

UNPLOWED GROUND BABY

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UNPLOWED GROUND *Baby*

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What is Attachment?

Attachment is the unique emotional relationship between a baby and their primary caretaker. It is a key factor in the way an infant's brain organizes itself and how a child develops socially, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually. Attachment is the basis of trust formation. All future relationships are dependent upon the quality of attachment between a baby and their mother.

What Happened in the Womb Matters

For a baby who is adopted, especially out of an abusive or neglectful environment, this attachment process is compromised. Attachment starts in the womb, so for babies who experience in utero neglect or stress, rebuilding the broken bond will be necessary. What happens in the first nine months of life (in the womb) matters. Adoptive parents should realize that in order to rebuild the broken bond of attachment, your adopted baby will need a special level of care.

The Mother and the Newborn Baby

In the healthy attachment process, both the mother and newborn baby participate in an exchange of nonverbal emotional cues. These cues make the baby feel understood and safe. Even in the first days after birth, a baby picks up on the emotional cues of their mother—her tone of voice, her gestures, and her emotions—and sends her signals by crying, cooing, mimicking facial expressions, and eventually smiling.

Attunement

In return, the mother watches and listens to her baby's cries and sounds, and responds to their cues. All of this occurs at the same time the mother responds to the baby's needs for food, warmth, and affection. Secure attachment grows out of the success of this nonverbal communication process between a mother and her baby. This nonverbal communication is called attunement.

Rebuilding the Bonds

A baby who is neglected from birth does not receive this attunement. Their birth mother may have rarely or only occasionally noticed the baby's needs and met them. For this reason, methods that encourage self-soothing like the cry it out method are **not** recommended. Babies who have been neglected need their cries answered consistently. Neglect profoundly affects the organization of the brain and stunts a baby's social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and even spiritual growth. It will be necessary for the adoptive mother to "re-do" the first moments of life by providing a 12-week special level of care called the "fourth trimester." The good news is that the bonds of attachment can be rebuilt! As your baby's forever mom, you can provide the healing your baby needs.

**We recommend six keys to building
bonds of attachment...**



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SIX KEYS TO BUILDING BONDS OF ATTACHMENT

1

Full Maternity Leave (6-12 Weeks)

It is important to view the early post-adoptive days the same way you would the post-partum period. This time is even more crucial for an adoptive mother and baby because you have not had the benefit of nine months of in utero bonding. A full maternity leave is imperative to begin this important attachment work. It will take all of your time and energy as an adoptive mom to engage in this "fourth trimester." It is hard work but worth the investment!

2

Baby Wearing 6-8 Hours a Day

Baby wearing (carrying your baby in a wrap or sling) is a key component of the fourth trimester. Through baby wearing for 6-8 hours a day, you are simulating carrying your baby in your womb to expose your baby to your voice and your heartbeat. This helps your baby experience calming sounds and movements, good nutrition, and the bonding hormones of love and belonging.

3

Skin to Skin 1 Hour a Day

There is perhaps nothing more important to the bonding process than healthy touch. The effects of loving, gentle touch on healthy brain development are beyond measure. For this reason, we encourage moms and dads to engage in skin-to-skin contact with their new baby for at least one hour per day. Simply place your baby on your bare chest, with a blanket draped over both of you for warmth. Studies show that the benefits of spending time with your baby in skin-to-skin contact will last for years, even decades, to come. Its multiple benefits include better maternal attachment behavior, reduced maternal anxiety, enhanced child cognitive development, and optimal mother-child reciprocity (attunement).



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SIX KEYS TO BUILDING BONDS OF ATTACHMENT

4

Exclusive Holding for 3 Months

As happy as adoption is for the new adoptive family, it is important to remember that the sudden separation from the birth mother, whether she was safe or not, is a trauma for your baby. It is important to give your baby time to build the bonds of attachment with you, their forever mom and dad. For this reason, we recommend that only the adoptive mom or dad hold the baby during the fourth trimester (the first 3 months home).

5

Attachment Environment Feeding

Because hormones play a strong role in attachment, we recommend adoptive breast feeding. Many do not realize that breast feeding without birthing is possible, but it is. Contact us at info@unplowedground.org for resources to help you get started. If you choose not to breast feed, it is imperative that only mom or dad feed the baby during the fourth trimester, and always while holding in arms. Never prop bottles!

6

Infant Massage

Healthy, gentle touch is powerful medicine for babies who have come from trauma. They tend to have higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Daily infant massage can help bring calm and relaxation to the body and brain of a newly adopted baby. Use soft, gentle strokes, massaging your baby's legs, feet, arms, and hands, using a baby lotion or oil, talking softly or singing a lullaby.

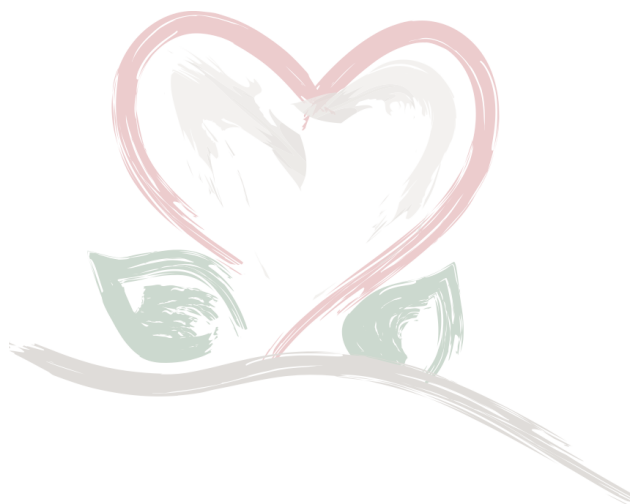
"For you created my
inmost being; you knit me
together in my mother's
womb. I praise you
because I am fearfully
and wonderfully made..."

PSALM 139:13-14



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**HAVE QUESTIONS OR
NEED MORE SUPPORT?
WE ARE HERE FOR YOU.**



**Coaching Consults/Q&A
with Lee Anne Cooper**

schedule online at unplowedground.org/baby

**Adoptive Breastfeeding
Consults/Q&A**

contact us at info@unplowedground.org



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