

PRENATAL BONDING (BINDUNGSANALYSE BY RAFFAI)* - AN INTRODUCTION

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THE INCEPTION OF PRENATAL BONDING (BA)

PRENATAL BONDING (BA) had its origin in the early 1990s, when Jenö Raffai, Hungary did psychoanalytic basic research with young psychiatric in-patients. During his treatments he observed a special psychodynamic constellation, namely a lack of inner boundaries between the patients and their mothers in early childhood, creating confusion about reality. Jenö Raffai subsequently assumed that schizophrenia has its roots in gestation, if inner boundaries between mother and fetus are not well established. This creates a distortion of reality, so perceptions and the sense of self become confused. Raffai subsequently developed a preventive method which helped mothers set and experience inner boundaries between themselves and their unborn babies. The most important innovation to come out of the research was PRENATAL BONDING (BA). Raffai on his own has provided more than 1200 women with PRENATAL BONDING (BA) in Hungary and carefully documented the outcomes by observation. He found that the method has a profound effect on pregnancy and childbirth in general and on the development of the child's personality. Details are following later. Raffai noted that PRENATAL BONDING (BA) is not meant to be psychotherapy; it is intended primarily as a facilitating process, which helps pregnant women to have better contact with themselves and their unborn babies.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

PRENATAL BONDING (BA) starts normally at about the 20th week of pregnancy. The following is required: The pregnant woman lies on a comfortable couch in a relaxed position with the intention to focus on her inner perceptions. By centering on her awareness the facilitator helps the woman to come into contact with more and more images, as we know it from our dreams. Images are seen to be symbolizations of words, body feelings and emotions. Gradually the images become more frequent, creating a flow of information and communication between the mother and the unborn and this creates the "umbilical cord of both souls". Mothers find out how their babies are developing, what they are feeling and needing and whether things might be threatening or dangerous. It is much more impressive for mothers, as well as less invasive, dangerous and expensive to babies to gain information this way, as compared to ultrasound or medical tests. The powerful effect: PRENATAL BONDING (BA) enables a dialogue with the unborn. Depending on the starting point about 20 to 30 sessions are needed for the whole process.

AND HOW DOES MY PREGNANCY IMPROVE?

Raffai recommends that the pregnancy and the development of the baby have a better outcome if a differentiated inner separation between the pregnant woman and her own mother has taken place. The growth of the pregnant woman from the role of the "daughter of her mother" to the "mother of her baby" means a healthy separation that supports the competence of the expectant mother. Prior to birth a second process of separation between the pregnant woman and the unborn baby is important for a natural and easy birth. It is facilitated by a number of explicit steps. For example, the unborn is invited to say goodbye to the intrauterine world of his mother. Then the mother shows the baby the environment the parents will live in with the baby. Next, the mother and baby speak separately about their experiences during the pregnancy. The story the mother tells is partly or sometimes completely different than the story the baby tells. This makes it clear that the baby has its own mind, perceptions, and experiences, and makes its own decisions. As a last step giving

*In the following the abbreviation: PRENATAL BONDING (BA) is used equivalently to the term PRENATAL BONDING (BINDUNGSANALYSE BY RAFFAI)

birth itself is simulated in a “final rehearsal” as mental training, and post-birth procedures are explained. Personal hindrances and anxieties can be realized and discussed before they can become obstacles during birth. This is very similar to the simulation of birth as advocated and taught by William Emerson. - About two weeks before the due date, PRENATAL BONDING (BA) ends. The delivery is activated by hormone releases of the baby.

EFFECTS ON THE BABY

Babies who are communicated with in PRENATAL BONDING (BA) feel themselves to be seen and heard at a deep level. This makes them feel respected as they are and for their unique personality and situation. In addition, the reflections of the baby's feelings and perceptions by the mother build a safe container for it to expand and express itself, so a profound self-esteem can grow. The development of the brain is stimulated and the interest and trust in the outside world are empowered.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FATHER

The important role the father has in the process of PRENATAL BONDING (BA) should also be emphasized. The research of PRENATAL BONDING (BA) has proven that the unborn is aware of the father and significant others as well. So the father also has the chance for an early bonding with the unborn. He is important to the unborn baby right from the beginning and his role is to provide a “social womb” for his pregnant wife. This means creating a safe space for the pregnancy, allowing the mother to encounter the extensive changes in her womb and body and widespread changes in her life. The father is encouraged to attend as many sessions as possible. In addition, he is invited to contact and communicate with the baby at home by singing lullabies, telling fairy tales, reading poetry and holding or touching the womb every day.

12 COMMON RESULTS OF PRENATAL BONDING (BA)

1. The mother's inner perceptions are well attuned to her pregnancy and the unborn. She has access to her own as well as to her baby's wisdom.
2. Her natural female capabilities are empowered by PRENATAL BONDING (BA) and create greater assertiveness and security during childbirth.
3. Mother and baby become a good team and experience less anxiety and pain.
4. There is less effort in giving birth and less complications.
5. The need for obstetrical interventions goes down significantly.
6. Caesarean sections are decreased to about 6%, as compared to the norm of 30% and more. Thus birth is safer and less costly.
7. On 1200 pregnancies treated by Raffai premature birth rates were less than 0,2 percent as compared to an average of more than 8%.
8. Birth trauma is of low degree as indicated by natural, round shaped heads and little crying after birth (mostly less than 20 minutes per day).
9. The babies are curious about the world, emotionally stable, socially mature and have complete access to their personal potential.
10. There is less sleeping during daytime, but longer and deeper sleep at night, with few awakenings, so parents suffer less from sleep disorders.
11. Babies and children are easy to communicate with, and dealing with them becomes “completely intuitive”. Babies have a lot of self-awareness and self-esteem. They are patient and understanding of their parent's intentions and needs, as well as their own.
12. Postpartum depression is expected to become a thing of the past (without PRENATAL BONDING (BA) about 15% of mothers experience clinical depression for several month and 5% exhibit first-time PTSD after birth).