

What do Newborns Teach Us About Family Engagement? *Working With Families in the Newborn Period*

Michigan Home Visiting Conference

August 2016

Opportunities?



Learning Goals

1. Understand the competencies that newborn's bring into the world
2. Understand the opportunity for parent-child attachment based on the newborns behaviors
3. Understand the professional's role in supporting attachment

The Competent Newborn



Sensory Competencies

- Visual
- Auditory
- Tactile



Motor Competencies

- Muscle Tone and Strength
- Reflexes
 - Grasp, root, step
- Fully-Formed Behaviors
 - Hand-to-mouth activity
 - Pull-to-sit
 - Crawling and turning head in prone



States of consciousness

- State 1: deep sleep
- State 2: light sleep
- State 3: drowsiness
- State 4: alert
- State 5: fussing
- State 6: crying

State Regulation

- Habituation
- Self-Soothing
- Stress Cues



Self Regulation



Hand to mouth skill allows baby to soothe self

Mutual Regulation

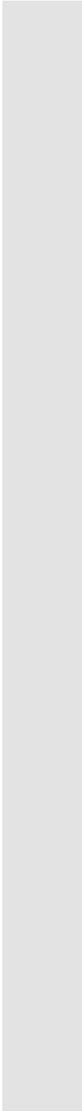


Newborn Behavior is Meaningful

We “read” newborn
behavior from
many perspectives:

Developmental
Biological
Cultural
Personal



- 
- 
- Video

The social
newborn:
The infant
as catalyst

- *“It is fortunate for their survival that babies are so designed by nature that they beguile and enslave mothers.”*

John Bowlby

- *“The baby stands for the renewal of the self. The birth can be experienced as a psychological re-birth for the parents.”*

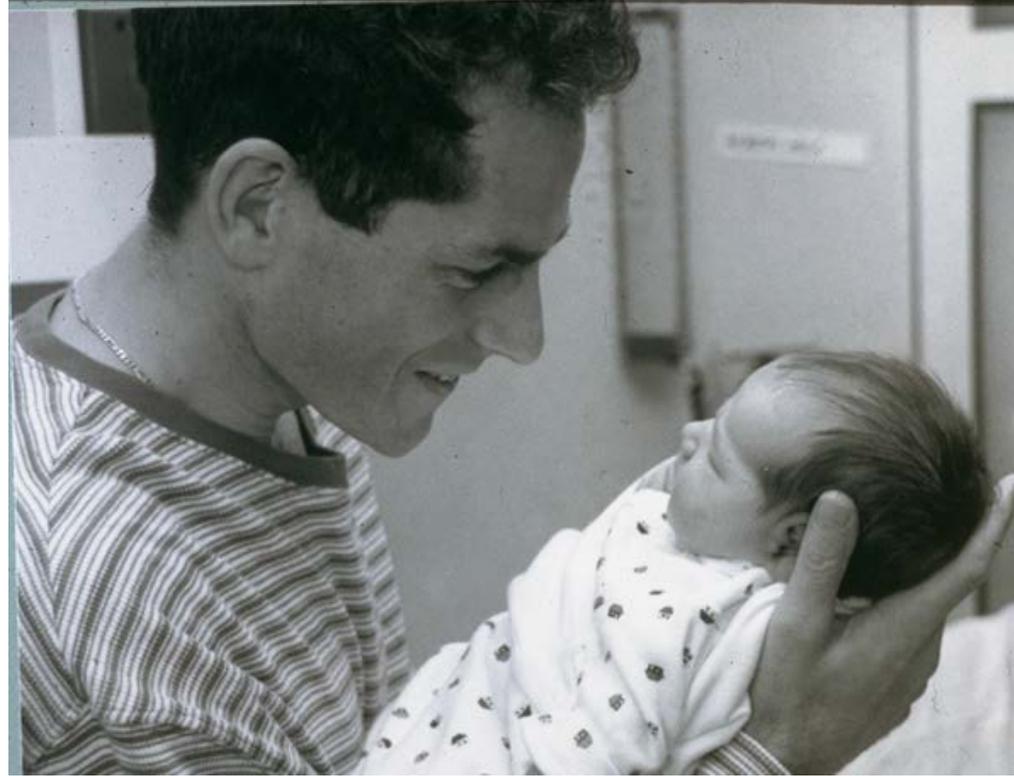
Selma Fraiberg

A sensitive stage
in the in the
development of
parent-infant
communication



Infant and parent are in a heightened state of readiness to exchange their first communication signals in their efforts to reach “affect attunement” in their interactions.

Early
parent –
child
interaction
includes



- Engagement
- Attunement
- Imitation

Readiness for Relationships

- A period of disorganization
- Current relationships disorganize and must reorganize
- The newborn elicits emotional strength and weakness: “Ghosts in the Nursery” (Fraiberg) and “Angels in the nursery” (Leiberman)
- Post-partum mother’s mind is “a sponge regarding the infant” (Keefer); new parents are psychologically open to form new relationships; mothers show “primary maternal preoccupation” (Winnicott)



The Capable Parent



- Already an expert
- Months of mental preparation
- Knows a great deal about baby
- Rapid learning in the first days
- Bringing all resources to bear
- Writing a new chapter about this child

Our
relationship
with the family
begins....

- In a very few moments, we need to
- Convey that we SEE THEM
- Convey RESPECT
- Convey CARING
- Bring KNOWLEDGE and RESOURCES
- Begin with OPENNESS, not agenda

Nurturing the parent

Parents are exceptionally vulnerable during the newborn period, wondering

"How is my baby?"

and

"How am I doing?"



A Relationship- based Approach

- The newborn period is a critical transition period for both infant and family and for the parent-infant relationship
- Development and change occur only in the context of a relationship
- Support for parents during this period can enhance the social, cognitive and emotional development of the infant
- Newborn parents are psychologically ready for a new relationship with their
 - Newborn baby
 - Partner
 - Family
 - Clinician
 - Community



A Successful
Practitioner
uses
**Reflective
Listening**
(Phyllis Klaus;
Constance
Keefer)

- Assumes a position of unconditional positive regard
- Encourages communication
- Validates - does not advise
- Helps clarify
- Mutual Action - partnership

Helpful Hints

- Take time to simply look at the baby with parents.
- Identify the newborn's state.
- Take the baby and parent where you find them.
- *Show. Don't tell.*
- Use more listening than talking.
- PAUSE. Use silence.
- Focus on the family.
- Recognize that every encounter is an opportunity to learn.
- Save paperwork for the end of your newborn encounter.

Contact Information

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