



12

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

PRENATAL AND PERINATAL PSYCHOLOGY

Nurturing Human Potential and Optimizing Relationships from the Beginning of Life

Leading-edge prenatal and perinatal psychology-oriented therapists collaborated in an academic community grant project funded by the Bower Foundation to create these 12 guiding principles out of decades of PPN clinical findings. These principles are offered as a beacon to help guide parenting practice, professional practice, theory, and research, and to support human potential and optimal relationships from the beginning of life. These principles lay the foundation for a new movement in welcoming and caring for our babies. Everyone has a part to play.

1. The Primary Period

The primary period for human development occurs from preconception through the first year of postnatal life. This is the time in which vital foundations are established at every level of being: physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and relational.

2. Forming the Core Blueprint

Experiences during this primary period form the blueprint of our core perceptions, belief structures, and ways of being in the world with others and ourselves.

These foundational elements are implicit, observable in newborns, and initiate lifelong ways of being.

These core implicit patterns profoundly shape our being in life-enhancing or life-diminishing directions.

3. Continuum of Development

Human development is continuous from prenatal to postnatal life. Postnatal patterns build upon earlier prenatal and birth experiences.

Optimal foundations for growth and resiliency, including brain development, emotional intelligence, and self-regulation are predicated upon optimal conditions during the pre-conception period, pregnancy, birth, and the first year of life.



Optimal foundations of secure attachment and healthy relationships are predicated upon optimal relationships during the pre-conception period, during pregnancy, the birth experience, and the first year of life.

4. Capacities & Capabilities

Human beings are conscious, sentient, aware, and possess a sense of Self even during this very early primary period.

We seek ever-increasing states of wholeness and growth through the expression of human life. This innate drive guides and infuses our human development.

From the beginning of life, babies perceive, communicate, and learn in ways that include an integration of mind-to-mind, energetic, and physical-sensorial capacities and ways of being.

5. Relationship

Human development occurs within relationship from the beginning. Human connections and surrounding environment profoundly influence the quality and structure of every aspect of baby's development.

From the beginning of life, baby experiences and internalizes what mother experiences and feels. Father's and/or partner's relationship with mother and baby are integral to optimizing primary foundations for baby.

All relationships and encounters with mother, baby, and father during this primary period affect the quality of life and baby's foundation. Supportive, loving, and healthy relationships are integral to optimizing primary foundations for baby.

6. Innate Needs

The innate need for security, belonging, love and nurturing, feeling wanted, feeling valued, and being seen as the Self we are is present from the beginning of life. Meeting these needs and providing the right environment supports optimal development.

7. Communication

Babies are continually communicating and seeking connection. Relating and responding to baby in ways that honor their multifaceted capacities for communication supports optimal development and wholeness.

8. Mother-Baby Interconnectedness

Respecting and optimizing the bond between mother and baby and the mother-baby interconnectedness during pregnancy, birth, and infancy is of highest priority.

9. Bonding

Birth and bonding is a critical developmental process for mother, baby, and father/partner that forms core patterns with lifelong implications.

The best baby and mother outcomes occur when mother feels empowered and supported and the natural process of birth is allowed to unfold with minimal intervention and no interruption in mother-baby connection and physical contact. If any separation of baby from mother occurs, continuity of father's contact and connection with baby is vital.

Baby responds and thrives best when communicated



with directly, when the relationship with mother is undisturbed, and when the process of birth supports baby's ability to orient and integrate the series of events.

10. Resolving & Healing

Resolving and healing past and current conflicts, stress, and issues that affect the quality of life for all family members is of highest priority. Doing so before pregnancy is best. When needed, therapeutic support for mother, baby, and father provided as early as possible during this vital primary period is recommended for optimal outcomes.

11. Underlying Patterns

When unresolved issues remain or less than optimal conditions and experiences occur during conception, pregnancy, birth, and the first postnatal year, life-diminishing patterns often underlay health issues, stress behaviors, difficulty in self-regulation, attachment, learning, and other disorders over the lifespan.

12. Professional Support

These early diminishing patterns embed below the level of the conscious mind in the implicit memory system, subconscious, and somatic patterns. Professionals trained in prenatal and perinatal psychology can identify these patterns and support babies, children, parents, and adults to heal and shift these primary patterns to more life-enhancing ones at any age. When parents resolve and heal their own unresolved issues from their child's pregnancy and birth, their children benefit at any age. 📌

Adopted and endorsed by the Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health.

McCarty, W., Glenn, M., et al. (2008, 2016, 2017). *Nurturing Human Potential and Optimizing Relationships from the Beginning of Life: 12 Guiding Principles*. [Brochure]. Natural Family Living—Right from the Start: Santa Barbara, CA. For more information and to obtain 12GP brochures, visit: 12GuidingPrinciples-PPN.com. Currently available in English, Spanish, and Italian.