



Welcome



Baby



utah county health department
"creating healthy communities"



United Way of Utah County

February 2011 A Newsletter for "Welcome Baby" and "Parents as Teachers" Families



Infant/Parent Relationship

February is a month where love is in the air. Regardless of our age, every single person deserves the chance to be loved. Especially our little ones. Our relationships with our infants is one that needs to be cultivated and nurtured from day one.

The most important way to nurture your relationship with your infant is through bonding. "The quality of the attachment bond varies. A secure bond provides your baby with an optimal foundation for life: eagerness to learn, healthy self-awareness, trust and consideration for others. An *insecure* attachment relationship, one that fails to meet an infant's need for safety and understanding, leads to confusion about oneself and difficulties in learning and relating to others" (Kemp, 2009).

Most think that only the mother can bond with her newborn. But there are ways where both parents can be involved in the bonding process:

- participating together in labor and delivery
- feeding (breast or bottle); sometimes dad forms a special bond with baby when handling a middle-of-the-night feeding and diaper change
- reading or singing to baby
- sharing a bath with baby
- mirroring baby's movements
- mimicking baby's cooing and other vocalizations — the first efforts at communication
- using a front baby carrier during routine activities
- letting baby feel the different textures of dad's face (Hirsch, 2008).

As both parents are involved with their baby, and any child at every age, that child will grow up with confidence, knowledge that they are loved, and have a wonderful relationship with their

parents. This will be a great benefit when that cute, little baby is a teenager!!

References:

Kemp, G., Saisan, J., Smith, M., & Segal, J. (2009). *Bonding With Your Baby: Parenting Advice for Developing a Secure Attachment Bond*. Retrieved February 7, 2011, from http://helpguide.org/mental/parenting_attachment.htm

Hirsch, L. (2008, February). *Bonding With Your Baby*. Retrieved February 7, 2011, from http://kidshealth.org/parent/pregnancy_newborn/communicating/bonding.html#

Spousal Relationship

It's 8 a.m., and I'm caught up in the get-the-kids-to-school shuffle: shoes, breakfast, knapsacks, and no, you can't bring the vacuum cleaner for show-and-tell. Suddenly, I catch my husband giving me a funny look. "What?" I say, wondering if I have toothpaste on my cheek. "Do you know what today is?" Dave says with a wistful smile.

Um. Wait. Oops. Today is our ninth wedding anniversary. I knew it was coming up, but kid stuff had taken over my brain — signing up for swimming lessons, planning my daughter's 5th birthday party (must get blue-frosted cupcakes!), finding a speech therapist for my 7-year-old son. I'd been so consumed with them, I'd forgotten about us.

Like other couples we know, we've fallen into a pattern: Our kids have become our life. Dave and I go out to dinner and spend a good chunk of it talking about them. We center our weekends around their activities. And — dare I admit it? — they often sleep in our bed.

My husband and I are still very much in love. He's the greatest guy I know. Yet I miss him. I really miss him. So I set out to find ways of reconnecting — short of asking Octomom to adopt the kids.

"These days, many parents seem to be married to their children instead of their spouses," says David Code, an Episcopal minister, family coach, and author of *To Raise Happy Kids, Put Your Marriage First*. "This creates stressed-out parents who feel disconnected from each other and demanding, entitled kids who act out. Some might become overly dependent on parents as a result of all the attention."

As sex therapist Laura Berman, Ph.D., puts it in her couples' guide, *The Book of Love*, "No matter how sacrilegious it sounds...you need to put your relationship before your children. A strong relationship provides security for your children and demonstrates how a loving, respectful partnership should be. What could be more important?"

It doesn't help that wives tend to take on more of the household

chores. "When women feel overwhelmed or resent that their husbands aren't doing their share, a desire for sexual intimacy can go out the window," notes Joy Davidson, Ph.D., a New York City sex therapist.

So how can two overworked, overtired, overeverythinged parents realistically stay connected and dodge these problems?

1. Start small. "Every now and then on a Saturday night, my husband and I have our own little party," says Diana Tynan, 33, a mom with kids ages 3 and 2 in Maplewood, NJ. "We watch movies, drink beer, play Springsteen albums, stay up too late. It takes off the pressure of parenthood. Suddenly, it's just us again."

2. Have kid-free conversations. "When I'm out with my husband, our rule is, we don't discuss the kids; we're all about us," says Hilda Hutcherson, M.D., a mom of four and an ob-gyn in New York City who regularly dispenses that advice to patients. Code gives this suggestion: "At the end of your day, share a highlight and a lowlight, ideally not involving the kids — one specific thing that made you really happy during the day, and one specific thing that annoyed you. It helps you instantly connect, and sparks longer conversations."

3. Stay in touch during the day. Quickies are fine; Dr. Hutcherson and her husband text-message to say hi and share discoveries, like a new movie they've read about and want to see on their next night out.

4. Try new things together. Last year, Julia Langley, 44, a Bethesda, MD, mom with two kids ages 12 and 14, signed up for the Susan G. Komen 3-Day for the Cure, a walk to raise awareness about breast cancer. "I trained on weekends, and asked my husband to join me. " ...The walks gave us concentrated time together without the pressure of making scintillating conversation. If we had that, great. If not, we'd fall into a rhythm of walking that brought us close without words. We still keep up those walks."

5. Bring on the PDA.

Nobody's suggesting you make out in front of the kids, but being affectionate keeps you connected and shows the children an important part of your marriage. "You're modeling what a good relationship is like — helpful for your children down the road," says Braun.

6. Make pleasure a priority. 'Any kind of intimacy is important', notes Dr. Hutcherson: "I tell patients to hold hands or spoon when they fall asleep. The pleasure chemicals released from skin-to-skin contact bond you."

7. Don't be a martyr. Getting your husband to do his fair share around the house means you'll be less zonked...[and] less resentful... "Don't ask your husband to 'help' you," says Davidson, "because that implies housework and child rearing are *your* job and he's just pitching in. It's far better to say, 'We need to share tasks.'" I'm happy to report that these ideas are doable. I've put a bunch of them into practice.

When Dave and I are working, we e-mail each other little notes to say "I (heart) you" or to share funny stuff (pictures from awkwardfamilyphotos.com always make us laugh). We've been cooking Sunday brunch together while the kids play on the computer, and every night, we talk about the day's highs and lows. When we go out to dinner, we discuss the kids during the car ride there, and that's it. Oh, and said kids now sleep in their own rooms, on blow-up beds (Dave's genius idea; they think they're camping out). And we make it a point to turn in a little earlier.

Since we've been increasingly focusing on each other, the kids have been doing more things on their own; removing the spotlight has made them less clingy. As for Dave, I feel closer to him than I have in years. The anniversary of the day we met is coming up — and I'll remember it.

Taken in part from:

Seidman, Ellen. *7 Ways to Put Your Marriage First*. Retrieved February 12, 2011, from <http://lifestyle.msn.com/relationships/article.aspx?cp-documentid=24375126>

