

PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

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12_Digital media bothers babies

Cell phones and televisions have no place when breastfeeding, caring for and being in contact with the baby.

First of all it should be noted: If infants/children can build up a good and secure bond with their parents, they not only develop a good, sustainable relationship with their parents. Secure attachment influences their happiness in life, their physical and mental health, their ability to love and relate to others as well as the development of their self-esteem.

In order to form a secure bond, it is necessary for the parents to relate to the baby/child in a certain way:

You need to give the child emotional security when it is distressed, which it shows by restlessness or crying. You should be aware of the child's needs and feelings and respond sensitively to them. It is also important that the newborn's rest periods are respected and that the parents are present not only externally but also internally when in contact with the baby.

Unfortunately, digital media are increasingly leading to a lack of contact and take the parents' inner presence away from the child. "Infants react with irritation when their caregiver is not emotionally present and their thoughts are constantly elsewhere. They respond to such a lack of emotional availability on the part of their parents with stress, anxiety, and increased waking hours. "A flickering screen draws mothers in and makes it difficult to engage more deeply with the baby's messages and signals", writes Thomas Harms, psychologist and parent-baby therapist. Television and digital media definitely do not belong in the crib or bedroom.

“The baby is confused and insecure when it can no longer feel connection to the mother. Mere physical contact is not enough. On the contrary, the child is all the more disoriented because it is receiving two contradictory messages at the same time. On the one hand, through physical contact, it learns that its mother is close. On the other hand, if the mother watches TV while breastfeeding or is in contact with someone else on the mobile phone, her baby feels separated from her. “The decisive factor is how the mother can get in touch with herself before breastfeeding or feeding and how she can calm down inside”, agrees Klaus Käppeli, psychologist specialising in psychotherapy.

Increased media consumption often means adults can no longer properly perceive the subtle signals of the baby or child. This leaves the child lonely because its parents no longer absorb its non-verbal messages. This can lead to disturbances in a secure attachment relationship and thus severely impair the child's healthy development.

“The baby needs communication and feedback to learn to understand and grow. All it needs is someone who notices it and is ready for the offered dialogue with it. “If the child cannot evoke a reaction from the mother or receives false feedback to its crying over a long period of time, it will encapsulate itself in order to survive,” writes Silija Wendelstadt, body psychotherapist.

The crucial question is why are mothers and fathers so often no longer able to fully engage with their children?

Paula Diedrichs from the Cry Baby Outpatient Clinic in Berlin says: "When women need to watch TV to fall asleep or want to be available all the time, that means for me as a therapist: they feel lonely and need contact." After the birth, mothers need special attention and help, as well as rest and relaxation. This is a nod to all fathers: Your partner now needs sensitive, emotional and practical support. It is best to discuss before the birth how to best care for the mother.

Text: Astrid Egger
www.familie.it

Source: “Digitale Medien als Spielverderber für Babys. Beziehung als tragfähiger Boden für die Zukunft“ (Digital Media as Spoilsport for Babies. Relationship as a Sustainable Basis for the Future”) Verein Spielraum-Lebensraum Grabs