



Playful Wisdom

A Father's Adventure

Michael Mendizza

What I learned from
Carly our first two years

featuring

Bev Bos
and

Joseph Chilton Pearce

foreword by

Dr. Gabor Maté

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Gabor Maté M.D.

Dedicated to
Bev Bos and Joseph Chilton Pearce
For their passion, wisdom and insight.

Review Edition

Playful Wisdom, A Father's Adventure;
What I Learned From Carly Our First Two Years
By Michael Mendizza

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Bev Bos and Joseph Chilton Pearce quotes are drawn from personal interviews with Michael Mendizza.

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Playful Wisdom

A Father's Adventure

What I Learned From Carly
Our First Two Years



When the child comes into the world the reception of that child determines how they respond to that world. This is hormonal. This is cellular. It's biological. It doesn't have anything to do with the child's feeling good or self-esteem. The emotional state of the mother profoundly affects the emotional state of the child. It's transmitted hormonally. If a mother knew this, if a father knew this, if the nation knew the full impact of that, then the protection and support of a mother to create the most powerful nurturing ambient in order that there might be no anxiety, no fear, we might then have a completely different world from that one simple little action.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Foreword

Who amongst us, having read Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer" as a child, not cherished the fantasy of being a live, hidden attendee at our own funeral service, witnessing the grief and appreciation, hearing the accolades and fond recollections of those gathered to honor our memory? A more poignant fantasy comes to many of us in middle age or beyond, is to have our children small again, to parent them with awareness. We picture ourselves without the emotional baggage that burdened our younger selves and interfered between what our hearts desired for our offspring and who we were able to be for them. "If only we knew then what we know now," we may sigh, with more than a tinge of regret.

Michael Mendizza is given just that opportunity. Finding himself newly a father at age 65, he does no sighing in this book, but he does set out to be a present-in-the-moment parent to Carly Elizabeth. He holds in his heart and mind what life experience, the transformation of his consciousness, and the teaching of intellectually and spiritually advanced mentors have directly imparted to him. Among these latter are Jiddu Krrishnamurti, a Tibetan monk close to the Dalai Lama, and—foremost—the visionary polymath, child advocate and author Joseph Chilton Pierce. The spirit of JCP is present in every page of this inspired volume. His words accompany Michael's own writing throughout, along with those of Bev Bos, another contemporary icon in the field of early childhood development. Mendizza also studies scientists such as Candace Pert, child developmental luminaries such as Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget, pioneering attachment researchers such as John Bowlby and many others. In short, to his second-chance parenting he brings the highest teachings of heart and mind, infused with his own loving intention. All of which prepare him to receive the pedagogy of his greatest instructor of all, the infant Carly Elizabeth. And the child teaches him not only about herself, but also about himself and how to be in life.

I hope, along with Michael, that this book will invite many other fathers to permit themselves similar instruction. "Just as nature demands that women change when they become mothers, males must change when they become fathers," Mendizza writes. "Personal, dare I say selfish wants and needs give way to something far greater. Becoming a father means stepping up to the plate and demonstrating, moment by moment, the very best qualities and capacities we have, not for personal gain or fame, rather because the future of the world depends on it."



The longer I do this the closer I am to tears when I watch children. I can feel that rush. I can feel my eyes well up, observing that freshness, the aliveness, the spirit of children. And the more I'm with children, the more I travel the world, the more I see environments for children, environments that adults have established, the more frightened I become about the light going out in children's eyes because we haven't, as adults, kept that spirit of the child going in the places they are every day, in the places they are cared for.

Bev Bos

“The child is the father of the man,” wrote poet Wordsworth, implying that the template of personality that develops early in life largely determines the beings that, as adults, we become. But what if child lacks a father who helps shape that template in salutary, loving ways?

We now know that early experiences largely determine our worldview, sense of ourselves, capacity for relationships, self-concept, mental-emotional balance and, indeed, the very neurobiology of our brains. As a seminal article in the journal *Pediatrics* pointed out, “The interaction of genes and experiences literally shapes the circuitry of the developing brain, and is critically influenced by the mutual responsiveness of adult-child relationships, particularly in the early childhood years.”

In that mutual responsiveness is grounded the future of our children, and therefore that of humankind. We see all too well what the results are when material anxiety, conflict, inequality, loss of community, a driven techno-based lifestyle and overwhelming stress on parents inform the child-rearing environment—conditions under which that responsiveness is exceedingly difficult to provide.

For all too many children the nurturing, life-enhancing parent-child interactions for which evolutionary eons have prepared us—and on which healthy human development depends—are less and less available. Hence the rise in childhood diagnoses from ADHD to depression to various “conduct disorders,” and hence the rise in parental despair. And here, too, in childhood emotional loss are to be found important contributing sources of many ailments that beset mind and body, from physical illnesses to, say, addiction.

Having forgotten what our “primitive” ancestors and our rapidly vanishing tribal contemporaries have implicitly known, we must now be reminded. That is one purpose of Michael Mendizza’s journal. He teaches how, from conception onwards, the child is in interaction with her emotional milieu and how the very circumstances of her birth influence the person she is to be. Carly Elizabeth is born at home, under the care of a midwife, blessedly saved from the unnecessary and harmful medical interventions such as I, as a physician trained in the typical Western model, used to impose on my patients—now to my regret.



Such practices still predominate in the birthing field, in most cases causing entirely unneeded disturbances in infants' first experiences outside the womb and beyond. We live in a culture that, beginning from birth, fosters disconnection, and emotional/sensory deprivation and anxiety.

The playful wisdom Michael Mendizza teaches would go far to restoring what our culture has lost in our headlong pursuit of progress. No need here to anticipate further the wealth of information Michael presents in the following pages—verified information, mostly uncontroversial and yet largely unknown to most parents, medical people and educators. The material speaks for itself.

Mendizza succinctly articulates what age-old tradition and modern developmental science alike have affirmed: it is the attachment relationship with the nurturing environment in the early years that best predicts and determines our adult course.

As Mendizza writes, “The role a father plays during this period is both essential and critical. If we get the beginning right the entire flight opens and continually expands as nature designed. If not, there is trouble at every turn, trouble for everyone.”

The most poignant passages in the book reflect Michael's willingness to be transformed by his interactions with his daughter, by the life wisdom the child naturally embodies when invited to be herself in the presence of a loving adult who knows when to guide and when to be guided. “As I witness and strive to nurture Carly's next self-discovery, she is doing the same for me, she at her stage of unfoldment and me at mine,” he writes. “We are each providing for the other the precise catalyst, overflowing with care and boundless affection, needed for the other's continuing unfoldment.”

One finishes *Playful Wisdom* with gratitude for Michael's capacity to learn and to transmit his knowledge. And thank you, Carly Elizabeth.

Gabor Maté M.D.

Co-author, *Hold On to Your Kids:
Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers*

www.drgabormate.com

Introduction

Becoming a father (again) at 65

The beginning defines the ending. If we get the beginning right each age and stage of our child's development continually opens and expands as nature designed. If not, there is trouble at every turn, trouble for everyone.

I remember reading that a child's basic nature is etched by age five or six. Some speculate that we are mostly cooked by age three. I know for certain that our basic nature - are we safe, do we trust, do we feel our feelings and needs are appreciated and respected, is the world scary or a wonderland, are we kind or not - is formed while most fathers are rather distant, certainly by a child's first or second year. We know that this basic nature is forming before birth. The role a father plays in shaping his child's future, and that future is the future of humanity, is both essential and critical.

Playful Wisdom is an intimate journal of an intimate journey that transforms everyone who takes it. The word that best describes the adventure you are about to join is 'celebration' for the deep, profound and positive changes that will happen all along the way, if you know how to look, listen and touch. We call this journey 'being a father.'

Being a parent is the most important and difficult challenge we will ever face. It demands the highest qualities and capacities we can express every day, every minute, because someone is watching and becoming what they see and experience. A father's first challenge is to do no harm. The second is to anticipate and meet every moment of every day in a way that opens, uplifts and expands our child's limitless potentials. Doing no harm means meeting the challenges we face in ways that model the very best qualities that humanity has to offer, with playful care, a soft touch and a full heart. If this is what very young children experience – this is what they will become. Documenting my journey began with feelings and experiences during the pregnancy and home birth of Carly Elizabeth now two years young and growing.

It has been said that art isn't the object, a sculpture or a painting. Art is the way experiencing a creative expression impacts one's inner perceptions, how the object or experience changes the way we see the world and our place in it.



Michael Mendizza



Fathers can't replace the mother, they just don't have the right genes for that. The job of the father primarily, in nature's agenda, is to protect and support the mother so she might not be subjected to anxiety, fear, want and neglect, because again, the environment of the child is the mother. The emotional state of the mother influences every stage of development. Later the father becomes critical in establishing the bridge from the family nest to the environment or the world. The father is a bridge to the larger world beyond the family environment itself.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Carly, as every child is and that is the point, is the most miraculous creative expression anyone will ever experience. Experience is a wonderful teacher. More precisely, experience is the only teacher. I knew Carly Elizabeth would awaken startling and rich insights as each of my children have done. I also knew that memory is foggy and dull. One of my mentors would often say; *don't miss the moment*.

If there is one reason to take the journey this journal invites – that is the reason, so we don't miss the most important challenge of our life or the most explosive period of growth and development of our child's life. This is especially true for parents and people who care for children. My mantra is; every moment matters. Why? Because the explosive growth and changes that occur during the critical early years come so fast and are so profound that most fathers are dazed by the blast. If we blink it is over and that moment will never repeat itself again. *Playful Wisdom* is a meditation, a precious reminder to be touched deeply, with amazement and wonder, every day, to be innocent once again, this time hopefully with wisdom as our wings.

Forty years ago Eric, my first son, was born in July 1977. Nine years later, June 1986, my second son John-Michael was born at home. It was around 1987 that I discovered Joseph Chilton Pearce, author of *Magical Child* and other powerful and insightful works. A new organization focusing on birth psychology had just formed. Earlier, in the late 1970's, I discovered J. Krishnamurti. Together these events carved the course my life. Much of it would focus on the parent-child relationship. In 1993 I founded Touch the Future, a leaning center to help parents discover what Pearce called the 'model imperative'. Of a child's vast open-ended potential, he or she will develop only those skills and capacities that are modeled. Child development is model dependent. Ideally then, the focus and nurturing we call early childhood development begins with optimizing the model-environment. We are that environment. The first and ever-present challenge is your continued development and mine.

Do this well and optimum child development unfolds spontaneously, without force, praise, punishments or rewards. In 2003 Joseph Chilton Pearce and I wrote *Magical Parent – Magical Child* to develop this theme. Between my interests in Krishnamurti, birth psychology, what I call *optimum learning relationships* between parent and child, alternatives

People speak of having an intelligent animal. Animals have such intelligence for their own well-being. Not to read and write like we do or any of that, but to tend their own young and to preserve their own species as best they can, to move for their own well-being. We have the very same intelligence in us, an intelligence that simply moves for our well-being and for the well-being of our species. This is precisely the intelligence that is activated in women on contact with their infants at birth, what we call bonding. Intelligence isn't conceptual. It isn't a learned process. It is not verbal. Intelligence is a capacity to act and respond for well-being which unfolds in us spontaneously, if it's allowed and given the right stimulus. Intelligence is simply a life force, a process that moves to embrace and open up for the well-being of all involved. Whereas intellect is a very highly select form of pure-brain operation, an analytical, logical process of taking things apart and manipulating. Intellect always wants to predict and control, to seize control in every way. This intellect is vital and necessary when coupled with life-serving intelligence that would never do anything against the well-being of self and species. Nature's agenda is for intellect and intelligence to come into a proper balance, a proper dynamic, and then it would all work beautifully. But we have an intellect cut off from true intelligence. We're training brilliant intellects to think they must predict and control intelligence itself, and there we have it. Nowhere is this split seen more dramatically than in the demonic hospital scene and its interfering this past century with the natural intelligence of women. And we have bred an entirely different generation of women as a result and people are not willing to look at that. And the males that resulted from this are, as we know, at a rage factor which is threatening our very destruction.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

in education and the intelligence of play I have recorded several hundred interviews with leaders in all these fields. I now stand with this collective experience on the threshold of a new and challenging chapter in my life, learning and growing every day right along with Carly Elizabeth.

As with my relationship with my wife Z, little about our birth experience would be called normal. Foremost was Z's insistence. Carly is defiantly a wanted baby. Being my second family, having parented two adult boys, my priority was securing the quality of Z's and my relationship. After all, that is the foundation. It took a long time for our relationship to be stable enough to consider 'babies,' she being twenty-two years younger, born in Czechoslovakia, at that time behind the iron curtain and I, born and raised in Southern California, worlds apart in so many ways.

Pregnancy, birth and the 24/7 demands of caring for a new human being creates unprecedented stresses and strains on the mother-father bond. Raising a child is a tall mountain to climb. The rope you use, which in this case is each other, needs to be well cared for and strong. Babies are planted in the soil of that mother-father bond. If you want a healthy plant to grow, you prepare and nurture the soil it will be planted in.

This focus and primacy of the mother-father bond is easily forgotten. A new mother is a changed being. She is no longer that cute, seductive playmate or business partner. Her attention, as never before, is with this new miracle bursting inside. A father's experience is distant, second hand by comparison. Our role is active support. It is our precious responsibility to allow our partner to sink deeply and safely into this experience, to protect her, allow and empower her to give herself as completely as possible to the natural miracle we are sharing. As the saying goes, 'women and children first.'

It takes a strong man to do this; not outward strength, rather inner strength. Just as nature demands that women change when they become mothers, males must change when they become fathers. Personal, dare I say selfish wants and needs give way to something far greater. Becoming a father means stepping up to the plate and demonstrating, moment by moment, the very best qualities and capacities we have, not for personal gain or fame, rather because the future of the world depends on it. Like a tree the care and steady model we invest at the beginning of a child's life

Whittlestone, at the University in Australia, claimed years ago that the mother's heartbeat was the most profound influence on the developing infant from the moment of conception. The field generated by the mother's heart literally imprints the child on a cellular level and later the entire neural system imprints to the mother's heartbeat. Kennell and Klaus, the British National Childbirth Trust, The Swedish Pediatrics Institute, groups in Australia, all concur that the most critical issue immediately after birth is skin to skin contact between the mother and infant. We find throughout human history that the mother has placed the infant to the left breast immediately after birth with the umbilical cord intact. Thirty percent of the child's blood and oxygen supply remains in the placenta for quite a long time after birth. When the umbilical cord stops pulsing then it is safe to cut - not before.

Joseph Chilton Pearce



Carly Elizabeth at 6 weeks

will later feed, shade and protect future generations we will never see. But that future is right here, right now and is being shaped by the care and attention we give today.

Our failure to give fully and completely at the beginning cycles back to cause us and therefore the world untold stress, conflict and heartache in the future. It is therefore in our selfish best interest to suspend our habits and addictions and relish in the new discoveries this life changing experience holds. Doing so is like depositing money in the emotional bank of humanity.

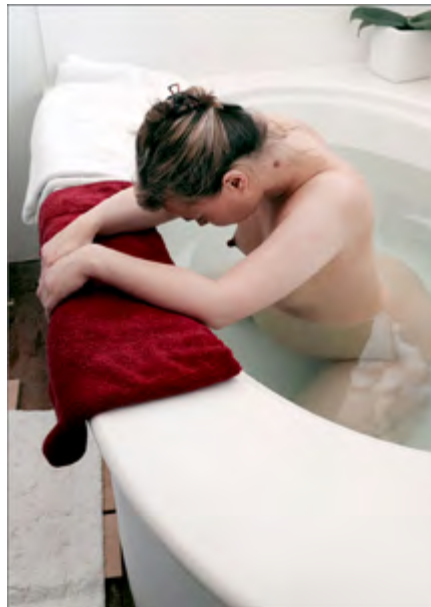
Babies need mothers and mothers can't mother without the support of their partners and their community, the extended family, something our industrial-medical-technocratic society has forgotten. Failure to recognize and support women to be available, attentive and stress free mothers places children at risk. High risk children often grow into high risk, narcissistic, selfish, addictive and aggressive adults. This is particularly true for boys. This inner psyche of the high risk child-adult is mirrored in the society with its corruption, violence and environmental callousness. And this in turn feeds back further impairing the mother-infant bond, the biological foundation upon which the entire human experience stands. Round and round it goes. The key, of course, is to break the cycle at the very beginning by honoring the sanctity of the first bond, that between mother and father, and upon this creating a sanctuary for the entire human species, one child at a time. That is really what we are doing as parents - holding the future of humanity in our hands.

Your children are not your children.
 They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
 They come through you but not from you,
 And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.
 You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
 For they have their own thoughts.
 You may house their bodies but not their souls,
 For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit,
 not even in your dreams.
 You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
 For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

The Prophet, Kahlil Gibran

We act out of the mammalian brain at birth. Not the intellect. Anything that activates the intellect: being watched, words, anxiety about past and future, interferes with the process. When they get ready to deliver all mammals seek the quietest, safest, most private dark spot. Anything that interferes is a signal that nature fires in to stop the birth process and wait for the coast to clear. The mother may even change her birthing place. If that place is not safe she will go somewhere else. This is inherent within our whole system. And with our technological approach to birth of course the coast never clears and then we have to do all sorts of things intellectually to get the system going. The trouble is that every time we have intellectually interfered with a fifteen-million-year process, that intellectual interference has been paid for with a bitter price. And intellect never learns. We can make money off of it, so immediately anything goes.

Joseph Chilton Pearce



Birth in the Bath

You would think that being connected to the birth community for over twenty-five years, finding a midwife would be a snap. Only the best would do. We kept calling. They did not travel past Santa Barbara. Weeks went by. We passed the early cut-off. By this time no birth center or obstetrician would touch us. Finally, we found a Santa Barbara midwife, sixty-five, who had been in the field for thirty years. She knew all the great teachers. Many I had interviewed. It was a match.

Everything was looking fine—except Z's blood pressure. She is quiet and this of course registers in one's BP reading. When people are looking, and they look a lot during pregnancy, blood pressure goes up. This became a concern. Marina, the midwife, was bound by specific limits. If the blood pressure was too high, she could not assist. We would be forced to go to a hospital and would get whoever was on duty. For three or four weeks there were twice-daily readings plus water retention, which is so common.

The due date was July 25. It came and went. Not a hint of activity. The longer the pregnancy lasts, the bigger "Baby Mendizza" would get and the more critical the BP becomes. Sooner is definitely better. Four days later, on July 29, strong and steady contractions began at 3 am, a minute in duration and one or two minutes apart, which is unusual. Z turned on the lights and announced the news at 3:05 am like a fire alarm—except there was no place to go.

Z spent most of the intense first hours in the tub and was fully dilated, that is 10 centimeters, when Marina arrived at 11 am. Z was doing great. The baby dropped and the second phase, the big push, began. I'm told that in hospitals two hours of pushing is about all they allow. OMG, the mother is exhausted, labor is not progressing, and the baby is in distress. Better do something, another emergency, painful and expensive. Midwives consider five hours of pushing about the limit. Five hours is a lot of heavy pushing.

At three hours of phase two, Z was tired and awash with hormones, the combination of which is kinda-dopey. "How much further does the baby have to go," she asked. "How much longer?"



If we look at the connection with the heart, we get into some very interesting research. A heart cell disconnected from the heart begins to fibrillate. Put two heart cells together on a slide and they both fibrillate. If you bring the two heart cells close enough, at a certain point of spatial proximity, they do not have to touch, the two heart cells communicate and immediately go back into synchronous rhythm. If you take the billions of cells that go together to make up a heart all functioning in absolute synchrony this field of communication extends well beyond the heart. I've talked about *The Intelligence of the Heart*. The field the heart produces informs the entire system moment by moment the social-emotional state of that heart. John and Beatrice Lacey did years of research into the heart, and drew the conclusions that there was a direct and intimate dialogue between the heart and the emotional-cognitive structures of the brain that handle all relationship. The brain is always informing the heart of its current experience in the world and the heart was always exhorting the brain to make an appropriate response to that world.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

It is fairly common for women to experience a lull at this point. In fact, some women fall asleep. Z needed a rest. The all-important contractions were still coming but weaker, lacking the oomph to kick the baby out. We tried different positions—each affects the bony pelvis, widening this way or that. Z pushed and the baby moved but just a little. When the contraction and pushing ended, the pelvis would push the baby back up, not down. The clock was ticking. Should we consider plan B, an hour's drive to emergency? Z shook her head, no. OK, another twenty minutes.

From various standing, leaning, squatting, and every variation we and the Pink Kit had to offer, we moved to the bed, Z lying on her side, resting and pushing but not the big push we needed. Z was tired, spaced out and frustrated. Concerned looks darted around the room. Thirty minutes had passed and I made a call to a physician we had seen and explained that Z was fully dilated, progress had stalled, and Z was getting tired (an all too common scenario). No, he could not help us if we went to the hospital, but he was encouraging. A little Pitocin and/or a vacuum pump would do the trick. "No problem," he said.

A hospital is, well, a hospital, governed by fear, where one must assume that everything that can go wrong will go wrong and be sure, for malpractice reasons, that everything that can be done is done, just in case, which means that more is routinely done than is medically required. The use of Pitocin is one example. A survey by a friend Robbie Davis-Floyd, PhD, a cultural anthropologist at the University of Texas, found that 81 percent of women in U.S. hospitals receive Pitocin either to induce or augment their labors. Z did not want to go to a hospital. "Keep trying," she said, and we did.

Z did not want to eat most of the day, turning up her nose when offered food. Now she agreed. The thirty to forty minutes lying down helped. Royal Jelly, a super-rich honey, also helped. Vitamin C and hydration did too. There is a direct link between the breast and uterus. Breast stimulation contracts the uterus. "If I must," I said. The midwife and her assistant suggested two herbal stimulants that also contract the uterus, like Pitocin but without the violent punch and side effects. Three doses over the next forty minutes plus, and most of all, Z's determination not to go to the hospital, and she was back in the race.



Since the dawn of time, women tended women at this most critical, crucial and vulnerable part of their life. During the past century or so male surgeons suddenly began to make in-roads. Before World War II thirty percent of women delivered in hospitals. Before World War I almost no women did, not in our country. After World War II ninety-seven percent of all women delivered in hospitals because the medical establishment outlawed midwifery in most places in the United States. It became illegal for woman to tend woman as they had down through the ages. Years ago a woman wrote a book describing how breaking birth patterns in black communities in South Africa broke the social cohesive patterns holding those societies together. Unravel social cohesiveness and you end up with chaos and violence at every turn. She made this observation a number of years ago and of course they paid no attention. At the root of this social chaos you will find intellectual interference of the mother's intelligence during and after the birth process.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Her contractions got stronger. Marina took Z's blood pressure—more encouraging news, 160/80. Wow, a miracle. We all got stronger and more committed. Z found that holding onto the bathroom sink, knees bent, seemed to help. After a little more than five hours of second-stage labor, the head began to crown. We were close. Z was even stronger, more determined. Once the baby's head begins to be exposed, all sorts of things “can” happen. The next few minutes are critical. Getting stuck now is bad news. Z moved to another position, one knee on the floor and the other up. The next contraction and Carly's head was out. But the cord was wrapped around once and a little hand was squeezed next to baby Carly's head, compressing the cord. The cord was barely pulsing, which meant oxygen to the brain was restricted. Standard medical protocol is to cut the cord and vacuum or use forceps.

The clock ticking, Z announced another contraction. I can't tell you how much focused energy was in the room. “OK,” I said, “let's get this baby out.” Z pushed—hard. Marina was able to push the tiny hand back, creating enough space to tug on the cord, enough to loop it over the baby's head, and she was almost free. Z kept on pushing, riding the contraction for all it was worth. She did not stop, giving 150 percent, and in a few seconds our baby girl slid into Marina's hands. She placed her lips over the baby's mouth and nose and blew. Carly gasped. Marina blew again and the baby's lungs were clear. Down through Z's legs into my waiting hands she came. Z scooted to the floor and in a single motion the baby rested on Mommy's tummy.

She did it! It was a moment as thrilling as any World Series overtime playoff. The next few minutes were filled with exhilaration, relief, and still some anxiety. Birth is critical for the baby. The next few minutes are critical for the mother. How much bleeding? Did the placenta detach? Are there strong enough contractions to deliver the placenta? Marina tied and I cut the umbilical cord. It was the least I could do. Z coughed and out came about half a cup of clotted blood, a good sign. Z and baby rested. After all that effort and the extra hormones, Z was in another dimension. Nearly an hour after the baby was born, the placenta was safely out. Home at last.



The model imperative goes in both directions. The infant awakens and activates whole blocks of intelligences in the mother that are mammalian, that she doesn't know she has that are inherited from our huge evolutionary past. And that mother will know exactly what to do for that infant at exactly the right time. The presence of the infant in-arms opens intuition which is the ability to perceive information not present to the sensory system. She receives information before it presents itself at the physical level and the mother who is bonded with her infant can do precisely that. Those infants will reach object constancy much sooner than infants denied this kind of contact and their patterns of development will be much smoother in the first four years of life.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

We had read hundreds of well-written pages, watched videos, I had interviewed many of the leaders in the field and still, nothing can quite prepare a woman for this—nothing. It is a ride, a process, sometimes very hard, and it has its risks. Why, knowing all this, did we choose, and when the going was tough, to stay home?

Neither Z nor I shun the gifts modern medicine offers. As my friend and mentor Joseph Chilton Pearce summed up, we end up intellectually/technically interfering with a delicate and miraculous process that nature has evolved over millions of years. Hospital practices, more often than not, interfere too soon, too much and by so doing routinely create many of the emergencies they proudly tout they save, justifying the necessity for everyone to do what they say at a hefty price. As a result there are so many cascading consequences. Over 30 percent of all births in the U.S. are C-sections, with rates as high as 50 percent in some countries. Women expect all the technology. Women expect to have the birth managed by others rather than managing their bodies as nature designed.

January 30, 2014: In today's peer-reviewed *Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health* (JMWH), a landmark study confirms that among low-risk women, planned home births result in low rates of interventions without an increase in adverse outcomes for mothers and babies.

This study, which examines nearly 17,000 courses of midwife-led care, is the largest analysis of planned home births in the U.S. ever published. The results of this study confirm the safety and overwhelmingly positive health benefits for low-risk mothers and babies who choose to birth at home with a midwife. At every step of the way, midwives are providing excellent care. This study enables families, providers and policymakers to have a transparent look at the risks and benefits of planned home birth as well as the health benefits of normal physiologic birth.

Of particular note is a cesarean rate of 5.2 percent, a remarkably low rate when compared to the U.S. national average of 31 percent for full-term pregnancies. When we consider the well-known health consequences of a cesarean—not to mention the exponentially higher costs—this study brings a fresh reminder of the benefits of midwife-led care outside our overburdened hospital system. Home-birth mothers had much lower rates of interventions in labor. While some interventions are necessary



A true childbirth activates an intelligence enfolded within the mother's brain that then empowers her to make the proper response to the child and then you don't have to go through any of these other systems. Then you're going to have a different child to deal with and then you're going to have a different mother to deal with. That is why I say that the single most important thing we can do, and I know this sounds strange, is change the birth practice. That's the great criteria. The reason I'm saying this is because hospital-technological birth has become the most destructive force on Earth. We are interfering intellectually, and essentially with male intellect, with the intelligence of the species, the natural intelligence of the system. Were we not doing that, we wouldn't have to educate mothers about the proper nurturing of children. Do you have to educate a mother cat to nurse her kittens? You cannot teach breastfeeding. The minute you get to the point where you need to teach it you've lost the game already. So, the whole issue is simply we need to stop intellectually interfering with the natural intelligence of the system.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

for the safety and health of the mother or baby, many are overused, are lacking scientific evidence of benefit, and even carry their own risks. Cautious and judicious use of intervention results in healthier outcomes and easier recovery, and this is an area in which midwives excel. Women who planned a home birth had fewer episiotomies, Pitocin for labor augmentation, and epidurals.

Most importantly, their babies were born healthy and safely. Ninety-seven percent of babies were carried to full-term, they weighed an average of eight pounds at birth, and nearly 98 percent were being breastfed at the six-week postpartum visit with their midwife. Only one percent of babies required transfer to the hospital after birth, most for non-urgent conditions. Babies born to low-risk mothers had no higher risk of death in labor or the first few weeks of life than those in comparable studies of similarly low-risk pregnancies.

Medical interventions are the third leading cause of mortality in the United States. Compared to other industrialized countries (Japan, Sweden, Canada, France, Australia, Spain, Finland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Belgium and Germany), the U.S. is ranked last or near last in several significant health care indicators. You don't hear about these studies but in terms of overall health and the wellbeing of mothers and babies, home births perform better than hospital births or births in birthing centers. We did our homework.

Joseph Chilton Pearce (see Appendix A) drafted one of the best summaries on the choices we made and why it was worth the risk. You may find it of interest.

The Mystery

I wonder if all parents experience the awe as this unimaginably complex and mysterious process unfolds. How is it possible? The union of two cells explode and become Carly Elizabeth—heart beating, ten fingers and ten toes, deep gray-blue eyes, sensing, learning, changing every moment, never to be quite the same again, as different as all the stars and the sky and yet, just like you and me. Surely every parent must be amazed in their own way.



Ashley Montagu wrote a marvelous book, *Touch*, about children who lack the stimulus of their physical body needs in the early years from isolation, separation. And of course James Prescott has been researching this very thing for years. The most serious issue is the automatic practice of separating the infant from the mother at birth. The umbilical cord is often cut the minute the infant is out of the womb. The operating theater is brilliantly lit and they peel the infant's eyes back and drop chemicals to protect them against syphilis or gonorrhea. The infant is then weighed and whisked off to a nursery, isolated. They feel abandoned. They've lost contact with every stimulus they've had. They retreat and it takes an average of 9 to 12 weeks to compensate for this lack of physical nurturing and stimulus. As a result, we have a generation of young people with an underlying, unnamable anxiety and fear of the world and enormous hostility against the world feeling they are a stranger in a strange land.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Today is August 29, Carly Elizabeth's birthday, one month and counting, along with 7,257,214,905 other new beings just like her. Yet none are really the same, not a single one. Joseph Chilton Pearce noted: "We have this marvelous play between unity and diversity. There's only one field, the universal field on which all brains draw. No two brain structures are ever alike; they have the same makings, the same stuff, but they're never put together in quite the same way." Our lives are sculpted by our point of view, falsely morphed into a rather fixed identity. Look from here and Carly is unique. Look from there and she is the same as everyone else. Unity and diversity, different ways of seeing.

Remember looking through two ends of a telescope? From one end we all appear almost identical. Zoom out and at a certain distance all seven billion of us look like bacteria wiggling around doing very important stuff that too looks pretty much the same, just like all the other mammals who experience in a way very similar to ours, sans our symbols that mystify and confuse. And from the other end we are unique as snowflakes, crystal patterns that have never been and will never be again. Wow, Carly Elizabeth is just like all of us, and just like all of us she is unique, like each star, blade of grass, each leaf on all the trees, and the wind — all creation moving.

Carly Elizabeth is the same as all the children in Gaza and Tel Aviv, Bangalore, Shanghai, Kansas City, Rio and Rwanda. The light shining in her eyes is the same as the light shining in Pixel our cat, shining in the bears, mice, the elephants and whales. Her need to feel safe, at home, welcome and appreciated is the same as theirs, each and every one in their own way. It really doesn't matter what home looks and smells like. Home is home and that is all any of us really need, and we do. Brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandmas and even the grump next door, we feel the same feelings, want the same closeness, need acceptance and affectionate touch, just like Pixel and the elephant standing alone in the Serengeti.

Speaking with James W. Prescott, PhD, who has researched the origins of love and violence more than most, we wondered if this miracle called Carly Elizabeth and all the other miracles just like her will survive another hundred years. Maybe. After all, miracles do happen. Just look at her sleeping in her beautiful mother's arms.



Parents want to know what's really right for their children, how they grow. I think we may have a whole generation of parents who actually missed their childhood so they don't understand what children really need. I have a good friend who says that we are all under a spell, we're under a spell of how we were raised and what our parents did. A spell isn't intellectual; it just means that we come with that stuff. Some of it was really good. I know that parents try to do the very best job they can with the knowledge they have.

Bev Bos

It would be so easy to do unto others as we would have done unto us. No more waterboarding and beheadings. No more plucking an eye for an eye, leaving everyone blind. No more police shootings or the killing of children in Gaza or on Main Street in any town in the world. No more circumcisions or desperate suicides. It would be so easy. Just flip the telescope around and see that we are the same, that we need the same, all of us, including Pixel, the elephants, the coral reefs, and whales being slaughtered by Navy microwaves gone mad. It would be so easy to have our children and all children look through that end rather than the other, the end that sees only our fears, justifications and defenses and nothing else; me, mine, my gang, my political party (a gang by another name), my nation, my soldiers, my money, my corporation, mine! From one end of the telescope me and mine is all we see. Looking through the other end, me and mine don't exist nor do all the violence, wars and abuse that other way of looking and its identity creates, and so easily.

With the snap of a finger, behold I make all things new. It is a fact. Ending the greed and the violence is just that easy. Flip the telescope around. Look and you will see. We are one family, one vast creative movement and endless expression called life, ever changing, never the same, like Carly Elizabeth today, one month old and counting.

To be with Carly and with all the other offspring of all the species of the world, or for that matter to be with anyone or any living creature, you need to turn off the dumb-phone, the computer, the 5,000-channel satellite dish TV, Fox-Not-News, the car radio and all the blather in your head, all the judgments and self-centered fears and projections and defenses we recycle day after day. And once that noise is gone, to look, listen, feel and respond by doing to and with Carly Elizabeth what you would want done, if you were her, because you are! And never stop doing that every second of every day for the rest of this life and all the other lives to come, because life, creation, is moving, changing, and is never the same—like Carly Elizabeth, like you and me. That is what she taught me today—silent, expansive sensitivity and action. I wonder what she will share with me tomorrow? One month old today and counting...



The first or primary brain center, often called the maintenance system, presents us with our physical world, reproduction, knowledge of the body and our ability to interact as a body with the body of the world. Surrounding this is the emotional-relational, mammalian or limbic brain that presents us with images of how we feel inside as we physically interact with the environment outside. All of our bondings, all of our relationships are expressed through this second brain system that we share with all mammals on earth. After these two primary brain centers are stabilized nature begins development of the neocortex with its ability to create abstract symbolic and metaphoric images, imagination and creativity. First things first is nature's agenda. Appropriate development of the third brain is dependent on whole and complete development of the two primary brain centers that preceded it.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Silent Attunement

Now six weeks young

The Buddha spoke of emptiness. Krishnamurti called it silence. Both were referring to a heart and mind unfettered by the noise generated by words, symbols and social conditioning. Such is the body, heart and mind of Carly Elizabeth, now six weeks old.

One of the great challenges for us adulterated-adults is to enter into and become as little children. To relate to children or, for that matter, any living thing, we must silently attune to their state of being. Instead, most often, we expect them to conform to who and what we are. That's crazy, impossible, nuts! Relating means shared meaning. To share in the meaning of Carly's experience I must become, at least empathically, who she is and act from that. Then and only then will she trust and respect the relationship.

Holding, carrying or just being with Carly Elizabeth dampens the activity of my neocortex. Again, referring to Krishnamurti, he noted that talking and thinking dulls perceptions, and it certainly does. Distinguished physicist David Bohm referred to this activity as "electrochemical smog."

As the intellectual-verbal habits of mind slow down and even end, our sense perceptions grow more present and intense. The light appears brighter. The deafening roar of the motorcycle and smell of diesel exhaust take center stage. These are always there but we don't notice them. When they intrude, we talk to ourselves louder or thumb faster on our dumb-phones.

How can we lead our children into dominion over themselves and their world without the trust and respect shared meaning implies? We can punish and reward, bribe and explain, twist behavior to meet our expectations, but all these deny who the flowering child is this moment. How can they trust someone who doesn't see and respect who they are?

Play researcher O. Fred Donaldson, who has traveled the world playing with unadulterated wild animals and wild children, described how we crazy humans, cut off from the actual, natural world, lost in our virtual realities, appear to these authentic creatures—mad as hatters, therefore unpredictable, not to be trusted, feared, to hide from or threatened away.

People talk about reading, writing and arithmetic being the basics. Those are very complex processes and they have to be based on the basics. You have to have the basics first, then you can do what people call the basics. The number one basic for everyone on this planet is wonder. Children are born with it. You have to protect the toddler from themselves they're so filled with wonder, wanting to know everything on this planet. It's here in every child and we have to keep that alive but we often don't. I'm stunned when I travel, when I watch people, not to be curious about everything that there is. When traveling I watch kids, just watch them. They're fascinating to watch; a kid pushing a stroller, kids riding on the moving sidewalk, riding it backwards, wondering if they can go fast enough to do that. That wonder of everything. And it's our job to give them the time and places to do that. Then, the second basic is discovery, understanding that everybody has the right to discover things for themselves.

Bev Bos



As each age and stage of development unfolds, it is our gift and great challenge to become as our children are and relate accordingly. Carly at six weeks is nothing at all like the Carly of eighteen months will be. This demands a moment-by-moment attunement, a recalibration of my sensory, emotional and intellectual state, to attune to hers. And this implies a fundamental transformation of my identity at that moment. I can't be playing and identifying with some cultural role and, at the same moment, be present and attuned to who and what Carly Elizabeth is right now. Not doing so means that I am not paying attention, not really relating, not earning and renewing her trust and respect upon which our entire life together will rest.

Some people meditate, practice mindfulness, chant or any number of other so-called spiritual practices. On close examination all these have a common root—to shut up, extinguish and clear away the self-generated electrochemical smog and to wake up to all the sights, sounds, colors and so much more this miracle has to offer. Carly helps me remember who and what I really am.

I'm Not the Center of the Universe *Social is sensory*

This rude awakening came as quite a surprise today, shocking really. The sun, moon, planets and every living thing do not revolve around me. Life is reciprocal. The more we naturally give to life, the more life nurtures and empowers us.

Dear friend and inspired mentor Joseph Chilton Pearce speaks of parenting demanding this realization—giving over our self-as-center-ness to the joyous, though not always easy, service of others. We can look at the entire developmental process as a slow transition from me to we, from mine to ours or us.

Interesting how the less energy and attention is invested in me, the larger, more expansive and intelligent what we no longer think of as me becomes. What the old ones call bonding and the hipsters call attachment (neither very good) come into play here. Instead of conceiving of bonding as attaching two separate things, consider that the experience bonding implies actually describes one's state of being and



The brain is always functioning as an integral unit, but nature spotlights her focus on each structure until it is complete. If something interferes with optimum development of current stage nature opens the next on schedule, then opens the next structure, gets that going, and opens the next. As nature develops each stage-specific capacity the intent is for the higher system to transform the nature of the lower systems into its higher nature. This is what the whole game is all about, expanding capacity, the quality of life, opening up whole new universes. If we furnish an appropriate nurturing environment for each of these systems they'll unfold automatically, absorb everything appropriate to the system, and the system just keeps opening and opening and opening. The tragedy is when the psychic structure remains embedded in the lower structure and that transformation of the lower into the higher does not take place. Increasingly we see children who display no compassion, no ability to understand the feelings of another person – their psychic structure, their sense of awareness or ego remains embedded, locked into an identity with the most primitive brain system, what Paul MacLean called the reptilian brain.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

therefore identity. The nature and quality of the bonded relationship defines one's identity. If that identity is me-me-me, one's worldview is pretty small. The more attention that the me consumes, the smaller the world becomes. Joe Pearce describes how bonding is expansive, how the developmental process is one of expanding bonds, first with mother and father, the family with the living world, the neighborhood, tribe, culture, the planet, the cosmos, and ultimately spirit. At each developmental stage the center of one's identity expands, and with it empathy and intelligence; at least that is what nature intends. The bigger the bond, the bigger the world becomes. Most, for painful reasons, get stuck. Ashley Montagu suggested that few develop beyond high school. Many get stuck earlier, resulting in toddler tantrums in a grown-up body.

Love, I reasoned many years ago, is the natural, pleasure-based glue that this expansive empathy and intelligence depends on. Bonding and the pleasure it assumes is the only force strong enough to overcome the weight of self-centeredness, me-as-the-center. One can't be stuck in me and love at the same time. Love implies transcending this puny me-identity, letting it go for something much bigger. Loving Carly is transcendent movement.

And Carly Elizabeth demands a return to the senses. Social is sensory. This too implies a transformation in my identity. Here we are, adulterated-adults, preoccupied with all sorts of abstract ideas, memories, words, projections and the virtual realities these entail, what James W. Prescott calls "cognitive processing," blabbering away, talking to Carly as we change her diaper. How crazy is that? While walking home last evening, an old woman was sitting on a bench lecturing to her dog that could care less, not understanding a word. We all do this all the time.

Our challenge, of course, out of love and care for the other, is to abandon all the cool ideas we think we are and become extremely sensitive, attuned and responsive. That means giving silent attention to what Carly or the dog is actually this moment, and communicate with touch, movement, resonate shared feeling and sensation. Do this and when the time comes for concrete and semantic language, the empathic shared-meaning foundation will be strong and co-learning explosive.



The experiences have to be real. They have to be authentic. It can't be a video. Children have to discover everything on their own. I imagine trying to discover how to ride a bike on a video. They have to do it themselves. Imagine that your first experience with apple is the word in a book; not seeing that long thing that your grandmother could peel off all in one, not tasting it, not smelling it, not knowing it can be juiced. Imagine your first experience with an orange was only a word. And we do that to children. We show those things on videos or on a computer. They have videos now for mixing playdough. At our school, the discovery is; if you take flour and salt and water, you can mix and mix and mix. We start with a hundred pounds of flour and a hundred pounds of salt and just pitchers of water. A dad said to me one day as he's watching the kids mixing and mixing and mixing, "do you think they're ever going to get anything that looks remotely like playdough?" I said, "I don't know but I know they're not doing this any place else." They've got to see the solids turn to liquids, feel the graininess and then adding color. The experiences have to be real.

Bev Bos

Prescott posted a historic essay where he describes how leading scientists were blinded to the sensory-deprivation implications of their mother-infant separation research. Researchers denied that what they were doing was sensory deprivation. From their position, the research was social deprivation. Jim, having done sensory deprivation research for the military, appreciated immediately the profound and lasting developmental harm being inflicted on these mother-deprived infant monkeys. He understood that during this very early and extremely sensitive developmental period, "Social is Sensory," something every adult relating to very young infants would do well to remember, and remember and remember. Being with Carly today helped me reconnect with my senses.

19 September 2014

Michael, Congratulations on an extraordinary post (above), one that brings academic abstractions into the real sensory world. Our video (<https://vimeo.com/69200952>) dramatizes the importance of movement and touch in early development and will help readers appreciate how affectionate touch, movement and play affect brain-behavioral development, specifically the prevention of violence. This finding secures the foundation for spontaneous play behavior that you emphasize.

Doctors Bill Mason and Gershon Bersken also studied infant monkeys reared in isolation but they added a surprising variable. Some of the surrogate mothers, a fur-wrapped Clorox bottle with a pie pan attached to the bottom, could move and others were stationary. That one simple change, adding movement, had a tremendous impact. The infants reared on the moving surrogate did not develop the broad range of emotional-social psychopathology that had been so well described in isolation-reared monkeys. This is the critical importance and power of affectionate touch and movement. It changes the brain for a lifetime, and that positive change expresses for generations. Many thanks for all you have done.

James W. Prescott, PhD

When we use the word play, we're talking about nature's means for learning. Play is the act of learning itself. It is the over-arching umbrella in which all learning takes place through all the developmental stages. Play with each stage of development involves different types of activity. The early child plays or learns in a very different way than the middle child plays and learns, and this is certainly different from the late child and adolescent. Each stage of development has its own block of intelligence and abilities which are opened and developed through play. Play is the way by which all learning takes place, how we build all of our response patterns in the world, how we build the very structure of knowledge of the world itself, how to get along in the world. All of this unfolds through play.

Joseph Chilton Pearce



Play is Learning - Learning is Play

In the quiet moments when Carly melts into my arms, there is attunement, resonance, shared meaning, trust, respect, appreciation, curiosity, wonder, all moving, changing and so much more—embodied, nonverbal, silent. This silent, reciprocal attunement is the essence of bonded attachment, and that creates a safe place for play.

While at the co-sponsored “Attachment Parenting” Notre Dame Conference, I had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing Colwyn Trevarthen, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Child Psychology at the University of Edinburgh. The reason: his appreciation and research in mother-infant play. Colwyn worked with Jerome Bruner, Branselton, and many other leaders in the field. He filmed and later videotaped how mothers and babies look, listen, touch, mimic, and tease—in a word, play together. “Play,” said Trevarthen, “is a metaphor for life.”

Playfulness signals, as Fred Donaldson often says, two things: you are lovable and safe. These two requirements are essential prerequisites for real learning to take place, and that dynamic-reciprocal learning unfolds as play. “Play is learning, whether as a baby in arms or as a theoretical physicist,” David Bohm, protégé of Einstein, shared in a conversation years ago.

Play is the third phase of what Joseph Chilton Pearce describes as the “Cycle of Competence:” first, roughing in a new possibility; second, repetition to establish the pattern; and third, variation. With trust, affection and their implied safety, playfulness moves steadily and expansively as an exploration of variation and novelty, imagining, surprising, testing, safely risking—failing is not a failure but an integral part of learning itself, feedback and adaptation. All this, every second, is taking place in the state of authentic play, not to be confused with culture's win-lose, competitive-comparisons we call games.

I also had the privilege of spending time with Darcia Narvaez, Professor of Psychology at the University of Notre Dame, exploring her new book, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality*. I rarely use the word morality, usually associating it with the Ten Commandments.

The most important thing is experience, experiences to attach words to, your own experiences to attach words to. Experience is not the best teacher. It's the only teacher. When you get older and take driving lessons, you take the written test and oh boy, you get to drive a car. You get out on the road and then you know what's real. You probably ding a fender. You aim the car for the first couple of months and then you get a sense what it's really about. Those are experiences to attach words to. And we have to make sure that the experience is appropriate for the age.

Bev Bos

If we try to force some of the later evolutionary functions: intellect, reading, writing during the sensory and emotional developmental periods we cloud and compromise what is supposed to be happening in these early stages. The child will try to follow the model but they lose out on what should be developing at that point. Later, when they are ready for the real movement into those great intellectual pursuits, they don't have the foundation for it. And then we're in trouble.

Joseph Chilton Pearce



Morality is the principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior, and is therefore implicitly judgmental. The behavior being judged is the real issue. Darcia argues and is supported by distinguished colleagues such as Allan Schore, Jaak Panksepp, Colwyn Trevarthen and others, that moral, inherently good behavior is rooted in biology, not intellect, the judging part. This is a monumental shift in orientation foreshadowed fifty years earlier by James Prescott, Joseph Chilton Pearce and others. Darcia provides the research that proves beyond any doubt that social is indeed physical. If you want moral behavior, a moral society and culture, the foundation must be laid in early childhood, beginning with playful interaction between mothers and infants and expanding that safe space throughout life.

Gabor Maté, MD and I continued our conversation looking at culture and how early attuned attachment-bonds prevent addiction. Gabor noted during his presentation that drugs are not the cause of addiction. He was asked, why do some become addicted and others don't? Failed or impaired early attachment expresses in some as addiction, in others as depression, Alzheimer's, cancer, attention deficits (disassociation), eczema, arthritis, diabetes, suicide and more. All these result from the dis-ease implied in impaired early attachment-bonds. The key point is that suffering, pain, illness, addiction, violence, abuse, aggression, rape, depression, suicide and more are attachment-bonding issues. Attuned attachment-bonding is the foundation for how we behave and this is established very early by the sensory experiences implicit in the earliest relationships, not by the church, by the government, school, the athletic coach, grandma or any expression of the intellect. Intellect judges behavior and the behavior being judged is rooted in sensation, the physical-emotional experiences beginning at conception.

Of course words have their place, but not with Carly Elizabeth, now nine weeks old. Everything she and I share is sensory. Does she feel safe in my arms? Am I responding appropriately to her cries and smiles? Is she startled by the sudden warm water in the tub? Is her trust in our shared experience deep enough to negate the fear of unfamiliar sights, sounds, sensations? When I whisper "Yes, yes, yes," and she responds with her best mimicked "Yes," do we laugh and smile, deepening the trust and safety this play creates?

Play is a mindset, an attitude, a condition of total openness that the child must have for real learning to take place. Real playing is how real learning takes place. You can have conditioning or behavior modification which we generally call learning, but it's not learning. It's conditioning. Real learning takes place by what Marie Montessori called the "absorbent mind of the child," which is a mind that is absorbing its universe, becoming it, and children do this through play. Play is the most serious undertaking of a child's life. Children are completely entrained in play. The three parts of the mind; thought, feeling, action, every aspect of the child is focused totally on the activity of absorbing their world. They're literally building their construction of knowledge of the world, of themselves, of their relationships and laying down the foundations for all later forms of intelligence.

Joseph Chilton Pearce



Do we return to this playful state over and over again as she changes, adding more complex variation and novelty, expanding her feelings of competency and mine?

"The future is now." The profound truth is that this silent, affectionate, sensitive attuned play, or its absence, expressed mostly through touch and movement and not ideology, shapes the next generations' approach to self and other—creative and egalitarian or selfish and defensive-aggressive.

Social is sensory. It is all so natural, so simple, so easy, that is unless judgment and censorship creep in, most often at Carly's expense, not mine. Innate intelligence, billions of years old and beyond, is not judging with the intellect. We might say "No!" harshly in an emergency, usually because we adulterated-adults are distracted, out of sync, mal-attuned. To let intellectual judgments guide the relationship implies a lifetime of conflict. Sensitive, quiet, ongoing, renewing, attuned attachment-bonding is what nature designed.

Pleasure Bonds

"Ouch, too hot," said Goldilocks—pain. "Ouch, too cold." "Ahhhh, just right," she said—pleasure. As I have come to understand, thanks to James Prescott, pleasure and pain rest at the foundation of our development as human beings. We are drawn to and seek experiences that are comforting, pleasurable, and we avoid, withdraw from, sensations that are painful. Not very complicated, obvious, but we forget.

Carly, twelve weeks new today, helps me reawaken to so many sensations—the light in her and my eyes; of course the temperature, too hot, too cold; the sound of dishes being placed in the cabinet while she sleeps near the fireplace; the softness of her skin; how she rests on my arms; the leaves rustling above; the irregular surface of the road as I carry her down the street; the annoying rumble of stinky cars and trucks passing too near; and on and on. Being social with Carly is very sensual. Everything we share is based on sensation, feelings, looking carefully with great attention and empathy for cues that we are sharing the meaning of this moment and the next. Active meditation quiets the verbal mind-chatter, bringing into awareness all these sensations, inner and outer.



We make this profound error of thinking that education and schooling are dramatically separate from play. Schools are set up for conditioning and behavior modification which inhibit the child's ability to open to and absorb the universe within them. Mistaking conditioning for learning is one of the reasons we find a very small percentage of retention of the conditioning we think we're giving our children through schooling. A large study by the Carnegie Institute way back in '63 concluded that children retain only 3-5 percent of the total information or conditioning modifications we're trying to bring about, about 3-5% retention whereas, what is learned through play is literally built in as a permanent neural patterning in the brain which children never lose. If we could just recognize the direct correspondence between play and learning and the dramatic difference between real learning and conditioning, we could change our approach and produce 95% retention but it would have to be within the framework nature has set up which involves play. When a child is not played with that child's learning is seriously impaired. By learning we mean opening and developing the higher brain structures which can moderate or modulate the lower evolutionary structures of the brain. It is just that simple. This doesn't happen without play. Play being the learning and the learning being the opening of those blocks of intelligences.

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Being with Carly is a spiritual practice, one of the best, self-changing and therefore life-changing, ever new. Her sensitivity awakens mine, which is, admittedly, pretty dull most of the time. The body is built to experience pleasure and of course pain. Pleasure and pain are forms of intelligence, attracting and repelling. Leprosy can result in a lack of ability to feel pain and thus loss of parts of extremities due to repeated injuries—a loss of sensitivity and therefore loss of intelligence. The late neuroscientist Candice Pert, PhD, known for the discovery of endorphin, the pleasure receptor, described how we are hardwired for pleasure, happiness and joy. Feeling good must be good. Feeling bad is bad.

While contributing to a panel at the Norte Dame symposium on thriving children and families, I noted that the word *pleasure* had not been used, whereupon I was informed by several that pleasure is too sexualized. The word *joy* is more appropriate for describing pleasurable experiences. Really? I rest my case.

One of the experiences I share with Carly is our “swim-swim-swim” warm baths together. My quest is to have her feel so safe, so warm and cozy that she relaxes her tiny fists as I pour water over her body. I happen to love the water, floating, swimming naked in crystal clear rivers. I was a scuba instructor at the age of eighteen. I would not use the word joy to describe our baths together. It's pleasure. Feeling pleasure is intelligence in action. Joseph Chilton Pearce, James Prescott and I penned a short essay, “Pleasure Is the Glue That Bonds Human Relationships,” (see below) and it is true. I experience it every day with Carly and people I care about.

One of the many things I appreciate about Jim Prescott is his sensory-deprivation orientation. Physical trauma of course should be avoided but can be dealt with very effectively when soothed with—you got it—pleasurable nurturing and comfort. Chronic deprivation of pleasure, the absence of pleasurable stimulation, renders the sensory pathways hypersensitive to the denied sensation. Spend a day in a dark room and suddenly open the windows to bright sunlight and you will know what I mean. We overreact.

What we call bonding in these sensitive early weeks and months is based on pleasure. The more the better. Touching, carrying, feeling each other's heartbeat, rubbing her feet, making playful sounds that she, even



I think people have forgotten what's natural. It's the water, the sand, the dirt, the mixing, the stuff that my mother did. These are the things that I had as a child because my parents were poor and they had eight children, those were the things that we had to play with. Our mother expected us to make our own way. We had loose parts, wood, pieces of wood, stumps, rocks. We hauled things around. We built things. We argued. We fought. My mother locked the door. People ask me not to share that but that's what she did. She didn't want us in the house. And if you said, "I'm bored," she'd say, "I'll find something for you to do. And that was the last time you said I'm bored in your entire life. You never were bored again. You made your own way. You had the experiences.

Bev Bos

at twelve weeks, can copy and mimic, and she does with delight. These and a thousand pleasurable sensations build a deep, profound foundation, a self-world view that knows the world is safe, to be touched, explored, embraced, yes, with joy and a lifetime of happiness. Pleasure bonds.

In so many ways we have intellectually made pleasure bad, dirty, sinful. The denial, sensory deprivation, of pleasure, inflicting pain and later shame, retards the neural pathways for happiness. The Dalai Lama and others observe that happiness is the highest form of wisdom. Think about that. Experiencing pleasurable sensations throughout childhood ensures a mature brain-body that is not compulsively searching for the sensations denied, what Buddhists call *The Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, and the title of the best, most human book on addiction, by Gabor Maté.

Feeling good is good. Let's skip as much pain, punishment and shame as we can. Replace "No!" with sensitive, attuned, playful shared meaning. But you will have to turn off your phone and the noise chattering in your head. Being with Carly Elizabeth helps.

See: Pleasure Bonds (<https://ttfuture.org/blog/michael/pleasure-bonds-0>)

Reincarnate Happiness

Ninety days

Like every new life, Carly Elizabeth is a miracle unfolding at astonishing speed, from almost seven pounds to twelve-point-six in ninety days. Hallelujah! A week ago I mimicked the sounds she was making.

Her eyes grew bigger and she mimicked me. Today I call it baby singing. She sings, I sing, we all sing and do it again. She knows when I am paying complete attention and, of course, when I am not. Biologist Rupert Sheldrake studied the phenomenon of knowing when we are being watched. You know when you have this inner feeling, turn, and the driver in the car next to you is looking—telepathy. I know at some deep level that Carly knows who I really am from this moment to the next. Joseph Chilton Pearce speaks of Bruno Bettelheim, the child psychologist and writer well known for his work on Freud, psychoanalysis, and emotionally disturbed children. "We can't lie to children," he said.