



# *APL - Canton*

*Attachment Parenting International*

**July 2006 Newsletter**

## *Babies Arrive All at Once*

*By Jan Hunt, M.Sc.*

A parent wrote to my advice column recently because she was having "power struggles" with her four-year-old daughter. While she gave me many details about her little girl, the most helpful comment was that seven weeks ago, she had a baby boy.

A seven-week-old infant requires an enormous amount of time and attention. Siblings will necessarily receive less attention from their parents than they did before the baby arrived. No matter how well the parent prepares them for this change, it will be a major and sudden change for them. One day Mother is still pregnant; the next day the baby has arrived.

If a baby could somehow appear gradually – if a baby could be present for one hour the first day, two hours the next day, and so on – the siblings could adjust more easily to this gradual change in the amount of attention they receive from their parents. But babies arrive all at once, and the other children must do their best to adjust to this sudden lessening of their parents' time, energy, and attention.

It is our job as parents to understand this situation from the child's point of view. The better we are able to empathize with the siblings' inevitable feelings of disappointment and jealousy, the better we will be able to meet their need for attention. It can be a challenge when siblings require even more attention than usual – at the precise time that parents have less to give. It is not an easy task to give an older child more attention at a time when we are so fatigued; our own adjustment to the new baby has come suddenly too.

We might wish that the older child could understand the situation from our point of view, and demand less attention from us while the baby is small. But that is not the way things are. It is simply not fair, realistic, or helpful to expect children to be able to postpone their own urgent needs for love and reassurance. It is our task to empathize with their needs. And our empathy for each child is precisely how he or she learns to have empathy for others – including their new brother or sister.

## More Info On Sibling Rivalry

### Siblings Without Rivalry

by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

### Adventures in Tandem Nursing

by Hilary Flower

### Ideas on Sibling Relationships:

[www.naturalfamilyonline.com/articles/siblings.htm](http://www.naturalfamilyonline.com/articles/siblings.htm)

\*\*not an API approved site

### The Baby Book


by Dr. Sears

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*"To the outside world, we all grow old. But not to brothers and sisters. We know each other as we always were. We know each other's hearts. We share private family jokes. We remember family feuds and secrets, family griefs and joys. We live outside the touch of time."*

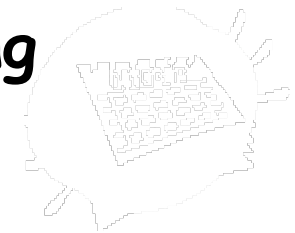
*-Clara Ortega*

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API-Canton meets the second Tuesday of every month. We are currently meeting at the Stark County District Library - North Branch on 25th St. NW in the basement meeting room.

## Upcoming Events

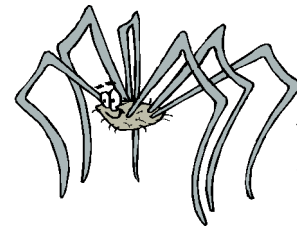


**July 19-** Mamma's Nite Out at Westfield Mall (formerly Belden Village) food court. Contact Dedra for more info.

**July 31 - Aug. 6 -** World Breastfeeding Week

**Aug. 13 -** Canton World Breastfeeding Walk -4:00 pm at Stadium Park

**Sept. 9 -** Waldorf Workshop



API-Canton  
Websites:

### Home Page:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/apmammaof2/?yguid=198814301>

### Discussion Group:

<http://www.orgsites.com/oh/apicantoncircle/index.html>

It is, as always, a matter of trust. We need to believe in our children. We need to understand and truly believe that they are communicating their legitimate needs in the most mature way possible at that point in their development and circumstances. If we punish them for this communication they cannot move on to more mature means of expressing their needs and feelings. As the educator John Holt warned us, "When we make a child afraid, we stop learning dead in its tracks."

We need to find the love within our own hearts to empathize with a child who is faced with such a sudden and difficult adjustment. But how can a parent who is overextended after the birth of a baby find the energy to cope with an older child's feelings of rejection and jealousy?

Careful nutrition and adequate rest, both before and after the birth, can make a remarkable difference in our ability to cope with an older child's adjustment – and our own. Taking the time to prepare a child for the new sibling – through patient listening, full response to questions, sharing informative books, and spending time with babies in other families – all this can be helpful. But the most important factor will always be our emotional capacity to love, respect, and trust each child. This capacity has come about through the love, respect, and trust we received in our own childhood – and so the cycle continues.

How can we give more to our children than we received as children? That is the dilemma, and resolving this dilemma is the most important job we have as a parent. It can be difficult – but we are thinking beings. By learning from those who have experience and insight – and taking the time to reflect – we can break this cycle, giving our children a life of health and happiness.

From Jan Hunt's site : <http://www.naturalchild.com/advice/q49.html>

### **Co-sleeping benefit for sibilings**

A deeper sense of love and trust often develops between siblings who sleep near each other, lessening sibling rivalry during waking hours. Siblings who share the night as well as the day have a greater opportunity to build a deep and lasting relationship. Babies and children who are separated from other family members during the day (parents at work, siblings at school) can partially make up for these absences and reestablish important emotional bonds by spending time at night together, and by the delightful early morning family time that is otherwise often missed. Of course, home businesses and unschooling can minimize separations and deepen family bonds during the day, just as co-sleeping does at night

(con't on p.4)

(con't from p.2)

Question:

We have a 3-year-old boy and 1-year-old girl. The 3-year-old is high-need but generally pretty good-natured (although quite stubborn sometimes) and shares well with other children. The 1-year-old is a pretty easy baby, good-natured, and adores her brother. They sleep with us. The 3-year-old was nursed for 21 months. Our daughter is still nursing. I am a stay-at-home mom.

The older one is very mean to his little sister. I know this stuff is supposed to be "normal" but it is quite distressing. We have never hit him, and we say "we don't hit in this house", give him quiet time alone and so on, but it doesn't seem to make any impression. I always bring one of them to the bathroom with me because I can't leave them alone for a second. Any suggestions? I'm going nuts!

Name withheld

Hi,

My heart goes out to you. It must be so hard to see conflict between your children, especially when you are conscientiously doing the very things that generally bring children closer.

One thought I have is that your son, being only two years older, may still have "baby needs". Many mental health professionals are recommending a minimum of three years between children, to help ensure that the older child's needs have been well met before having to share the parents' attention.

Another possibility is that if it was not entirely your son's idea to stop nursing, it would be only natural for him to feel some jealousy toward his nursing sister. Many mothers have found that tandem nursing is one way to prevent or minimize sibling problems. As it has been so long since your son stopped nursing, he probably wouldn't remember the technique; on the other hand, if he wants to try, or even "pretend", that might be helpful.

When he expresses a need to be a baby at certain times, this should be encouraged. Whenever he wishes to be cuddled, rocked, to crawl, or in any other way to be a baby again for a while, it can be very helpful to meet these residual needs. Unfortunately, our society urges parents to do just the opposite – to encourage older siblings to be responsible and mature. But if an older child believes that his younger sibling is receiving an unfair amount of attention and cuddling, he will quite naturally feel frustrated by this, and will present "baby" behavior in order to have those needs met. Unmet needs – for undivided attention, kindness, touching, and so on, will continue to be expressed in one way or another, until they are met. Meeting these needs is not only helpful in changing unwanted behavior, but it is fair and right. Every child deserves to have his/her needs taken seriously, whether they appear to be "age-appropriate" or not. All underlying needs are appropriate, in the sense that they would not be there without a reason.

In situations where jealousy and frustration have become pronounced, counseling may be the most helpful step.

# Join API

Attachment Parenting International (API) is a tax exempt, 501(c)(3), nonprofit, nonsectarian, and nonpartisan organization. API membership is not required to attend API group meetings but is encouraged to sustain the activities of the group and support the work of API. All donations to API are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible.

Individual/Family Membership , \$35.00 (one-year membership includes four complimentary quarterly issues of the Attachment Parenting: The Journal of Attachment Parenting International).

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## **Contacts:**

**API-Canton Co-Leaders:**  
*Traci Singree*  
*sunfairie@msn.com*

*Amy Dunnerstick*  
*apmammaof2@yahoo.com*

**Secretary & Newsletter Info:**  
*Dedra Keoshian*  
*dedrakeo@yahoo.com*