem-cells-do-transfer-to-organs-of-offspring/>

Cells of Human Breast Milk

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5508878/>



PONDER THIS

- 40% of sugars contained in breast milk are destined to feed the baby's microbiome during the first year.
- 92% of first time mothers report at least one breastfeeding concern within three days after giving birth, so it is essential to prepare for the first days of this crucial period in your baby's life.



DID YOU KNOW

- A prospective longitudinal birth cohort study was conducted in a sample of 973 men and women and a sample of 2280 men, all of whom were born in Copenhagen, Denmark, between October 1959 and December 1961. The samples were divided into 5 categories based on duration of breastfeeding, as assessed by a physician who interviewed mothers at a 1-year examination. Independent of a wide range of possible confounding factors, a significant positive association between duration of breastfeeding and intelligence was observed in these 2 independent samples of young adults, assessed with 2 different intelligence tests.

JAMA 2002 Jun 12;287(22):2946 by Erik Lykke Mortensen, Kim Fleischer Michaelsen, Stephanie A Sanders and June Machover Reinisch: "The Association Between Duration of Breastfeeding and Adult Intelligence": <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11988057/>



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Honor the intimacy of breastfeeding as a pact of love between the baby and you - strive to stay away from electronics and social media.
- A precious guide book to have at hand is La Leche League's "The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding." This book will free your insights on subjects as diverse as breastfeeding on demand, co-sleeping, mastitis and tandem nursing.
- Reach out to breastfeeding consultants for advice in case tough challenges arise.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FOURTH TRIMESTER



“During the first three months of life, the newborn’s utter vulnerability makes him see his mother as a ‘divinity.’ This exquisite time is designed to imbue him with the beauty and goodness of life, so that throughout life he will be prone to access these realms.”

Osteopath François Amigues

11

THE FOURTH TRIMESTER

Besides a harmonious and loving atmosphere, the main needs of a thriving infant are sleep, milk and playtime. An infant never cries without reason—manipulation is not yet in his abilities—, and it is wise to attend to him as soon as he manifests some unease. When the needs of an infant are readily satisfied, he cries far less.

Infants who are often soothed, cajoled and held in arms will grow up into healthier adults—less prone to depression and gifted with better empathy—than those who are left unattended. Even when a baby seems inconsolable, it is worthwhile to keep soothing him, instead of leaving him alone to cry, as this would inundate his body with stress hormones capable of causing lesions to his brain.¹

It is important to read a baby's signals and refrain from any kind of overstimulation in his environment, all screens included. A baby's optimal development requires rhythm, intimacy and calm.

An insightful eastern tradition advises hanging a red ribbon at the entrance door of a newborn's home. This symbol helps to “protect” him from too many visitors and keep him in a reassuring and calm cocoon. They somehow sensed what today's neuroscience teaches us: during the first three months after birth, there is a significant growth of the hippocampus, and that development requires a familiar, tranquil and reassuring ambiance, void of overstimulation of hearing and sight. This region of the brain will later be responsible for the individual's social skills, behavior control, attention, and memory and spatial intelligence.

Parenting an infant, understanding that he doesn't whine or cry without reason, allows for better listening, dialogue and kindness. Such parenting helps children to regulate and manage their own emotions, instead of being overwhelmed by them. This is how coregulation between parents and baby slowly develops into a healthy approach to life and its eventual frustrations.

“Experience is the architect of the brain, experiences shape and reshape the neural circuitry of the brain.”

Psychiatrist Bruce Perry

Due to epigenetic plasticity, in case a mother has had a challenging pregnancy or childbirth experience, it is not too late to weave powerful and positive emotional threads of communion with her child throughout his early life. During the fourth trimester, babies are still extremely dependent on their mothers. When the mother finds it in herself to welcome the baby she had possibly struggled with accepting during her pregnancy, his need for love will gradually be fulfilled, enabling him to rebuild the very basis of his future physical and mental health.

“Caretakers do more than regulate the present psychobiological state of an infant; they activate the growth of the brain through emotional availability and reciprocal interaction.”

Psychiatrist Robert Emde

In the 1800s, Bulgarian philosopher Peter Deunov taught that the intelligence of an adult directly reflects the love received from his or her mother in the womb and during breastfeeding. And in the 21st Century, we can find several articles in Dr. Michel Odent's Primal Health Research data bank that confirm Peter Deunov's saying, like the study “The Association Between Duration of Breastfeeding and Adult Intelligence.”²

¹ *The Effects of Excessive Crying*

<https://www.askdrsears.com/topics/health-concerns/fussy-baby/science-excessive-crying-harmful>

Neuroendocrinology of Parental Response to Baby-Cry:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4319977/>

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11988057/>



PONDER THIS

- What are my baby's common physical and emotional needs in this period?
- Am I feeling anxious and worried about the postpartum period challenges?
- Who will I reach out to in order to support me in case of need?
- Until the discovery of the importance of hygiene's basic principles, in the 1870s, it was common for all mothers to massage their babies' skull - a tradition passed on from mothers to daughters, and this massage relieved most newborn discomforts.



DID YOU KNOW

- "Children speak of their birth memories, not because they want something from their parents, but because they want their parents to pick up something from this information that they have been keeping in their hearts."

Obstetrician Akira Ikegawa



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- When your infant cries inconsolably and you have already tried many of the soothing techniques recommended by health professionals, ask him to show you the source of his discomfort, with his hand. It might surprise you, but in many cases he will do it! Then, gently tap on the area, or press on the skin while vibrating your hand. You can even place your hand right above the area and let your magnetism comfort him. You should have a result within 90 seconds – if not, change your hold.
- Surround yourself with supportive people that will encourage you to trust your skills and intuition, and support you when needed.
- Tell the infant, as many times as needed, the story of his birth and - more importantly - of when he was in your womb. And each time, bring up new details that come back to you. He might find precious elements to relieve his angst. Keep in mind that a tiny stress for you might have seemed a big threat to him.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CHILDREN REMEMBER THEIR BIRTH
AND THE TIME BEFORE



“Prenatal psychology is assisting in the creation of a new paradigm about babies, moving from talk of “reflexes” to talk of sentience; from “brain” talk to talk of mind; from “conditional learning” to talk of logic, thinking and telepathy. Unavoidably, we are at the interface of flesh and spirit.”

Psychologist David Chamberlain

12

CHILDREN REMEMBER THEIR BIRTH AND THE TIME BEFORE

Once children have acquired language and up until they reach the age of four or five, there is an amazing window of opportunity: they are able to tell us about their birth, their life in the womb. They speak spontaneously and quite matter-of-factly of complex events that no one ever mentioned in front of them, leaving parents and caretakers taken aback by their detailed recollections. It is also possible to gently coax such recollections in a moment of quiet, preferably not suggesting a possible answer in the question, as in “Did you like being in mommy’s tummy?”, but rather asking an open question, as in “How was it when you were in mommy’s tummy?”. And there is a question that will somewhat guarantee that the child is not “pretending” to remember: “What did you eat?”; they faithfully report that there wasn’t any food, but that they could drink.

Several books narrate the very sentences of little ones from around the world remembering some episode of their birth and prenatal life, most of them easily corroborated by their parents. In 2019, Elizabeth Carman and Neil Carman shared their 20 years of research on this subject in their rich, comprehensive and didactic book “Babies Are Cosmic ~ Signs of Their Secret Intelligence.” However, up until recently, this subject had not been researched by psychologists—perhaps due to the Freudian tenet that prior to the acquisition of language we are not able to keep to memory what happens to us. The good news is that in Japan, obstetrician Akira Ikegawa is keen on unveiling the realm of “Prenatal Memory” and has devised a remarkable research in which linguist Professor Masayuki Ohkado rigorously interviews

children from ages 3 to 6 who remember their life in the womb and, to the stupefaction of the researchers, many of them also recall the time prior to being conceived!

And what are these memories?

The Japanese Prenatal Memory Education Association (PREMEA) provides several categories of Prenatal Memories. Here they are, as incredible as some might seem:

- Memory of choosing one's parents, prior to being conceived
- Memory of being conceived
- Memory from the time in the womb
- Memory of being born
- Memory of the time from birth to toddlerhood
- Memory of Life-Between-Life
- Memory of a Past Life
- Compound Memory: any combination of the previously quoted memories¹

¹ PREMEA "Basic Course" Textbook, Chapter 2, (1) What is Prenatal Memory? Page #20.

Dr. Ikegawa is keen on notifying mothers about the importance of carefully listening to their children's prenatal memories and believes that a harmonious birth experience leads to a fulfilling adulthood. He is aiming at having two out of every ten mothers on earth to take their children's Prenatal Memories seriously. He also advises pregnant mothers to enjoy conversations with their prenatals, knowing how much this awareness promotes their happiness, a fundamental gift to her pregnancy.

Yes, at this point we are crossing the realm of our rational mind, however more and more similar studies reveal the existence of a human being's spiritual dimensions.

And, as you welcome your baby in womb, we invite you to embrace his or her soul who also longs for you to be aware of its presence and its need for connection, long before birth.

In fact this kind of research has been mentioned in many ageless traditions, as well as by scholars ranging from Paracelsus in the Renaissance, to Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Carl Gustav Jung in modern times, and now by teams of applied psychologists like those of Dr. Ikegawa, able to collect detailed and exquisite data that convey unbelievable messages we hadn't previously imagined.

We are at the threshold of a new paradigm that impels us to prepare consciously, in order to welcome our prenatals, even before conceiving them!





PONDER THIS

- A 2015 online survey of 10,000 Japanese mothers showed that 70% of them knew that babies are conscious in the womb, mainly thanks to the Prenatal Memory Project. Since then, this awareness has been growing and keeps having a positive impact on parent-child relationship in Japan.

OHKADO, M. (2015). Children's Birth, Womb, Pre-life, and Past-Life Memories: Results of an Internet-Based Survey. Journal of Prenatal & Perinatal Psychology & Health. Fall 2015, Vol. 30 Issue 1, p3-16. 14p



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Welcome your children's attempts to tell you what they remember from their life before birth.

CONCLUSION



“Smiling babies have a chance to be the start of a smiling society, a happy society, a tolerant society, a loving society and a cooperative society. Only then we may be talking about civilization.”

Psychologist David Chamberlain

Conclusion

Life is a continuum and begins when we are but a glow in our parents' imagination, a sparkle of hope in their hearts and minds. During the formative prenatal period, parents and babies are fundamentally interconnected. And now, even science understands that prenatals are conscious, sensitive beings, and that what they experience in the womb, at birth and during early infancy has a profound impact on their lifelong health, temperament and character.

For the last two generations, more respect and freedom have been extended to women, and this has already allowed them to bring forth a more peaceful, ecological and interactive humanity. Imagine what societies around the world could become in a very short time, should we offer women effective conditions for gestating their children consciously and harmoniously?

It is during this primary period that we start creating the foundations of our children's sense of belonging, self-worth, self-love and trust. These roots will forever nourish their individual and social skills, their capacity to love and establish harmonious relationships with others and nature. As psychiatrist Thomas Verny taught in the 1990s:

“Womb ecology becomes world ecology”

All youth, prospective parents and expecting parents, as well as birth professionals and societies at large will hopefully become aware of how great an impact conception, pregnancy and birth have on our physical, emotional and psychological lives.

It is time we start using everything in our power to implement the necessary changes in order to promote harmonious pregnancies, births and breastfeeding experiences. This will spare many painful and costly interventions, and lead to forever more loving and thriving children growing up happily into adolescence and adulthood, in a more conscious and connected world.

Prenatal Alliance invites you to participate in this powerful project of social transformation for the emergence of a healthier humanity.

The world needs this information.

Please share it!

Scientific Resources

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*(In 1991, Japanese child psychiatrist Ryoko Hattori from the city of Kumamoto published an article in the medical journal *The Lancet* on the correlation between the Kitasato University method and autism. This method combines sedatives, anesthetic agents and analgesics, as well as a planned induced delivery, one week before the due date.)

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THANK YOU

Prenatal Alliance is a purpose-driven organization with a mission to promote awareness about the relevance of the beginning of life, from conception, pregnancy and birth to breastfeeding, for the quality of Human Civilization.

Our supporters help us spread our message, perform or participate in educational campaigns to disseminate this information to all youth, prospective parents, families, governments and societies worldwide.

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