

June 2016

## First Connections

### Infant Massage and More



#### Welcome!

Summer has arrived and with it come weddings, births, graduations and vacations! I wish you a safe journey if you are traveling and a lovely "staycation" if you remain at home. And remember, at home or on vacation, babies love massage! Cherish time with family and friends. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) offers a free "[Parents Guide to Playing it Safe with Cars and Kids.](#)" It is an informative and helpful reminder for parents. We welcome your ideas for topics you would like

#### Infant Massage Classes Coming to a Babies R Us Near You



Infant Massage USA Certified Educators were invited to present at the Babies R Us National Registry event on June 11, 2016. This event occurred at 400 locations across the United States. Educators provided information on the

to explore in the Parent Newsletter.  
Please feel free to [email](#) me your suggestions.  
Warmest wishes,  
Lou Ann Damsma, CEIM



benefits of infant massage. Babies R Us would like our educators to continue offering these presentations on an ongoing basis. You can call or log onto the [Babies R Us website](#) for upcoming presentations and classes in your area.



## Your Baby's Brain

*The wise remain aware  
of the spirituality of life.  
Every mother has felt  
the stillness and the stir  
of Eternal Consciousness  
in her womb. Remember that.  
Bring that mysterious, silent moment  
into the clamoring present.*

—Vimala McClure

from *The Tao of Motherhood*

The development of an unborn baby's brain is fascinating and it helps us understand the amazing benefits of massaging your baby. Knowing how your infant's brain is handling all of the new things surrounding him enables you to approach him with both knowledge and compassion. Doctors Eileen and Tom Paris contend that part of creating a healthy relationship with our children is owning our feelings and expressing them as our own. They say, "For example, telling a startled newborn, with kindness, 'I see you were startled when Mommy and Daddy yelled and had a fight. Grownups get angry sometimes, especially when we are tired. You're okay, we love you,' mitigates the effect of the fighting." You may think, 'How is a newborn going to understand that?.' They do!

Most of our communication is in the tone of our voice, our body language, and our intention. These are communicated very clearly to your baby. Even though it is true that adult fighting stresses children (even in utero), never feeling angry is an unreasonable expectation for either ourselves or our children. We can notice when we feel angry, own those feelings, and try to talk them out, reassuring the little one that everything is okay.

"The most complex information-processing device ever constructed is on its way," says John Medina, author of *Brain Rules for Baby*. He goes on to say, "During the attachment process, a baby's brain intensely monitors the caregiving it receives. It is essentially asking such things as "Am I being touched? Am I being fed? Am I safe?" If the baby's requirements are being fulfilled, the brain develops one way; if not, genetic instructions trigger it to develop in another way. It may be a bit disconcerting to realize, but infants have their parents' behaviors in their sights virtually from the moment they come into this world. It is in their evolutionary best interests to do so, of course, which is another way of saying that they can't help it. Babies have nowhere else to turn."

In her book, *Philosophical Baby*, Alison Gopnick says, "In adults, vivid awareness accompanies attention, and attention is linked to brain plasticity (the quality of being easily shaped or molded). Attention literally allows us to change our minds and brains. If we made the backwards inference that brain plasticity implies attention, which implies vivid awareness, it would seem that babies are more conscious than we are. They are vividly aware all the time." She concludes that infant awareness is steeped in "a kind of exaltation and a particular kind of happiness."

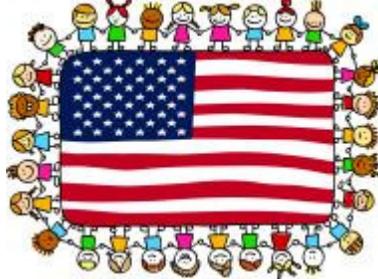
Once I saw a video of a baby, probably 5 months old, sitting on a couch with her father on the floor in front of her. He began tearing pieces of paper. She giggled, and then laughed and laughed and laughed, so hard for so long I could hardly believe it. She was the perfect example of this "exaltation and a particular kind of happiness." Alan Schore, in *The Neurobiology of Child Brain Development*, says, "The brain does not continue to grow and grow. It organizes, then it disorganizes then it re-organizes. This disorganization of the brain and the massive death of billions of cells and synapses is part of how the brain is growing." He goes on to say, "Positive affects (meaning happy faces) are key to early development. They're key to growth, they're also key to not only positive psychological states but to physical health. Joy has something to do with the quality of life."

Excessive stress responses also pump him up to be less trusting in general, less able to believe that life is on his side. This wiring of joy and intimacy happens not only in the infant but in the mother as well, a significant but often overlooked factor. "The infant and mother's psychobiological systems are co-regulating each other," says Alan Schore in an interview, "Joy is the key to attachment. By joining in the child's joy in the first years of life, mother and baby are both "interactively co-regulating very high levels of positive emotion."

I have written an entirely new edition of *Infant Massage: a Handbook for Loving Parents*, which will be released by Random House in February, 2017. The present chapters have been revised, updated, and expanded. There are five new chapters, including a chapter on your baby's brain. This new book will introduce the art of infant massage to new generations of parents.

To locate an Infant Massage class near you, click [here](#).

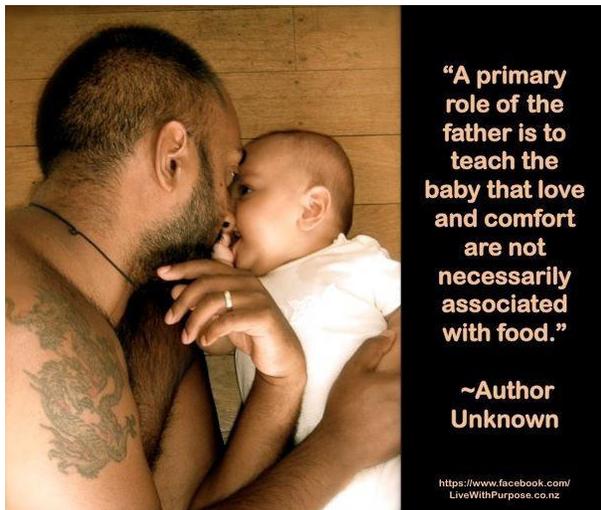
### Celebrate Independence Day Safely



The mission of Pathways.org is to "provide free tools to maximize all children's motor, sensory and communication development" They offer information on how to [safely celebrate the 4th of July](#) along with other summer safety information.

### *Product Recalls*

**The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission** provides up to date information on product recalls by categories. There is a tab for "Babies and Kids" to access recent products, clothing, toys, furniture, etc. that have safety related concerns. The site also provides seasonal safety tips and other helpful information for families. Click [here](#) to access this important information.



Vimala McClure, the author of *Infant Massage, A Handbook for Loving Parents* is the founder of the International Association of Infant Massage with headquarters in Sweden. Her work is the foundation for all of our trainings and classes.

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