

TBRI Tip 2022

(Trust Based Relational Intervention)

Trauma and the Unborn Child Healing Prenatal Trauma

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Based on the work of Dr. David Cross and Dr. Karyn Purvis at the
Karen Purvis Institute of Child Development, Texas Christian University

A Little Backstory for this TBRI tip

I am part of a TBRI parenting Facebook group. One of the parents in the group posted a video that intrigued me. Her adopted 18 month old daughter was inconsolable at night and would not sleep despite her having done everything she could think of to soothe her. For whatever reason, she figured out that the only thing that worked was to move at the same cadence that the baby would have experienced in utero. So she put the baby snugly in an Ergo type carrier and began to dance and do cardio while wearing the baby. It was only at this state of increased heart rate and rhythm, that soothed the baby to sleep! She shared a video of her "dancing" her baby into a peaceful slumber. The child's prenatal experience directly impacted her current behavior. This phenomenon has been researched and documented for decades.

The Amazing Life of the Unborn Baby Thomas Verny M.D.

Did you know:

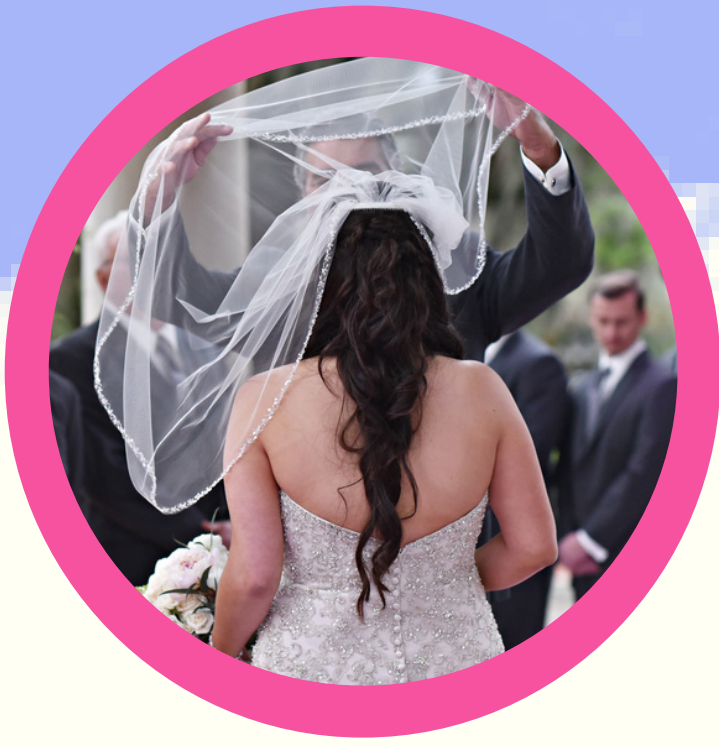
- A newborn will be comforted by rhythm of walking at the same cadence as their birth mom? It is called entrainment.
- Mama and unborn baby can react to one another's thoughts and feelings.
- An unborn baby will become emotionally agitated at the mama's thought of having a cigarette.
- The baby can hear clearly at six months gestation and will move his body to the rhythm to his mother's speech.
- Babies can be soothed in utero by soft classical music and will kick and wiggle to the sound of more upbeat classical music.
- The baby's palate can be impacted by the foods birth mom eats, i.e. garlic, chili, curry etc.
- A professional cellist musician learned that the music he could play sight unseen, was the same pieces his birth mom played while pregnant with him.
- A newborn's neurochemistry will mirror that of his birth mom for up to six months after birth.

Remember the TBRI Early Risk Factors?

- Difficult Birth
- Difficult Pregnancy
- Abuse
- Neglect
- "911" Type of Event
- Prenatal Exposure

Lifting the Veil

Bryan Post



There is an assumption that babies adopted at birth are preferable because well, to put it bluntly, they have been spared from abuse, neglect and other trauma that their older counterparts have experienced.

Back in the day, we (I) was taught the theory that babies are born a "tabula rasa" or a blank slate, ready for the story of their life to be written on them. While no one would deny the profound impact of life experiences during a child's critical years, we also cannot deny the impact the prenatal experience has on unborn child. Infants come to us with nine months of attachment and pre-birth experiences that can dramatically impact their beliefs and behavior.

Dr. Bryan Post used the following analogy to explain the experience of a newborn baby separated at birth from their mother. Imagine a couple who met and fell in love over a years' time. Through time spent together, they became close emotionally. They recognized the scent and voice of their beloved and reacted emotionally to hearing it. They picked up on each other's cues and could anticipate one another's mood and needs. Through their time together, they established a bond, so much so that they wanted to formalize their relationship through marriage. The big day arrives. The groom beams with love and anticipation upon seeing his bride walk down the aisle. She stops before him. With great anticipation, he lifts the veil. He recoils in shock and disbelief. Who is this? This is a stranger. It is not the one he has come to know and love over past months. He is confused, not sure of what is happening.

This is the state of the baby when you pick them up from the hospital. You are not the one they have experienced for the last nine months. You smell and sound different. You walk and rock them at a different cadence. Your heart rate pace is not the same. They are confused. Who are you? What is happening, they emotionally and behaviorally express their confusion and stress, but lack the cognitive framework to make sense of it. This is why later in this tip, we recommending "giving voice" to this experience for the baby. They will grown into the understanding.

"An unborn child is a feeling, remembering, aware child and because he is what happens to him, what happens to all of us, in the nine months between conception and birth molds, shapes our personality, drives and ambitions in very important ways.
Quote from "The Secret Life of the Unborn Child".

"chronic anxiety and wrenching ambivalence or anger towards motherhood can leave a deep scar on the unborn child's personality"



We have shown the positive outcomes for born babies bathed in a prenatal environment of love, acceptance, anticipation and joy. Now let's turn to the harder side of prenatal experiences. In preparation, please consider the following;

What might a child believe about themselves and how might they behave if they were formed in a prenatal environment where...

- Birth mom was stressed and scared throughout the entire pregnancy
- Birth mom lacked medical care and nutrition
- Baby was immersed in fluid filled with toxic teratogenic drugs.
- Baby's developing brain was flooded with cortisol for nine months
- The emotions of hate, violence and depression were high
- Birth mom constantly thought of ending the pregnancy.

Recognizing and Healing Prenatal Trauma

The hardest part of prenatal trauma is that to most people, it is invisible. Many have believed the myth that infants can't remember trauma or pain, therefore it didn't impact them. Nothing could be further from the truth. Babies are severely impacted by prenatal and early trauma as there is no escape from the fear and pain and the child lacks the cognitive ability to make sense of the experience. The terror and fear is stored in the body of the child and expressed through behavior and attachment.

Understand What Your Baby is Telling You



While babies lack the cognitive and verbal skills to tell you what they are feeling, that doesn't mean they aren't very skilled communicators if we know how to interpret what they are saying.

Here are a few ways babies communicate their distress or impacts from hard beginnings:

- High pitched, inconsolable crying
- A kind of frozen watchfulness
- Blank, disconnected stares
- Loss of playful cooing behavior
- Loss of appetite- or feeding issues
- Avoiding eye contact
- Arching back when held, resistant to snuggling
- Sensitive to touch
- Bowel difficulties
- Repetitive hand or other motions
- Sleep disturbances
- Avoidance to touch
- Chronic sneezing (a withdrawal symptom)
- Lethargic and will not engage
- Hates tummy time
- Trouble lifting head, weak core strength
- Hyper rigid or lack of muscle tone (hypotonia)

Helping Your Baby Heal

Harmed in Relationship-Healed in Relationship

" Babies develop a sense of security through being seen and heard, spoken to, rescued, protected, appreciated, and tethered across space and out of mutual sight; in other words, by being held consistently in someone's mind."

Trauma and Children-Better Health Channel

- 1. Hold them, rock them, wear them!** Dr. Purvis equated infants left in carriers or car seats for long periods of time as being in little isolettes because these items limit the multi sensory bath that is the power of human connection. Babies need to feel your breathe, hear you heartbeat, your words, regulate to your rhythm cadence and identify your comforting smells. Slings, baby packs and snugglers are your best friend!
- 2. Wear that baby!** Babywearing is a safe, sweet, and effective way to free your hands while keeping your little one happy as can be. Babywearing is the term used for harnessing your little one to your chest or back. Studies show that this close contact promotes attachment and bonding between a baby and a parent. Wearing a baby helps parents to be more responsive to their baby's needs. This concept boasts plenty of benefits aside from being able to use your hands and giving your arms and back a break from holding your baby. You can wear a baby/toddler for up to 3 or even 4 years old.
 - Reduces crying
 - Promotes health
 - Assists with breastfeeding (if you are able to do that.)*- Excerpts from Haven Midwifery*
- 3. Be actively present to your baby.** Interrupt their time of zoning out or their attempts to self soothe through loving eye contact, gentle touch and playful words, inviting them back into the interaction with you. This is never forced.
- 4. Engage in many "I love you rituals" during care.** When you change diapers, play "this little piggy" or "peek a boo". Massage their little feet. Lovingly caress their face. Sing to them. Make them giggle. Give gentle eye contact.
- 5. Baby Baby Oh Baby video on infant massage (recommended by Dr. Purvis).** This helps calm, regulate and strengthen connections with your little one. <https://babybabyohbaby.com/store/infant-massage-dvd/>
- 6. Learn your baby's cues.** Which cry communicates hunger, scared, tired, overwhelmed? Responding to their specific need quickly builds trust and safety.
- 7. Be present and available:** Babies can only rely on you if you are present to them. Answering their cries mean making them a priority. You will not "spoil" your baby. Independence is grown from dependence
- 8. Fostering attachment means providing quick, consistent response to your child's needs,** especially during the first year when the infant is learning trust vs mistrust. The pattern is: they cry, you come. That is how trust is built.
- 9. Mirroring and exaggerating sounds, smiles and actions.** These expressions need responses and reflection from a parent so the child learns to interact and engage the world around them. Smile at them and they will smile back! This is how a child develops focus, interest, excitement, wonder and curiosity with the world around them.
- 10. Be aware of the child's exhaustion and becoming overstimulated.** When a baby is done playing, they will turn their head and eyes away, squirm, arch their back, or try to turn away. Young babies may fall asleep. Be attuned and give baby a break from the over stimulation. This is part of being attuned or "tuned in" to you baby.
- 11. Infants from tough beginnings are often uncomfortable in their own skin.** They may have sensory issues or be misaligned resulting in bowel, walking and sleeping issues. As a parent, engaging occupational therapists and chiropractic adjustments worked miracles to help my baby move forward developmentally.
- 12. Swaddle, swaddle, swaddle!** Babies are comforted by the snug boundaries and warmth of swaddling. It can build safety and peace in a child.
- 13. Finally, speak truth over your baby.** You may be thinking, why talk to a pre verbal baby? We do it all the time anyway, however, as we talked about in the earlier section above, *Lifting the Veil*, we are not the person the baby expected. We do not sound, smell, or feel like birth mom. Acknowledge this with the baby. Speak truth over their confusion, anxiety or sadness. You are giving voice and clarity to their early experience. They will understand your tone, love and caring and grow into the understanding of the words.