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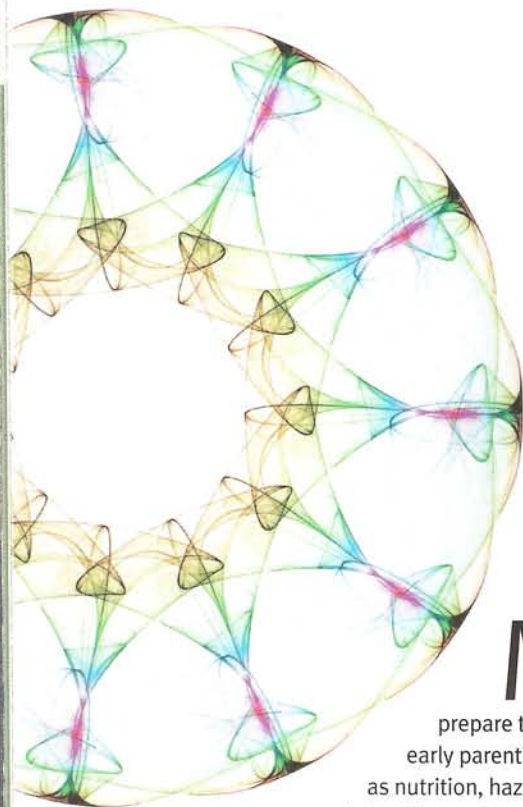
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# THE MISSING PIECE

## Consciousness and the MotherBaby Bond

By Tracy Wilson Peters, CCCE, C.L.D., and Laurel Wilson, IBCLC, CCCE

**M**ost information pregnant families access today is designed to prepare the family for childbirth and early parenting—detailing such things as nutrition, hazards to avoid, the anatomy and physiology of pregnancy and birth, breathing techniques, medications and medical interventions. Unfortunately, the most essential of all preparation, the awareness of the mind-body-spirit “*motherbaby*” bond, is rarely addressed. Cutting-edge research indicates that the experience in the womb and the early moments of birth and infancy are the most formative moments in our lives. These quantum moments shape all we become. Unfortunately, many professionals who work with families do not yet realize the significance of the motherbaby bond. In fact, the concept of bonding with the baby is rarely mentioned except for the postpartum and early infancy stages.

With today’s increasing rates of medical intervention, cesarean birth, postpartum mood disorders, and the overall atmosphere of unconscious parenting, it is obvious that a missing piece of critical information isn’t being communicated to families. This missing piece is the motherbaby bond. In this technology-obsessed world of ours, it is easy for mothers to forget that the most important knowledge comes from within. In our society, it is rare for us to listen to our body’s cues and respond accordingly. How many pregnant mothers nap during the day when they are tired or get regular chiropractic adjustments for overall balance and function? We avoid listening to our bodies because we feel rushed, and don’t honor their signals as actual communication. The pregnant body is communicating what it needs all the time, and, believe it or not, the unborn baby is, too. All we have to do as mothers is learn to listen, give ourselves the permission to trust the connection, and take the time to respond.

### How Does the MotherBaby Bond Work?

Nature is impressive in its design and prepares babies in the womb for the new world they will encounter at birth. Since each

baby is born into a distinctly different environment, he must adapt quickly in the womb in order to survive and thrive at birth. The information a baby receives in utero teaches him to adapt to his new world. A mother is constantly communicating about her world to her baby throughout pregnancy, via special messenger molecules. The baby, interestingly, communicates back to his mother through the placenta with his own set of messenger molecules. Mom and baby are sharing information during each and every moment of pregnancy. This sharing is how the motherbaby bond begins.

Mother and baby communicate by way of the placenta, using components such as hormones and neuropeptides. There are specific neuropeptides that are molecules of emotion, which communicate a mother’s feelings to her baby. When a mother has a thought, a “feeling” or emotion pulses through her body. These pulses are messenger molecules that deliver signals to the body’s systems. For example, if a mother smells something burning, she is likely to experience worry or fear. Her body starts to release hormones, such as adrenaline and other catecholamines, to pump blood to her limbs so she can get ready to move quickly and get her baby to safety. Her perception of the world (smelling smoke) creates a thought (“I smell smoke”) and emotion (worry/fear), which then signals her body to prepare to get out fast (blood pumping to her arms and legs).

This unique and remarkable communication between mother and baby is how the baby’s emotional intelligence is created. He experiences the world of emotions through his mother, and begins to become aware of life based on how his mother feels about her world. When she has a loving thought, he experiences love. When she feels joyful, he encounters joy, and so on. It’s an amazing process designed to give babies the opportunity to experience a kaleidoscope of emotions and develop a healthy emotional life that matches the emotional tone of his new family. This emotional tone becomes his way of coping with his world, known as EQ, or emotional quotient. Current research shows that a healthy EQ is much more important for long-term happiness and success in adults than a high IQ.

*Pregnancy can be an opportunity to make a shift. It's important for mothers to let go of attitudes that make healthy choices seem burdensome and embrace a new belief system where better choices are perceived as a loving gift to oneself and one's baby.*

If all mothers knew this, we would likely spend more time doing things we loved and activities that reduced our stress instead of focusing on less important tasks like worrying over where to register for baby goods. Neonatologist Dr. Frederick Wirth referred to this as being a “brain architect.” He knew that focusing on creating a healthy, happy baby in the womb led to happier, healthier children and families. Mothers should be excited to learn we have this power—the power to build our babies’ brains.

As we wrote in our book, *The Greatest Pregnancy Ever: The Keys to the MotherBaby Bond*, “Every orchestra has specific instruments and musicians, but you, the mother, are the conductor. You are writing your own symphony, you choose the music and the notes. If something is out of tune, you can change the music. You create the harmony. You are the maestro.”

#### **The Architect of Your Baby's Future**

Being aware of this motherbaby bond is critical if we wish to create a more peaceful society. Since mothers have an excellent opportunity to positively shape the personality and emotional intelligence of the next generation, mothers and fathers need to learn the tools necessary to enhance this connection. Prenatal education should focus less on the stages of labor and more on stress reduction, mindfulness techniques, and creating healthy and supportive relationships. Pregnancy is when conscious parenting begins.

When babies are conceived in a trusting, peaceful, loving state they are literally formed in love. Early pregnancy is an ideal time for mothers to contemplate their habits and environment. It is also a time to be grateful for our relationships with our partners, our families and our friends. Being in a state of appreciation, rather than conflict, has an enormous impact on the birthing experience.

#### **Keys to the MotherBaby Bond**

The motherbaby bond can be enhanced with a few key concepts that help a mother foster a deeper connection to herself, her baby and her world. These concepts are designed to create a BOND:

- Being**
- Observing**
- Nourishing**
- Deciding**



**Being** relates to a mother's consciousness, having an awareness of our thoughts and feelings.


Thoughts and feelings shape our daily lives, affecting our health, stress levels, fertility and the growth of our babies. Pregnancy is a great opportunity to begin making healthy changes in lifestyle. These changes should incorporate activities that enhance “being,” like mindfulness techniques, breath work, thought awareness, appreciation, and taking quiet time to bond deeply with the baby.

**Observing** means being in a state of mindfulness.

Mindfulness encompasses being purposeful, conscious and non-judgmental in thought and action. What could be a better mindset for pregnancy? Observing provides mothers an opportunity to create change where it's needed. To understand the world and the people in it, self-observation is the best place to start. Mothers who foster a healthy internal relationship tend to have nourishing relationships with the people in their lives. Loving, supportive relationships actually change a mother's brain, heart patterns, and mental and physical health. The people in a woman's life change her, for the better or worse. Emotions and attitudes are contagious. Choosing to be around people who contribute happiness and health has a profound effect on fertility and the growing baby.

**Nourishing** involves all of the generous and loving ways that a mother tends to her emotional and physical needs. Our physical health is more than what we eat, drink and do for exercise. It is about how we feel about our bodies and how we care for them. Pregnancy can be an opportunity to make a shift. It's important for mothers to let go of attitudes that make healthy choices seem burdensome and embrace a new belief system where better choices are perceived as a loving gift to oneself and one's baby. Remember, the body is always an expression of one's internal emotional world. The keys to nourishing revolve around gratitude, body-mind awareness, making healthy decisions and practicing stress reduction.

**Deciding** is the experience of actively participating in creating your reality. What we think about, we bring about. Therefore, it makes sense to move through this world intentionally, especially when it's known that our experiences as mothers impact the health and personalities of our babies. We can make decisions



that are in our best interest by being in conscious agreement. What is conscious agreement? Conscious agreement is the act of making decisions based on deep inner listening and coming to an intuitive mind-body-spirit agreement. It is making decisions that feel good at a gut level. Conscious agreement occurs when you are in collaboration with your inner wisdom, when every part of you says “YES!” You are in harmony with your own feelings.

Before pregnancy, a woman’s consciousness appears to affect only her life. Once she conceives, she must acknowledge that her consciousness directly affects her baby’s development and emotional well-being. Therefore, all of her choices impact her baby—what she eats, who she allows in her life, what thoughts she chooses to have and what state of being she chooses to be in. These choices will attract her relationships and experiences. Every moment in life, we are choosing our emotional state of being, and thus affecting our baby’s experiences as well. Being in a state of *conscious agreement* during pregnancy (and even while trying to conceive) becomes crucial to the motherbaby connection.


Easy steps for conscious agreement are:

**Separate from external influences.** To make a decision based on conscious agreement, it is sometimes necessary to remove yourself from environments or people that may be distracting. This can be as simple as closing your eyes and taking a moment to connect to your inner wisdom.

**Get quiet and pause.** Take a few deep breaths, allow your thoughts to calm and connect to your source. Your source can be defined as that which guides you—God, the universe, your spirit, your intuition, etc.

**Listen in.** Think about the situation that has presented itself. What is your gut feeling? How is your body feeling? How is your body reacting? Do you feel drawn to the situation or person, or do you feel a sense of discomfort? How does this feeling affect your baby?

**Decide and commit.** Honor the feelings that are coming up for you and your baby. Make a decision that is in harmony with what your body, baby and intuition are telling you. This is truly honoring the motherbaby bond.

Today’s mother is bombarded by technology, an endless array of choices and a medical community that has yet to recognize and honor the motherbaby bond. However, it is possible for every mother to tune in to the miracle happening inside of her. She can minimize the influence of her external reality and focus in on the internal world of the motherbaby bond. By moving into the states of Being, Observing, Nourishing and Deciding, she has the opportunity to truly BOND. 



Tracy Wilson Peters, C.L.D., C.L.E., CCCE, and Laurel Wilson, IBCLC, CCCE, C.L.E., C.L.D., are co-authors of *The Greatest Pregnancy Ever: The Keys to the MotherBaby Bond*. The keys detailed above—*Being, Observing, Nourishing and Deciding*, as well as *Conscious Agreement*—are concepts from within the book.

*Tracy Wilson Peters has been a lifelong advocate for families. Tracy’s experience raising her own children led her to a love for supporting expectant families. This passion encouraged her to found and serve as CEO of CAPP, the Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association, the largest childbirth organization in the world. Tracy has appeared on many television networks, including FOX, CBS, NBC and ABC.*

*With more than 16 years of experience, Laurel Wilson helps women connect with their inner resources to discover their true beliefs about themselves, their relationships, and their abilities to birth and parent their children. An educator, board-certified lactation consultant, and executive lactation director of CAPP, she believes that the journey into motherhood is a life-changing rite of passage that should be deeply honored and celebrated.*

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