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Attachment
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New Principles Are Here!

Prepare for Pregnancy, Birth and Parenting

The remarkable journey of new life is a positive, transformative experience. Pregnancy offers expectant parents an opportunity to prepare physically, mentally, and emotionally for parenthood. Making informed decisions about childbirth, newborn care, and parenting practices is a critical investment in the attachment relationship between parent and child. Education is a key component of preparation for the challenging decisions required of parents and is an ongoing process as each stage of growth and development brings new joys and challenges.

When preparing for the birth of a child, it is easy to get caught up in the material *things* associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and newborn care. Tiny infant clothing, the latest maternity fashions, and baby gear can all be part of preparing for a baby, but the lasting investment of preparation involves creating a peaceful, loving environment in which to grow, birth, and care for a new life.

Feed with Love and Respect

Feeding a child involves more than providing nutrients, it is an act of love. From providing for the very intense hunger needs of a newborn to preparing meals

served at the family dinner table, parents can use feeding time as an opportunity to strengthen the bonds with their children.

The newborn's rooting, sucking, and crying reflexes evolved to ensure the close proximity of a mother or other caregiver that the baby can depend on to meet her intense needs. The more parents learn to identify and meet their baby's needs, the more secure the parent-child bond becomes. Although older children are able to feed themselves and to more easily communicate their needs, parents should continue to respect the child's hunger cues, offer healthy foods, model healthy eating habits, and make mealtimes a time for love and connection.

Respond with Sensitivity

Parents can build the foundation of trust and empathy by understanding and responding appropriately to their infant's needs. Babies communicate their needs in many ways including body movements, facial expressions and crying, and they learn to trust when their needs are consistently responded to with sensitivity. Building a strong attachment with a baby involves not only responding consistently to his physical needs, but also spending enjoyable time interacting with him and thus

Principles Con't.

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meeting his emotional needs. Many societal challenges can interfere with a parent's ability to develop a responsive relationship with his baby. Myths about spoiling a baby, unsolicited advice from well-meaning family, friends, and media that conflict with science, normal development, or a parent's own intuitive feelings are stressors that new parents commonly experience.

In the course of normal child development, babies form primary attachments with the person or people who spend the majority of time nurturing and caring for them -- usually the mother and/or father. Frequent holding and interactions with baby increase bonding and promote secure attachment. In the first six months or so, your baby may seem happy being held by or interacting with other people. Then at eight to nine months of age, babies will suddenly begin to show fear and anxiety about being separated from their mother. This, too, is a normal phase, yet babies still require empathy and respect for their feelings to help them learn to feel safe and secure. This intense fear of separation begins to naturally improve as they mature. It may take considerably longer for more sensitive children to be comfortable in the care of non-parental adults. Follow the child's cues and do not force children to accept strangers or expect them to overcome stranger/separation anxiety before they're ready.

Use Nurturing Touch

Babies are born with urgent and intense needs and

depend completely on others to meet them. Nurturing touch helps meet a baby's need for physical contact, affection, security, stimulation and movement. Parents who choose a nurturing approach to physical interactions with their children promote development of healthy attachments. Even as children get older their need to stay connected through touch remains strong.

Engage in Nighttime Parenting

"Is your baby sleeping through the night yet?" is often the first question people ask a new parent. The truth is that most babies do not sleep through the night, yet this myth is perpetuated from generation to generation. Babies have needs at night just as they do during the day -- hunger, loneliness, fear, feeling too cold or too hot -- and they need the reassurance of a loving parent to feel secure during the night. Many babies do go through a phase where they sleep for longer periods of time only to begin waking at night during different developmental stages and they may wake occasionally during nightmares, teething, illness, growth spurts, or during times of transition in their lives. Babies are very sensitive to their parents' stress, which can affect their sleep patterns.

Parents can help their children learn that bedtime or naptime is a peaceful time; a time of quiet connection and snuggles. Even though young children may outgrow needing to eat during the night, they might still require comfort and reassurance.

Principles Con't

Parents who are frustrated with frequent waking or are sleep deprived may be tempted to try sleep-training techniques that recommend letting a baby cry it out incrementally. Some believe that it is healthy to "teach" a baby to "self-soothe." New research suggests that these techniques can have detrimental physiological effects on the baby by increasing the stress hormone cortisol in the brain, which can have long-term effects on emotional regulation, sleep patterns, and behavior. An infant is not neurologically or developmentally capable of calming or soothing himself to sleep in ways that are healthy. The part of the brain that helps with self-soothing isn't well developed until the child is two and a half to three years of age. Until that time, a child depends on his parents to help him calm down and learn to regulate his intense feelings.

Provide Consistent and Loving Care

Babies and young children have an intense need for the physical presence of a consistent, loving, responsive caregiver, ideally a parent. Daily care and playful, loving interactions build strong bonds. By providing consistent, loving care from early infancy, parents strengthen their relationship with their children and build healthy attachment. If neither parent can be a full-time caregiver, then a child needs someone who is not only consistent and loving, but has formed a bond with the child and consciously nurtures in a way that strengthens the

attachment relationship.

Practice Positive Discipline

Attachment Parenting incorporates the "golden rule" of parenting; parents should treat their children the way they would want to be treated. Positive discipline is an overarching philosophy that helps a child develop a conscience guided by his own internal discipline and compassion for others. Positive discipline is rooted in a secure, trusting, connected relationship between parent and child. Discipline that is empathetic, loving and respectful strengthens that the connection between parent and child, while harsh or overly punitive discipline weakens the connection. Remember that the ultimate goal of discipline is to help children develop self-control and self-discipline.

Strive for Balance in Your Personal and Family Life

Striving for Balance involves ensuring that everyone's needs -- not just the child's -- are recognized, validated, and met to the greatest extent possible. In an ideal world, every family member's needs are met all the time, everyone is happy and healthy, and the family is perfectly in balance. In the real world, nobody's family life is perfectly balanced all the time. It is not unusual for parents to feel out of balance at times. Parents who practice AP continuously look for creative ways to find balance in their personal and family life.

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Contacts:

API-Stark Co. Leaders:
Traci Singree -
harmonydesoleil@verizon.net

Amy Dunnerstick -
apmammaof2@yahoo.com

Dedra Keoshian (also
Newsletter Editor)
dedrakeo@yahoo.com

Book Librarian:
Jennifer Hall -
halljene@muc.edu

Secretary:
Lisa Boyce -
mammalisa@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer:
Sherry Garrett-
Ggarrett86@sbcglobal.net

Web Site Contributor:
Sheryl Rexrode-
srexrode1@yahoo.com

API Headquarters:

www.attachmentparenting.org

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.orgsites.com/oh/apicantoncircle/index.html

Discussion Group:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/APIofStarkCounty>

Our Mission

API's mission is to promote parenting methods that create strong, healthy emotional bonds between children and their parents. These methods nurture and fulfill a child's need for trust, empathy, and affection, providing a lifelong foundation for healthy, enduring relationships. Through education,

support, advocacy, and research, API seeks to strengthen families and increase awareness of the importance of secure attachment, ultimately helping to reduce or prevent child abuse, behavioral disorders, criminal acts, and other serious social problems.

Support API Through Membership

By becoming a member of API, you help reach other parents and professionals through education, support, advocacy, and research. Our efforts touch the lives of parents worldwide through local support groups, our quarterly publication, *Attachment Parenting: The Journal of API*, the newsletter, and national advocacy efforts. In addition, your membership donation contributes to innovative projects such as the creation of a comprehensive Attachment Parenting curriculum, the formation of strategic alliances with like-minded organizations, the expansion of our network of AP-Friendly Professionals, and the upgrade of our Web site to become the premier Attachment Parenting

online community.

Benefits of Individual / Family Membership, which is \$35 per year, include:

- Four issues of *Attachment Parenting: The Journal of API*
- Membership in local parent support (mention your local group when you join and \$15 of your membership is retained for use in your local community)
- Discounts and early registration for API conferences and select other events
- Share your passion; opportunity to become an API Leader, start a new support group, or donate your skills to the API Headquarters Team upcoming events or a special offer that promotes a new product.

Please see a leader if interested!



www.attachmentparenting.org



Peaceful Parenting for
a Peaceful World!