



**Talking about Babies
And
Prevention of Mental Health
Problems**

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Introduction

It is mostly wonderful to become a parent, to welcome a new life, a little person who is part of you and your partner. And it can also be a daunting experience.

I am myself a mother of four. I remember my own difficulties and worries. I thought it such a wonder to have my first child while it was at the same time rather frightening. I certainly focused on keeping my baby alive, by feeding and regulating their sleep, bathing and looking after their physical needs with great commitment. I wish now that I had known rather more about what babies need on an emotional level.

My belief is that emotional problems begin early in a child's life. To prevent these from occurring later on young mothers need to be better informed. Not enough mothers know about the importance of the emotional development of their babies. The three first years of life are so crucial for the connection and the bonding that later transform into a feeling of safety. That in turn will provide the person with good self-esteem and robustness so vital for meeting with the ups and downs of life. Early experience has also been found to have a crucial effect on how our brain and our personality develop.

Through my work I have come to see how little parents know about the importance of actively being with their child. Being requires time, you might think, and time is in short supply, especially for working mothers. I am aware of that, although knowing more about how to be present will help, and it is all rather simple. My clients tell me about their early childhood and the sense they are left with which consists more of sensations, a body memory, than cognitive memories. I also notice with interest, how they later on begin to ask me for advice on how they should behave in order to raise happy children I decided this was a subject that deserved further attention. In this article I am hoping to help inform you about the baby's needs and how these needs must be met in order to bring up your child to be a more fully functioning adult.

I would also like to present to you ideas that child developmental researchers have formulated and which have come to alter our general view of the baby. It is a new way of understanding the infants' inner world. Furthermore neuroscientific research-results from brain scanning have started to emerge. Scientists have been able to make a visual map of the brain's activity when emotions are at play. This will have a permanent impact on the development of the brain. This effect will stay and will determine the person's personality, how they deal with emotions, their capacity to relate to others and their creativity. It is rather exciting to think that the effect of the primary carers' response and engagement with the baby determines the child's sense of their self esteem and security and that it can be measured and empirically proven. This will also help us appreciate that the infant is much more aware of its surroundings than previously believed.

Pregnancy and Birth

Let's start by thinking about the pregnancy. The 38 weeks before birth have been studied psychologically and the behaviour of the fetus has been found to be important for its development both before and after birth. (Peter Hepper, 1996). The baby is growing inside the mother's body; it is part of her. We know that the mother's food intake during pregnancy can have an effect even on the embryo's gene pool. Therefore healthy food intake is important. Flavours from the mother's food pass

through the amniotic fluid and around the 12th week of gestation the fetus may be able to experience the flavours of his mother's diet (Mennella et al, 1995). The fetus swallows the amniotic fluid and at birth he will feed easier at the breast if the mother has stayed on the same diet until that time.

Perhaps it is even more important to explain how child development researchers now think the fetus experiences its time in the womb.

The fetus feels the comfort of the mother's heart beat; he hears all the gurgling sounds of the mother's body. She speaks to the growing baby inside her. He can hear her soothing voice and it becomes a familiar sound.

In late pregnancy the fetus already can discriminate between different voices and speech sounds (Lecanuet et al.1995). Newborns prefer music they have heard prenatally to that they have never heard and they prefer their mothers voice to the voice of another female.

The fetus is moving around in the amniotic fluid, he can touch, he can hear, and two months before birth he can even see the outside light as a shade of the colour pink. He is following the mother's rhythm. If the mother is anxious and uneasy he will absorb it too. The anxiety taken over from mother can show up as late as in the teens of the growing child. Embryonic science of fetal psychology is revealing the importance of this period for the rest of our lives (Hepper, 1992).

We think of the birth as being traumatic to the mother. We forget that it is traumatic to the baby. He has to leave this warm, obscure, contained, safe space, for a new frightening big bright world outside. The effects of birth trauma are well documented. It is a trauma of separation (I shall return to this notion later). Nowadays the mother is given the baby to hold right after birth to lessen this trauma, it facilitates bonding. It is advisable to hold your newborn on your chest on your bare skin; skin-to-skin. This will also help the baby who is not interested in sucking to latch onto the breast. When the newborn baby is left naked on top of the mother after birth, he will make his way up to the breast and find the nipple on his own. In the seventh month of pregnancy the baby is ready to taste the mother's milk and he is also born with the senses of touch and smell.

Your baby arrives with embodied feelings and senses writes Daniel N Stern (1985) who discovered that a newborn could distinguish between his own mother's milk and the milk of another. The newborn baby will turn its head towards a pad saturated with his own mother's milk, not towards another from a different mother. Newborns cry when others cry, they yawn when you yawn. They can read facial expressions, perhaps only the contour of faces, light and shade. A baby a few days old has been seen to tune in to music, to move his hands like a conductor when music is played or even sing (C. Trevarthen, 2003). The baby is turning his head towards a human face, he is already very much aware of the environment and hardwired for communication. Within the first hour he can track the mothers voice even from across the room.

The trauma of birth is a trauma of separation and has both a psychological and a physiological effect. In vaginal birth the hormones that are released will add to the mother's feelings for her newborn child, which does not happen during caesarian

birth. This may have implications for the first weeks of the baby's life. The need for bonding gets interrupted and therewith the sense of security.

During the pregnancy the mother and baby are one. Donald Winnicott (1896-1971), the well-known pediatrician/psychoanalyst, writes about an almost psychotic state of the mother that begins at the end of pregnancy and lasts for weeks after the birth. The mother is in that state totally absorbed by her unborn child, she is in an altered state of mind. This is an instinctual response. Ideally the father would be supporting the mother at this time, so she could be with her baby, read him, and respond to him instinctively, and indeed some fathers have been found to have similar intuitive feelings for their baby. This symbiotic relationship is so very important for the psychological health of the child. The infant believes at this stage that he is part of mother, that they are one unit.

- **He is part of you**

Hunger

Let's examine hunger and imagine how the baby might perceive this phenomenon:

When 2-3-4 hours has lapsed since the baby's last feed you will observe how he starts to move his hands and legs. The lower lip protrudes and he gives out a slight squeaky sound. Soon this feeling of hunger begins to upset his whole being. He might be feeling a discomfort all over his body as he starts to wriggle, while the intensity of the cry gets louder. The hunger pain ends up in the centre of his being and the cry becomes more and more loud and penetrating. In the end he is screaming with full force, his face red with pain and frustration. The scream is perhaps easing the feeling of hunger as well as calling the carer to come to the rescue. The mother rushes to him, she picks him up, he is now in a different position, he feels her comforting touch and then finally he finds the nipple of the breast or the bottle. He cannot always settle immediately. He still has to grasp for air but slowly the satisfaction of the warm food calms him down and he relaxes and he delights in the presence of mother, he feels the touch of her warm body and he finds her eyes that are meeting his. All is well again.

- **Listen out for his calling**

How to be a 'good enough' parent

Listen to your baby's calling for you and wait for it. Do not swamp him with nurturing nor deprive him of attention. He must be allowed to feel safe and secure. This is the beginning of attachment, which is a biological need (J Bowlby) (1907-1990). We cannot of course be perfect mothers. We will get it wrong at times. That is acceptable, so long as we do not keep repeating our mistakes. Repetitions of failure may leave traces in his memory. That is what we want to avoid. It is important to listen to the baby's cry, not to feed them when it suits you, nor when you think he is hungry, but to feed on demand, when he asks for it. You might think that knowing he will be hungry soon and feeding him before he has to ask is comfortable for him. It is not. He will feel overpowered, swamped, which can have later implications. It might affect intimate relationships in the future. The baby wants to be 'king.' Let him be. He will have to manage frustrations later on. We only need to be good enough. I would like young mothers to know that their intuition is usually the best law to follow. The baby feels more than you may think and you are so important to him. Do not treat him mechanically as if he were a doll. Do not follow "the recipe" in your

baby book. Look at him when you hold him, when you feed him. A newborn child can see at a 20-25centimetres distance, just the distance from his position on the breast. What does the baby see? He sees himself in your eyes and on your face. You are his mirror. You are helping him to develop his sense of self (0-2 months). It has been found that babies who see frustration on the mothers face will turn away and with the same imitated expression on their face. A two months old baby can be lost in your eyes, he gazes at you and his pupils are wide open which enchants the mother and they become locked in intimate contact.

- The attentive mother is sensitive to the omnipotence of her baby**
- Use your intuition**
- Engage with and respond to your infant**
- You can fail, but not repeatedly**

Self - Self with (M)other (I – Me)

Mirroring:

This is the beginning of social interaction. The baby watches the mother's face from birth. Eye contact is important. He sees himself in the mother's eyes, he can read her response to him, and the love for him is in her eyes. This is a connectedness between his inner self and the other person..

The baby looks for stimulation in you, finds your eyes, it is a mutual gaze, you are both in a world within a world, and it is like a dance between you. You talk to him and you can see that you are making contact. This lays down one of the foundations for future social interaction .

(At 7-8 weeks he smiles and begins to babble back to you).

- Connect with him**

No longer is the old belief valid that a baby younger than 6 months does not recognize emotion. At 3 1/2 months he can control the gaze and regulate face- to- face interaction. He can now look away when he wants to. The eyes are a psychological centrality. When he cannot see your eyes he thinks that you cannot see him, and he needs to be seen. This mutual gaze is so very important. Professor Allan Schore (1994) suggests that positive looks are vital stimulus to the growth of the social, emotionally intelligent, brain. When a baby looks at his mother (or father) he reads the dilated pupils as information that they are experiencing pleasurable arousal. He responds to that by being pleurably aroused himself with an increase in heart rate. It is a situation similar to lovers gazing into one another's eyes. (Autistic children have difficulty holding eye contact, they find it distasteful). According to Allan Schore pleasurable biochemicals help the social brain to grow. Lots of positive experiences early on produces a brain with more neural connections, and genetic expression also often depends on social input to become manifest.

Lack of Mirroring

A caregiver who is unresponsive, depressed or overly preoccupied, will hurt the child's feelings about himself and will later affect his social experiences.

A baby of 2 ½ months reacts to a still face, it distresses him. He may feel the lack of stimulus or he may even start to imitate the dullness and make it his own. He feels his mother is absent and wonders where she went. He makes her, in a sense, part of himself. Many psychological problems can be seen as a result of a child identifying with a parent who is frequently depressed, anxious, psychotic or violent.

- **Be present**

- **Your baby identifies with you**

As mentioned earlier, there is already empathy in place right after birth when babies cry hearing other babies cry. By 13 to 15 months they start to comfort a crying playmate. Part of the empathy may come from another early skill that is now better understood, namely the ability to comprehend facial expressions of people around them. Andrew Metzoff, a professor of psychology at the university of Washington, has studied the "gaze following" of thousands of babies. According to him this skill first appears at 10-11 months. It is an important mark of a baby's emotional and social growth, and can predict later language development (in Newsweek, August 2005).

At around 3-4 months the baby is starting to see himself as a separate being. He can see and feel his arm moving. He can see his mother's arm moving but he is not feeling it. He is beginning to experience himself in his own skin apart from her. This is the very first sense of separateness. Separation is for the baby a delicate process. When interrupted the child gets stuck in dependence. When it happens prematurely he feels isolated, unloved and lost.

Massage

Massaging your baby can be helpful in this separation process. By having visual contact with him while touching his arms, hands, legs, feet and toes and massaging his whole body and by communicating with him by naming the body parts while safely massaging through, can help form an effective integrated body self image. This is important in establishing a template of mother in the baby's mind that allows him to confront the separation from the parent and to begin exploring the environment.

Development of 'the I'

Attunement (an example)

Normal ego development is a result of early interactions between the needs of the child and the personality of the parents, especially the mother. Let's imagine that the mother is playing a game with her baby, a game familiar to all mothers. She starts this game: she looks surprised, she smiles and leans forward to touch her nose to his, smiling and making bubbling sounds. The baby smiles, he is delighted, but closes his eyes when their noses touch. The mother leans back, pauses to increase suspense, and

then moves forward again to touch noses. There is delight and pretend menace. The baby is now both tense and excited. His expression moves between pleasure and fear. Mum might not notice the change in him and makes a third nose-to-nose approach. Now the baby's face tightens, he closes his eyes, turns his head to the side. (Refusing eye contact is a baby sign of distress). Mother realizes that she has gone too far. She stops and smiles, the baby responds and becomes re-engaged. Mum readjusted her game; she became attuned to her baby's needs. (Adapted from Stern, 1990)

What to do, what to avoid doing

Being a 'good' parent means knowing how to readjust behaviour. Over stimulation and over excitement must be avoided. The baby does signal to you what it can tolerate. I have noticed that mothers are usually more sensitive to these signals than fathers, who often play rougher games and may not intuitively know when to stop. Fathers stimulate older children better than the mother. When he comes home from work he often engages fully with his child. But Mum is often more in tune with the young baby. Fathers also help with separation issues at a later stage, 18-36 months.

- **Use your senses, tune in**

Internal mental state and connectedness

Space: The baby is mostly lying down in what is to him a familiar position. When picked up he moves through space, which is more unfamiliar and will feel unsettling and confusing. You can see it on his face, but he seems to be able to tolerate it. When he is held again he feels safe. Always when something upsets him he will be reassured by physical contact and intimacy.

Early Anxiety

Anxiety evolves gradually from early panic, that newborns may experience, to fear of being dropped when passed through space, to an anxiety about falling forever and being left alone which is an anxiety about annihilation, 'a nameless dread' (Bion, 1962).

Subjective time can double backwards, and events can be replayed in memory.

Subjective time is discontinued, with gaps; it is the baby's fantasy world

At 7 months a baby can look at a toy, he can point at it, look at mother; he can shift his gaze from the toy to the mother's eyes, back and forth until the mother looks at the toy. The mother will now show him that he has been understood. This is what he wants and needs. Mother and child are connected. He wants her attention and thinks 'I know that you know that I know or 'I feel that you feel that I feel'... they are intimately connected.

The baby looks at the mother's face and he responds to it. If she is happy, relaxed and smiling he will approach a new toy with a smile; if her face shows apprehension he will shy away or even get upset. He is evaluating his mother's mental state of feeling in order to regulate his own feeling state. He imitates and models on his mother.

●Communication at a deep level (Intersubjectivity)

When he falls down he first checks his mother's face to see how to react, whether to cry or smile. He has discovered that they have separate minds. The discovery of internal mental connectedness constitutes an enormous change in his development. We can share or we can be different. He will interpret human action, at least in part, in terms of the mental state behind his actions. When he gets a new toy, he will look at the mother's reaction to the toy. A sharing or non-sharing of mental states is a powerful way to shape another person's behaviour.

●Helping your child regulate his feelings

Feeling mental states can also raise the possibility of misreading them. For example when a two year old puts his fingers on the mothers face, exploring her hairline, her nose, her mouth, he is only doing what comes naturally at that age. If the parent reacts with annoyance, or even experiences it as an aggressive act, or an act of violation it will result in a fundamental misunderstanding of motives between the caregiver and the baby.

The baby is likely to repeat the exploration to clarify the confusion or perhaps to evoke a different reaction. The parent may see an act of aggression in this action and think that the baby has indeed been acting aggressively. If this situation is repeated, the baby's false interpretation will become his, and later, his own accepted one. The baby will see himself as aggressive. Someone else's reality has become his. Thus the failure of mutual understanding can introduce a lifelong distortion.

●You are instrumental in shaping his behaviour

●Be aware of your strong influence both in a positive and negative sense

Attachment (Bonding)/ Separation/ Individuation

Attachment and bonding

At 7-9 months the mother has become even more important to the baby emotionally. He has a sense of his need for her presence; his attachment to her has become more evident to him.

We can see a shift from physical gratification (as in feeding) to emotional regulation (as in feeling secure) in the attachment to mother. He has internalized a good internal mother.

At 9 months he might also fear strangers; he may be upset about mum leaving and perhaps believes that she has abandoned him. He cries when she is leaving the house, he tries to call her back. This is an important reaction since it will prevent mother from leaving the child alone too much.

But even when she is not present she still remains a permanent part of his emotional world. Nothing has changed, but he is now able to experience the attachment and act on it.

If his mother works regularly he can develop the same attachment to a daytime caregiver and even share his attachment between two carers.

Your baby walks now. His curiosity is pulling him out into space while he is carrying a sense of mother within him. He is checking whether you are there. He must feel you by smell and by memory and vision. When he walks away exploring he must check back to see that you are still there. When he loses sight of you he gets scared and calls out. When you show that you hear him, all is melting away again and he feels safe.

The force that pulls him back is the attachment system. Countering it is the force that pulls him out into the environment; the exploratory system. Both tendencies are essential, according to Daniel Stern (1990). At home he knows the environment, but outside he only knows mother.

Since the baby was 7-9 months he has had negative emotions to strangers. He has begun to divide the world in two camps; strangers and family. He responds positively to family members but finds strangers scary. This keeps him away from them or he walks past them carefully, avoiding touching.

Since the age of 3 months he has been able to distinguish between children and adults. Children have different facial configuration; their head is bigger in proportion to their body.

At 12 months he feels attracted to children. He might walk up to a child, then looks around and discovers he has lost sight of his mother. If he cannot feel her, he gets scared; he is separated. Separation loss is an anguishing experience. The panic of separation is likely to make him feel lonely, lost and unsafe. He might feel that he is disappearing into a lonely empty space. (Agoraphobia and panic can be seen in the adult as an acute separation reaction). This is basic to all of us from 12 months to our deaths. We learn to cope with it but it is always there (Stern, 1990).

- **Separation equals anxiety**
- **Holding your child will help melt anxiety away**

When the baby finds his mother, she is likely to pick him up. He then puts his head on her shoulder and she holds him against her chest. He puts his arm around her neck. He cries more and more softly. The ultimate magic of attachment is touch. Mother's presence makes him more integrated, he is soothed and he is again able to build up his separateness along the lines of her touch. His charged up attachment system is now deactivated and his exploratory system is beginning to take over. His curiosity re-emerges and he will soon be ready to be adventurous again.

•**Secure attachment in childhood makes a happy adult**

Affect

What just happened is inside him, somewhere inside his body and his mind. His face is shifting with different expressions. The child's face displays emotional events extraordinary well. Babies display nine basic affects on their face according to Donald Nathanson (1992). (interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, surprise-startle, fear-terror, distress-anguish, anger-rage, disgust, and shame-humiliation).

His mother's response to him earlier, in response to him finding a new toy, meant to him that she understood what he was feeling. It is important for him to see that she can share his feelings that she is attuned to him. Such sharing is the basis for later aspects of psychic intimacy. What about sadness anger, pride, enthusiasm, fear doubt, shame, joy, love, desire, pain, boredom? Will a mother be fully able to share them. Or will she, consciously or unconsciously, be unable to share, which will perhaps mean that he can or cannot expect other people in the world to do the same.

If the parents are not united in the important things that they want in a child, he will not be a product of two different mind-scapes, he is more likely to become the creation of two incompatible dreams. He may spend most of his life trying to resolve these contradictions within himself. Or he feels he must reject aspects of one of his parents - and therefore a part of himself.

The verbal self

The capacity for a verbal life is innate but dormant until about 18 months. 'Language blossoms overnight when the time is right' (Stern, 1990). You have been teaching him to talk since he was born and he has been babbling back to you.

Many other abilities emerge at this age. He can now play out events in the past, present and future. He is learning how to pour water into a cup, how to use the telephone. He is imitating something that he has been observing and memorized. He retains and then reproduces events on a mental stage (deferred imitation).

He enacts his wishes through imagination. In front of a mirror he now can see himself as being him. If he has a spot on his face he will see it as being on him. "Me, mine, my" and his name. He is able to go places in his mind, both to the past the present and the future. He can dialogue and converse with another person; he has find a new way of being with another. But there are dark sides to language. Non-verbal expression may be better. It is possible to graduate experiences with facial and body language.

Language is slow, expression and gestures are faster. Language may split thought away from emotion, and most of all some things cannot be captured into words; like looking into someone's eyes while they are looking into yours! The simple wholeness of the experience has been divided, split, he now has to hold on to two experiences of the same occurrence.

- **Learning by imitation**

- **Imagination**

- **Memory**

- **Non-verbal expression is easy**

He is now waking up in the morning in his own bed, in his own room. The feeling of loneliness is different. It no longer holds the anxiety of being separated. He knows that there is human life elsewhere. He knows that his parents are in their bedroom and he can go to them and have human contact. He climbs into his parents' bed and enjoys the warmth, the smell and all the sounds. It has non-verbal sensations and feelings. He repeats words. At first it might be the sound of the words that evoke feelings of comfort. Later the words have a meaning. A word is thrown back and forth like mother and baby used to do when cooing to each other when he was younger, and when rolling a ball when he was 7 months old. He is learning the basic rules for conversation; turn taking, which were already established before he learned to talk.

Language can be hurtful. A passage in Daniel Stern's book "Diary of A Baby" (1990), demonstrates this well: *"He (Joey) sees the sunlight on his wall and floor. He walks over to the sun patch lying on the dark wooden floor. Absorbed he drops to his hands and knees. He looks at it. He touches it with his hands. He lowers his face and touches the sun patch with his lips.*

At that moment, his mother returns and sees him. She is both surprised and little disgusted. She shouts, "Don't do that! Joey, what are you doing?" Joey stops abruptly. He stares at the spot of sunlight, then looks up at his mother.

"That's just sunshine honey.... You can't eat sunshine. It's dirty." Joey looks at her a long while and then back at the sun patch on the floor. He disengages himself from her arm and walks out of the room...

Here Stern explains how the toddler's non-verbal world of feeling, touching, hearing and seeing collides with this new world of language. Sometimes he can jump out of the non-verbal and partly hear the verbal but his mother's forceful words had made it a forbidden act. His world fell to pieces and he felt alone. 'I feel naked and sad, I am all by myself.'

There was a break in connectedness between parent and child. It was a momentary break in mutual understanding. He felt that the mother could not see the world from his perspective. It is important to be aware of such breaks when the child is learning to knit together the two worlds, the non verbal and the verbal, by being empathic.

- **Observe failures of empathy**

- **Repair the bridge between you**

Transitional Objects (D W Winnicott, 1989)

Having talked about attachment and separation earlier, it is time to mention ‘the comfort blanket’; ‘the Linus blanket’. Most children find an object, be it a blanket, a piece of soft cloth or a soft toy to trail around, touching and stroking it with great enthusiasm, sometimes making a sound at the same time, especially at bed time or when sad or tired. The child gives this thing from the external world a psychological meaning. It symbolizes a comforting feeling of being close to mother. I suggest that you honour these objects. They play an important part in the attachment/ separation process for your child. They are often soft like the breast, and provide a sense of safety and represent nurturing. The feeling that accompanies it penetrates from the outside through the skin to the inside. According to Winnicott it facilitates the child’s capacity to play. And it is through playing that intimate communication happens. The thumb that finds the mouth or the pacifier serves the same purpose. These are similar objects and they sign the beginning of the baby’s sense of being a separate being, no longer part of mother. They are connecting the internal world with the external world. One day your child will let go of them by himself when they are no longer needed.

- Connecting with the outside world**

- Playing, creativity and intimacy**

Separation and Individuation

It is not easy to become a person, to have your own identity and to feel secure when separate from mother. We have spoken about the importance of expressing affection towards your child and how the development of the self; ‘the I’, is the result of differentiation phase happened at 4/5 months. We talked about the stranger anxiety at around 6/9 months and how mother always is ‘a secure base’ for the child. The transitional objects came in as something illusory in between mum and the baby. There is the need to check back at mother when exploring the world. Going back for refueling when the anxiety took over was part of growing up. The child has become aware of his own body and the world is his oyster. And there also seems to be an innate tendency towards separation (Mahler, 1975).

At 12 months your baby has become content in his own bed at night and you, his parents, can enjoy your sleep. Then things begin to change. He wants mummy. He fights with her and he does not like to be left alone in the evening and he wakes up at night demanding her company. Now 18-24 months, ambivalence resides in him. He does not want to be on his own and at the same time he wants to be separate. He took his first steps away from mum, but there seems to be a force that keeps pulling him back to her (neediness-separatedness).

Mother’s reaction is now very important. It affects the child’s self-development. She must react calmly to these needs and changes by being firm and affectionate. Your child needs to know himself; the structure of his ego is being formed as well as his sense of safety, the feeling of being a separate individual. The anxiety is a fear of losing mother and her love. It can be a trying period for the carer with phases of separateness and then again the urge for closeness. This usually comes to an end by 36 months or so. There may be a difference in girls and boys. Girls may need

closeness longer with mother than boys, and there are always individual differences. There are other differences between the sexes. Girl-babies, one day old, seem to cry more easily when other babies cry, and there is a difference in social interest. One-day old girls look longer at a face, and boy babies longer at a mobile. Male babies seem to need their parents help more in regulating their distress and their emotional and physical states than girl babies. Boys might be better at understanding and organizing systems and girls seem to be more empathic. Remember, we are all unique human beings with personal differences throughout life.

- **Be aware of your child's needs**
- **It is difficult to become your own person**
- **Help him self-regulate, by being lovingly firm and consistent**

An accepting and nurturing (encouraging) environment as well as an optimally frustrating, promotes a healthy growth of self (Kohut, 1977).

Anger

A few words about expression of anger.

Protests such as shouting and kicking are positive responses to separation. It will prevent the mother from leaving the child alone.

Anger is a natural emotion. It must be respected. John Bowlby, the father of attachment theory, said the following about children's expression of anger: ". *it is, we suggest, the greatest gift we can give them*" (Durbin & Bowlby, 1938). The best gift you can give your child is to allow him to show his aggression. You have heard about 'the terrible twos' and the battle of wills. It is a normal development. He wants you to love him and to show him the way. (This will be replayed in puberty). Suppressed anger causes problems. Respect your child's aggressive feelings by acknowledging and validating them. Tell him that you understand him and at the same time let him know that you must set boundaries for his behaviour, e.g. 'I know that you are angry and you cannot do.... or have...right now'. Remember that clear boundaries create the feeling of safety.

- **Be a parent! Be empathic and say no!**
- **The child does not want to be in charge. It promotes insecurity.**
- **Clear boundaries promote feelings of safety**
- **Help him regulate his emotions**

Conclusion

I have here wanted to share my thoughts regarding the emotional side of parenting with young parents and primary carers of infants and toddlers as well as with others in my profession. I believe prevention is better than cure. In order to help children grow up into optimally functioning individuals who can access their own potential and contribute to a mentally healthier society, we must let the new baby be omnipotent by adapting to his needs. We must remain sensitive to their changing needs and demands as well as provide them with clear boundaries. Our wish must be to make them secure and separate individuals. We need to be aware of how frightening a lonely existence can be. We must be in tune with the infant and understand how important the primary carer is for him. To stay alongside your child, not swamping them or using them for your own needs nor being a distant carer who only attends to the child when you have time or when you are interested. *We want to avoid creating adults who have to struggle with deep-seated unresolved conflicts and tensions in their personality that are a legacy from an unsatisfactory early life* (Guntrip, 1971). Your child is a real little person and he depends on you for mutual love, respect and understanding and it is your duty to assist him in all his needs. 'Good enough mothering' is sufficient.

- Throughout this paper I have used the masculine personal pronoun 'he' as a general noun to cover babies of either sex. It would be technically correct, but more cumbersome to say he or she each time.
- Mother/ mum can refer to a primary carer, as well as to a biological mother.

Do's and Don'ts

<i>Do more of this</i>	<i>Do less of this</i>
Look at your infant when holding him	Avoid being preoccupied
Trust your intuition	Do not rely on others advice
Talk to your baby	Don't treat him like a doll
You are there for your infant,	Do not use him for your needs
Show him your love and admiration	Avoid showing a sullen face
Always be a parent, even in play	He will learn from you
A child needs an adult: You are big, he is small	Do not treat him as he were a threat to you
Show him respect	ignore him
Say No and mean it.	Do not shame him
Explain why	
Be very consistent	Do not give in
Keep an open communication	Do not fear his anger
Be honest with your child	Do not forget you are his role model
You are teaching him how to be	Do not pretend

Children thrive on unconditional love, respect and understanding!

HELPFUL GAMES

To help with attention, engagement and relating emotional interaction and problem solving.

15-20 minutes at a time when your baby is most alert.

(Dr Stanley Greenspan of George Washington University, in Newsweek August 2005).

Look and Listen 3 Months

Talk to your baby as you slowly move your animated face right or left, trying to capture his attention.

Smiling Game 5-6 Months

Use words and funny facial expressions to get your baby to break into a big smile.

Funny-Sound Game 10 Months

Notice the sounds and expressions your baby makes and playfully mirror them back to him.

Working Together 18 Months

Create a problem that your child needs your help to solve, involve your favorite toy.

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