

what's happening »

## Join Us for API Reads Featuring Dr. Laura Markham in March/April

Thu, 02/28/2013 – 4:35 | No Comment

Please join us for our re-launch of the API Reads program with the book by Dr. Laura Markham, *Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids: How To Stop Yelling and Start Connecting*. This is an online discussion that ...

[Read the full story »](#)

### 1. pregnancy & birth

Fertility and conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and the early postpartum period.

### 2. the infant

From newborn to 17 months.

### 3. the toddler

From 18 months to age 3.

### 4. the growing child

From age 4 to age 9.

### 5. the adolescent

From age 10 to age 18.

Home » 2. The Infant

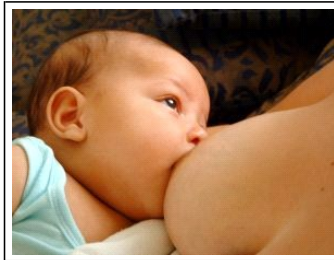
## Breastfeeding the Right-Brained Way

Submitted by **The Attached Family** on Tuesday, March 17 2009

**2 Comments**

By **Kathleen Kendall-Tackett (PhD, IBCLC) & Nancy Mohrbacher (IBCLC), authors**

In modern Western cultures, mothers have more information about breastfeeding than any time in human history. Unfortunately, most of this is information for the left side of the brain, which is fine for lots of tasks. But too much left-brained information can make you anxious about breastfeeding.



Breastfeeding is a right-brained activity. What do we mean by that? Think of left-brained instructions as head knowledge. Right-brained learning yields heart or body knowledge. To illustrate the difference, think about riding a bike. Did you learn by reading about it? Talking a class? Talking to other people about it? Or did you learn by just getting on a bike and doing it?

### The Right-Brained Dance of Breastfeeding

Mothers and babies have physiological responses that draw them to each other, that encourage them to look at each other, touch each other, and interact. Much of this behavior is guided by the right side of the brain. This is the side that has to do with affect or emotion.

A problem with the heavily left-brained, instructionally-oriented way that many mothers learn to breastfeed is that it doesn't allow mother and baby to take advantage of their natural responses. So much breastfeeding education focuses on all the things mother must do to get the baby to breastfeed, which ignores the baby's role. That type of instruction can be helpful to solve a particular problem, but it can be a definite drawback when one technique or strategy is applied to all mothers. It also discourages mothers and babies from using their hardwiring.

Worse still, this kind of education can encourage them to tune out their natural responses or to violate their instincts. It can be upsetting for all who are involved, sometimes creating a crisis where none existed before. Another problem with highly instructionalized left-brained approaches is that they can leave some mothers feeling incompetent because it feels as if there are 10,000 things they need to remember.

A different way to think about this is to consider how mothers throughout human history managed to breastfeed without all of the information we have now. When breastfeeding was the norm, girls learned about breastfeeding as they were growing up by seeing women actually doing it. Dr. Peter Hartmann, a well-known breastfeeding researcher, makes this point well. He asked a young Australian Aboriginal mothers, "When did you learn about breastfeeding?" She answered, "I have always known how to breastfeed."

How exactly do you use a right-brained approach to breastfeed your baby? First, take some deep breaths and let go of those worries about doing things "wrong." Instead of thinking of breastfeeding as a skill you need to master, or a measure of your worth as a mother, think about breastfeeding as primarily a relationship. As you spend time with your baby, you'll be more adept at reading her cues. As you hold her, your baby will be more comfortable seeking your breast. Breastfeeding will flow naturally out of your

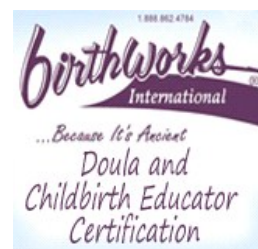
### Poll

**Breastfeeding may be natural, but it's not always easy. What was your biggest breastfeeding challenge?**

- Getting a good latch
- Managing my milk supply
- Thrush, plugged milk ducts, mastitis, or nipple cracks
- Finding support
- Returning to work
- Caring for other children
- Didn't like it
- Loved it! Had no problems

[Vote](#)

[View Results](#)



affectionate relationship.

Based on her extensive clinical experience with mothers and babies, pediatrician and board-certified lactation consultant Dr. Christina Smillie has developed some strategies that can help you help your baby. Here are some specific things you can do:

- 1) **Start with a calm, alert baby** — One mistake that many women make is to wait to try breastfeeding until their babies are either sound asleep or screaming. Think about yourself. Do you learn best when you are asleep or upset? Probably not. The other reason to start with a calm baby has to do with physics. When a baby is screaming, her tongue is on the roof of her mouth. You will never get your breast in her mouth when her tongue is like that.
- 2) **Watch for early feeding cues** – These cues include turning her head when someone touches her cheek and hand-to-mouth. Take note of when she starts smacking her lips or putting her hands to her mouth. This is an ideal time to try breastfeeding.
- 3) **Use your body to calm your baby** — One way to calm a crying baby is by placing your baby skin to skin vertically between your breasts. Your chest is a very calming place for your baby. Try talking and making eye contact. All of these activities can get her to calm down, allowing your baby to seek the breast on her own.
- 4) **Follow your baby's lead** – When a calm, alert baby is held vertically between her mother's breasts, often she will begin showing instinctive breast-seeking behaviors, bobbing her head and moving it from side to side. Once your baby starts these behaviors, help her in her efforts. Following your baby's lead, support her head and shoulders. Move her rump toward your opposite breast. Encourage her explorations with your voice.
- 5) **Play while you learn to breastfeed** — Play is something that is largely absent from the mothers we see. It all seems so serious and they are terrified of doing something wrong. If you are feeling frustrated, we'd like to encourage you to look at this another way. Focus on your relationship with your baby and consider breastfeeding as a part of the larger whole. Breastfeeding will flow naturally out of your affectionate relationship.

In summary, if your baby is healthy, she is wired to know how to breastfeed. It all doesn't depend on you getting everything right. Relax and just focus on getting to know your baby. The rest will follow.

Excerpted from: Mohrbacher, N., & Kendall-Tackett, K.A. (2005). *Breastfeeding Made Simple: Seven natural laws for nursing mothers*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.



2 Comments »

Leave a comment!

Add your comment below, or [trackback](#) from your own site. You can also [subscribe to these comments](#) via RSS.

Be nice. Keep it clean. Stay on topic. No spam.

Name

Mail (will not be published)

Website (optional)



Support API

Amazon.com Widgets



Now there is an easy way to support API: **GoodSearch**. Just make it your default search engine and every time you use them to search the web they donate about \$.01 to API. Help spread the word about another wonderful way to **donate to API**.

#### Secondary Attachments: Fathers, Grandparents & Other Loved Ones »

##### My Child Doesn't Want to Visit her Father

By Naomi Aldort, author of *Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves*, [www.AuthenticParent.com](http://www.AuthenticParent.com)

Q: I have recently gotten divorced. My daughter is three and initially enjoyed her time with her father, but since staying overnight she refuses to go. ...

[More articles »](#)

#### Solo Parenting: Divorced & Single Parents »

##### My Child Doesn't Want to Visit her Father

By Naomi Aldort, author of *Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves*, [www.AuthenticParent.com](http://www.AuthenticParent.com)

Q: I have recently gotten divorced. My daughter is three and initially enjoyed her time with her father, but since staying overnight she refuses to go. ...

[More articles »](#)

#### Special Circumstances: Multiples, Adoption & Special Needs »

##### Effects of Breast Implants on Lactation

By Lance Hugh

Breast augmentation is one of the most common cosmetic surgeries, accounting for more than 300,000 procedures per year. The average implant patient is in her mid-30s and has already had a child, but ...

[More articles »](#)

#### Striving for Balance: Personal & Family »

##### Balancing Attachment Parenting and Intimate Relationships

By Cassandra Brown, parent coach, [www.parentcoaching.org](http://www.parentcoaching.org)

Attachment Parenting International offers Eight Principles of Parenting. The eighth principle is about balance in personal and family life. In this article, we'll take a closer look at some ways ...

[More articles »](#)

#### The Editor's Desk »

##### Playful Learning

By Rita Brhel, managing editor & API leader

I am quite happy with the preschool that my children attended, although it took a lot of interviewing teachers and visiting sites, and a bit of trial-and-error, to ...

[More articles »](#)

#### Your Birth Stories »

You can use these tags:

```
<a href="" title=""> <abbr title=""> <acronym title=""> <b> <blockquote cite=""> <code> <del datetime=""> <em> <i> <q cite=""> <strike> <strong>
```

This is a Gravatar-enabled weblog. To get your own globally-recognized-avatar, please register at [Gravatar](#).

Submit Comment

## An Interview with Myself: On Epidurals and Natural Birth

By Ashley Franz

Choosing to have a natural birth is such a personal decision. Everyone has their reasons to have, or not have, a natural birth. Several girls have tried to get me to talk them ...

[More articles »](#)

### Recent Reader Comments

- i. [The Attached Family on The Use — and Abuse — of Attachment Research in Family Courts](#)
- i. [Twin mother on The Use — and Abuse — of Attachment Research in Family Courts](#)
- i. [Elena on AP in a Non-AP World](#)
- i. [cast of ncis on Teens and Sex from an Attachment Perspective](#)
- i. [Rachel Forbes on Peace at Home: Military Families Embrace Attachment Parenting](#)

### Attention API Members

Attachment Parenting International is grateful to those who contribute to its publications, including **TheAttachedFamily.com**. It is to be noted that API entertains a variety of perspectives and embraces opportunities to challenge and strengthen its API family. Please find what works for you, support and encourage, and leave the rest behind. For more on API's perspective on parenting, visit the API website by clicking on the link in the Additional API Resources below.

### Disclaimer

Nothing on API's website should be construed as medical or legal advice. API articles are provided for information purposes only. Consult your healthcare provider for your individual health and medical needs and attorney for legal advice.

### Notice some changes?

API is updating [www.theattachedfamily.com](#). You may notice some changes in the next few weeks, such as new posts going up more often and reorganization of the archived materials. These housekeeping tasks should not affect your readability or any linkbacks.

### latest video post

### random posts

[\(refresh random posts\)](#)

[The NVC Approach to “No”](#)

### additional api resources

- [API book](#)
- [API Forums & API Reads book club](#)
- [API Live! teleseminars](#)
- [API local support groups](#)
- [API's Eight Principles of Parenting](#)

### api news & events

- [API Links online now!](#)
- [2012 Attached at the Heart Contributions in Parenting Award](#)
- [2012 Lamaze Innovative Learning Forum](#)
- [12th Annual Nurturing Parenting Conference](#)
- [Notre Dame 2012 Symposium on Human Evolution and Human Development](#)

### aptly said

- [Never Stop Holding Hands](#)
- [Let's Run](#)
- [Play. Cook. Chef.](#)
- [Take a day off from the world](#)
- [Our Attached Family](#)

Content Protected Using Blog Protector By: PcDrome.

© 2008-2013 **Attachment Parenting International** All Rights Reserved – Copyright notice by Blog Copyright

Powered by [WordPress](#) | [Log in](#) | [Entries \(RSS\)](#) | [Comments \(RSS\)](#) | [2008 Attachment Parenting International. All Rights Reserved](#)

