

## MFT 603 Week 3 Reading Summary

### 3 Points - JA Ch 6

The miracle of the creation of life is precious and special, and as a mother of three sons, and one lost pregnancy at five months, I cherish and value the gifts of pregnancy, giving birth and the first year of a baby's life. For me, I look back and wish I would have paused to savor and enjoy that special time because it goes in a flash, and is probably the significant and transformational experience any woman, man and child experiences! The three most significant points from prenatal to the first year I will focus on are the APGAR, Attachment, and Play.

The APGAR score of a newborn measures the heart rate, respiratory rate, muscle tone, reflex irritability and the baby's color. It is measured at one minute and then five minutes after birth to determine functioning of the newborn's main systems. Measure of heart beats per minute, breaths per minute, motion and flexion of extremities, grimace and a the color of pink body and blue extremities derives a score. APGAR Scoring assigns numbers to these measures. But, it is not always an indicator of a baby's future. One of my identical twin sons was resuscitated at birth and in the Neonatal Unit on a respirator his first two weeks of life. His APGAR scores were zeroes. Although he was full-term, during a regular vaginal delivery, his umbilical cord had a prolapse, and he was robbed of oxygen while the doctor had to rotate him and deliver him breach. While it was a traumatic experience, we are grateful he survived, and was eventually able to breathe as his systems came back on line, and in time, he grew and had no signs of cerebral palsy, common with this delivery and birth complication. As a therapist, I may encounter parents who seek answers to the emergencies or difficulties during the pregnancy, delivery, or later an accident or diagnosis of their precious child that throws them into the reality of life that is unpredictable. Those times, parents need treatment for trauma, and maybe loss, and 25 years ago, that was not something anyone thought about or offered, but it was something I definitely experienced as we learned about ambiguous loss and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Counselors trained to help with these difficult emotions and process them is so important.

Attachment is a critical period and process for bonding of the parent-child and continues after birth. Using the senses of touch, sight, sound, smell and taste and time especially together and attention to one another is key. John Bowlby, Psychologist, is noted for the study of attachment from birth to about 18 months and affects the natural instincts of the baby's development of self and mother. The child is able to form attachments with the father and others as well. But, Bowlby argued that the key relationship for secure attachment is with the baby-mother. Maternal deprivation he studied and argued serves for not only emotional but physical development of the child. Without it, depression, aggression, delinquency, and inability to form and show affection occurs. The process of bonding, engagement, is critical for the child to develop psychological well-being, security, safety and protection. As a therapist, I would share research and enrichment with both mother and father, and stress the importance of this time with the baby. Many cultures get this right, and less so in our nation. A baby needs to be stroked, held, cuddle and responded to when it sounds distressed. Baby also needs freedom to explore while being supervised to assure safety and self-confidence. There needs to be love and encouragement to

begin to show independence. I still remember my twin sons expressing "I do it" wanting to feed themselves in their high chairs. Although they made a huge mess of yogurt, they began to express the desire to learn to feed themselves. Brief periods of separation results in tears, but it is important the baby learn to trust and gain self-control of emotions.

Play is more than just having fun, and keeping out of trouble! Play is important to the child's development even as a newborn. Teaching parents about the importance of brain, fine motor and gross motor skills during the baby's first year is fun and provides knowledge to the parents that there is more than changing diapers, bathing, sleep schedules and feeding to be done to assure the best for the baby. Infants need audibles objects, rattles and mobiles that make sounds. They put their hands in their mouths a lot and this is normal. We used infant car carriers and links and toys attached to the handles to amuse our sons. The baby wants to see what is happening, so keeping the baby with you and your husband and family is important. Around 4 months old, the baby will begin to grasp objects. This is important for muscle development so offering bright toys and a bouncer seat or your lap and making funny sounds and making eye contact is important. At 6 months of age, the child begins to notice cause and effect. Games of peek-a-boo, hiding a toy, naming body parts and going for stroller rides is so important. We also had a playpen with toys so baby could begin rolling over and reaching for items. At ten months old, adding blocks to stack and standing and pushing toys as well as an exer-saucer and swing were great fun.

Recently, a friend of mine got involved in a neat business of a subscription developmental toy delivery service supported by science. This may be something I will mention to new parents.