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Nurturing the Possible:



Supporting the
Integrated Self from
the Beginning of Life

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PRENATAL AND PERINATAL psychology (PPN) has grown into a multidisciplinary field “dedicated to the in-depth exploration of the psychological dimension of human reproduction and pregnancy and the mental and emotional development of the unborn and newborn child,” as stated in *The Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health*. The heart of the field’s unique contribution is the exploration and understanding of prenatal life, birth and bonding, and infancy from the baby’s point of view.

The field coalesced in the 1980s with clinicians who found their adult clients describing prenatal and perinatal experiences to be associated with the origin of a life pattern or belief, often debilitating or life-diminishing ones. Finding little in the psychological literature, the clinicians began to share their findings with one another and a field was born. During the past thirty years, a wealth of clinical experience with adults, children, and babies has been reported, and a much deeper understanding of our earliest experiences is now available. PPN research demonstrates that these early experiences involve consciousness beyond (before) the biological human self.

woven relationship between these two distinct perspectives. Together they form the “Integrated Self.”

3. From the moment of conception we perceive, function, communicate, and learn at nonlocal consciousness, energetic, and physical levels. Our ability to transmit and receive communication during the prenatal and perinatal period is much greater than traditionally thought.

4. During our gestation, birth, and early infant stages, we learn intensely and are exquisitely sensitive to our environment and relationships. Through our transcendent perspective, we have omni-awareness of our parents and others’ thoughts, feelings, and intentions that arise from their conscious and subconscious mind. Through our human self, our experience is intricately related to our mother’s experience, the health of our womb, and our physical/emotional journey at birth. Based on these early conditions we form a foundational holographic blueprint for life.

5. This blueprint becomes the infrastructure from which we grow and experience life at every level of our being—physical, emotional, mental, relational, and spiritual.

Based on our mother’s experience, and our physical/emotional journey at birth, we form a foundational holographic blueprint for life.

In 1999, Dr Marti Glenn and I co-founded the Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology Program at Santa Barbara Graduate Institute to help further the field and train professionals. I continued to grapple with the disparity between our current Western biologically-based models of early development and the findings from prenatal and perinatal psychology and PPN clinical work with babies and children. With the help of a grant from the New Earth Foundation, I wrote *Welcoming Consciousness* in 2004, a developmental psychology book that introduces an integrated model of development encompassing the newly evolving PPN research and perspective. The following are selected key principles of this model:

1. We are sentient beings—conscious and aware—from the beginning of life. We have a sense of self as we enter physical form that is present prior to, during, and after our human life.

2. From conception on, we have dual perspectives of awareness: a transcendent perspective and a human perspective. Our earliest experiences involve an intricately

Our early experiences become part of our implicit memory reflected in our subconscious and in our autonomic functioning. These affect us below the level of our conscious awareness and directly shape our very perceptions and conceptions of “reality.”

6. We already are making choices and forming adaptive strategies in the womb and at birth that appear to establish potentially lifelong patterns.

7. Young babies show us their established life patterns developed in utero and during their birth. The majority of babies born in the US show signs of stress or traumatic imprinting.¹

8. Many of the needs we have considered essential for healthy development during infancy and childhood are needs we have from the beginning of life: to be wanted, welcomed, safe, nourished, seen, heard, included, and communicated with as the sentient beings we are. From the beginning of life, stress and trauma inhibit or interfere with the natural relationship between a baby’s transcendent self and its human self.

Resources

BOOKS

*Life in the Womb:
The Origin of Health and Disease*
by Peter W. Nathanielsz
(Promethean Press, 1999)

The Mind of Your Newborn Baby
by David B. Chamberlain
(North Atlantic Books, 1998)

Pre-Parenting: Nurturing Your Child from Conception
by Thomas R. Verny and Pamela Weintraub
(Simon & Schuster, 2003)

*Prenatal Parenting: The Complete Psychological
and Spiritual Guide to Loving Your Unborn Baby*
by Frederick Wirth
(Regan Books, 2001)

*Remembering Our Home: Healing Hurts and
Receiving Gifts from Conception to Birth*
by Sheila Linn, William Emerson, Dennis Linn,
and Matthew Linn (Paulist Press, 1999)

*While You're Expecting: Creating Your Own
Prenatal Classroom*
by Rene Van De Carr and Marc Lehrer
(Humanics, 1996)

WEBSITES

Association for Pre- & Perinatal
Psychology and Health (APPPAH)
www.birthpsychology.com
*A forum and resource center for individuals from
diverse backgrounds and disciplines interested in
the psychological dimensions of prenatal and
perinatal experiences*

*What Babies Want: An Exploration
of the Consciousness of Infants*
www.whatbabieswant.com
*A new video documentary on prenatal and perinatal
psychology that includes both cutting-edge science
and the customs of traditional cultures*

Santa Barbara Graduate Institute
www.sbgi.edu
*Offering the country's first graduate degree programs
in Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology*

ARTICLE FOOTNOTES

- ¹ McCarty, W.A. (2002). The power of beliefs: What babies are teaching us. *Journal of Prenatal & Perinatal Psychology & Health*, 16(4), 341-360.
- ² McCarty, W.A. (2004). The CALL to reawaken and deepen our communication with babies: what babies are teaching us. *International Doula*, 12(2), Summer 2004.

9. As indigenous cultures have done for centuries, communicating with babies during the preconception, prenatal, birth and infancy period on is one of the most powerful ways to support babies and can mitigate the impact of potentially traumatizing events.²

10. PPN-oriented therapies and ways of being demonstrate new possibilities of wholeness and connection with the Integrated Self, starting at the beginning of life.

Prenatal and perinatal psychology's clinical findings bring a tremendous renewal

to the exploration of our understanding of human experience from an integrated lens that honors our multi-dimensional nature and echoes the ancient wisdoms held in many indigenous cultures. The new "western frontier" is clearing old beliefs that stand in the way of the fuller vision of who we are. Nurturing the possible, supporting

the Integrated Self from the beginning of life, opens the door to help each new being to create a foundational life holographic blueprint that supports their fullest creative life force and wholeness.



WENDY ANNE McCARTY, RN, is a psychology consultant, educator, researcher, and author. She founded the Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology Program at Santa Barbara Graduate Institute. Her new e-book *Welcoming Consciousness: Supporting Wholeness from the Beginning of Life* and her other publications are available through www.wondrousbeginnings.com.