



## **Interview with Wendy Anne McCarty, PhD, RN, HNB-BC, DCEP**

**By Kate White**

Dr. Wendy Anne McCarty is a global holistic educator, mentor, and practitioner serving professionals and families. She specializes in optimizing spiritual human potential and relationships from the beginning of life and repairing early-origin patterns at any age to transform lives now. Her work draws from pre and perinatal psychology, energy psychology healing modalities, consciousness studies, and authentic spirituality. She was the co-creator and Founding Chair of the Prenatal & Perinatal Psychology Program, Santa Barbara Graduate Institute. Her book, *Welcoming Consciousness*, is a holonomic, holographic early development model incorporating transcendental & human awareness and she has written over 30

papers and articles. For more information, [www.wondrousbeginnings.com](http://www.wondrousbeginnings.com). [drwmccarty@gmail.com](mailto:drwmccarty@gmail.com)

***Can we start at the beginning? How did you get started in pre and perinatal psychology? Tell us the story of how you got involved.***

Well, I started as an OB nurse in the 1970s and I was always interested in what is possible, the next step. In the 1980s I went to graduate school and studied mother-infant research. I got my Masters in Family Studies and Early Development, and did my research on people becoming parents. Then I realized I was really interested in counseling more than physical nursing care, so I got my PhD in Counseling Psychology at the University of Southern California. I did my doctoral research on transition to parenthood, this time looking at couples' prenatal expectations and their postnatal experiences of becoming first-time parents. I had five years of training in Gestalt therapy and existential humanism. By 1986, I had opened my psychotherapy practice and my husband and I were ready to start our own family. I felt like my personal life and work were coming together nicely. Then in 1988 I came to an APPPAH conference for the first time and literally my world was turned upside down.

Looking back, I was coming from a traditional western Newtonian paradigm way of understanding babies and the beginning of life. The APPPAH presentations didn't really fit with my previous education and training about babies and early development. David Chamberlain, Graham Farrant, Thomas Verny, and William Emerson were speaking from such a different perspective than I was trained in and I found it quite disorienting, yet exciting. But, the moment that was life changing for me was a direct experience, and this is so key. How do we convey this field, that comes from an expanded lens of who we are, to people who do not hold that lens yet? I mean, most all of us involved in PPN have made that transition from a biology base to a multidimensional base because we see this innate intelligence and capacity with babies from the beginning of life and even before conception. At that first APPPAH congress, it was actually William showing a video from a therapy session with a young baby that gave me a direct experience of seeing the baby's deeper capacities and the mutual communication between them. That's when I had a profound "ah-ah" moment. William interacted with the baby from a whole different premise than I had ever seen, and with that more conscious interaction, I saw how the baby responded in ways I didn't know possible. When I watched the baby directly with William as our guide, I experienced something with that baby that just changed everything for me.

After that first direct experience of expanded baby consciousness, it was kind of like a domino effect. My understanding just kept evolving and expanding. I could never go back to how I saw babies from a more traditional lens after that. That moment was like the Magellan's ship story. The

natives had never seen a ship before and although the ship was there, they did not perceive it until a shaman with more expanded vision helped them bridge what they knew in their present reality to this new phenomenon. The shaman held that new lens of reality and people could start to come into phase, into resonance with that reality and open up a new lens for themselves. And to me, when those of us in the PPN field resonate with the realness of our direct experiences, our direct knowing, how we have opened up our inner landscape to an experience to include these realms of reality and early experiences that are beyond what could be held in a consensus reality paradigm, we are that guide. Not only at a verbal and modeling level, but literally we are holding the field that helps other people perceive something that previously was unrealized and to have their own direct experience. Those of us who have worked with families, or when we have done our own work, those moments of ah-ha direct experience are when life changes.

***Yes! Your story telling is evocative for me because, as Director of Education at APPPAH, I spend my days working with people, helping prepare them to be guides as you describe. And I have my own passion for this work. I live it every day. And, I still struggle with some very advanced educators out there who work with babies who say: “Well babies do not know or babies are a bundle of nerves. They are not intelligent. They know something about survival but they are not intelligent.” That “consensus based approach.” What would you say to them Wendy? I would like to hear your response.***

You know, I really empathize with them first of all because I had very strong beliefs about how I thought everything worked. I loved babies. I was a conscientious nurse, conscientious learner, always trying to be at the advanced edge, leading edge. That was important to me. I valued that. And, until I came to APPPAH I would have been one of those people saying things like that. That was my edge back then. Now, I think we each have our own path of growth and awareness. I believe that there are moments in our lives that ignite us with something new, something more, and for me one of those pivotal ones was APPPAH. Also for me, when I had my wake-up experience with APPPAH, I was in the midst of my own personal spiritual awakening as well. The two went together. I touched a place of inner knowing, a primary knowing, a knowing beyond logic or reason that changed me. You cannot push that with someone. For pre and perinatal or any field that is moving us from biological base to a multidimensional consciousness based paradigm, it is a tricky thing. There is this extended transition period where there are going to be people that remain very grounded in the biology-first lens.

I remember teaching a class in which someone came in and was just livid, livid with her belief that baby consciousness was a bunch of hokey and wanted proof! I had to really center and ground myself to not to be reactive. I said to her something like: “We do not have all the answers. We do not have the best research. There are many things that logic and reason cannot explain, but what I want to do in the presentation is teach from my direct experience and the highest level of understandings that I have gained, what I have come to believe holds the greatest truth of who we are at the beginning of life and what we need. I am offering this to you as a possibility, one that I value and want to share. We’ll watch baby videos together and you can see what you perceive and experience yourself. If you would like to stay, I ask for you to just be respectfully open to new possibilities. I am just speaking from my inner truth and from what I have learned from babies, and how I have interpreted. I hope that is helpful.” She stayed.

***She stayed in the room? She did not walk out and slam the door?***

Yes, she stayed. I teach in many traditional places like infant mental health settings. My mindset is that what I share is an offering. This is my perspective. I value this new lens. I value what we have learned from babies. I give theory, research, and a developmental lens to help give a framework to understand this expanded perspective, but I try to always ground it by giving some direct experiences. Often the direct experiences are through stories, a therapy video, felt sense experiences for the participants, or a session to approach their own pre and perinatal experience. I hold these as

an offering of new possibilities that we explore together. We just never know in a week, six months, a year if that person has their “ah-ha” moment or maybe never does. I think we have to let go of convincing or controlling. Part of me wants to say, “This is so important, please get it! Once you get it, it is so beautiful.” And then part of me is just so compassionate with those who don’t believe in baby sentience because I was there for a long time. I feel it is more important for us to hold the field of resonance of our experience and inner knowing. That is tremendously powerful. The more we are grounded in these perceptions and conceptions, the more we hold these as the most “normal thing in the world,” it can help awaken it in others. Offerings!

***I admire that you can ground yourself and not get reactive. I would like to talk a little bit more about your contributions because you have really been an amazing pioneer for us, Wendy. What happened after that first Congress you went to in 1988?***

I immediately wanted to learn more and do more with babies and children. I started training with William Emerson. He was pioneering the PPN-oriented play therapy with children and his work with babies. I decided I wanted to open up my psychotherapy practice to young children and families, which had been primarily adults up until then.

As soon as I put out the intention that I was working with early origin issues, I was referred toddlers, preschoolers, and children on up until about maybe age six or seven. I started my practice in the tradition of PPN play therapy practice emulating a lot of William’s practice. I had props with tunnels and things to make caves. I had symbols and objects in the sand tray tradition like William as a meaningful way for children to therapeutically express and evolve their stories.

I videotaped all my sessions to study what children were actually showing us. After the sessions, I would transcribe and closely review the sequences in the session. Doing that video review work was one of the best ways for me to develop my deeper understanding, because often in the sessions I didn’t pick things up. I was still seeing the kids from my traditional beliefs and often missed the meaningfulness of their actions and interactions until I sat them in the video later. During this time in my practice, I was purposely trying to disengage from my old beliefs about babies, all my traditional assessment tools and diagnostic tools and immerse myself in direct experience with what children seemed to actually be capable of and showing us.

Yet, I still got caught up on interpretation and paradigms. I seemed to toggle back and forth between my older traditional knee-jerk beliefs and my new PPN training assessment and intervention models. As I was learning the PPN play therapy perspective, I went through a phase where I went to the other extreme. I was interpreting everything through those birth lenses and realized I was kind of over interpreting and categorizing too much. I saw everything as conception, prenatal or birth issues. Looking back, that is all part of learning. As I realized this, I tried to find my balance in direct experience and wonderment with less labeling or needing to be certain of the origins or meaning. I became more descriptive and open about it. “I wonder if...”

My mantra was to be quiet, receptive, to build my capacity, to have that intuitive perception of the greater field, not just what was said or done, but the energy of it in a non-local primary Gestalt knowing.

From 1990 to 1993 I was doing that very intense development of this work by myself. Then Ray Castellino and I met at Franklyn Sills’ craniosacral training. We decided people needed a place to learn PPN-style work with babies and children. I still remember Franklyn Sills saying something like, “People need to learn this work in a mentoring way where they can learn over time, where they get to experience someone doing the work and then they do the work with the mentor. Mentoring is really important to developing the skills.” At that time we did not really have anything like that. We had PPN-oriented workshops where you learned, but then you went home and you were on your own to put it into practice. So Ray and I decided to start BEBA because we wanted to develop the work, video record the sessions for educational purposes, and give professionals that mentoring opportunity.

Ray and I opened the BEBA clinic in 1993 and started seeing families with young babies working as co-therapists. It was a wonderful period of discovery and evolution. Our clinic began in

my play therapy room with my many PPN-oriented props, toys, and symbols. My play therapy style and our BEBA therapy style evolved. One of the shifts was moving from more formal sand tray work and an open-format use of the toys and symbols. I had the symbols on open shelves, which is one option, all the symbols open and available to the kids. I found that children would incorporate them directly in their sessions in many ways. For example they may collect toys or symbols into a cave, and their story would unfold. The room became the sand tray with the symbols and toys as a beautiful additional way of communicating and relating to the material.

I remember one young boy who told a whole sequence of events that had happened when he over a stressful weekend was five-months in utero. When his mother acknowledged that all that happened, he acted very satisfied, like, “Now – we have that settled. I was there and it was stressful for me too!”

When we opened BEBA and worked as co-therapists seeing families, it was great having two of us present because this work is the advanced course on tracing! You know, you track yourself in pre and perinatal material and current moment, you track both parents, you track the baby, and possible siblings! To be able to really be present and be therapeutic with the prenatal and perinatal work is the advanced course! And, the video camera can only be your partner so far.

Ray is the master in somatic and energetics of it. He is just so gifted in that. Oftentimes, Ray would be the one doing the hands on and I found myself loving being the one who was hands off. I was free to focus on sensing the greater field, what I have come to call the “therapeutic family holographic field.” The field that contains local, energetic, and non-local information; and that reflects the unconscious, conscious, and superconscious, all the interconnected relationships, and all time periods, ancestral and other life-times, etc. I would tune into the field and focuses would emerge. Ray and I really complemented each other well. When you work with someone it can be so helpful because one person can kind of lean in to being with the parents and the other can lean in to being with the baby. Or one therapist is more here-and-now and the other one tuning into the deeper material arising. So I just highly recommend working as co-therapists, especially while you are learning. Ray and I had four great years of collaboration, a great creative period. One of our most significant revelations and discoveries was realizing how babies were expressing self-attachment issues. We were mapping how and what babies were showing us and how to help them and their mothers heal their traumatic imprints, unmet needs, and unfinished sequences from the time birth until the baby had found the way to mom’s breast and reunited with mother for the first time. After four years, Ray remained as Director of BEBA. BEBA was natural complement to his training programs and I returned to private practice. Soon there after a new adventure began for me! Santa Barbara Graduate Institute!

### ***What year was that?***

Marti contacted me in 1999 with her crazy idea. What was she thinking?!

### ***It was natural for her to feel: Oh I think I can do this...***

I had met Marti briefly through a mutual friend. After that, she invited me to lunch to discuss the possibility a project? Sounded very innocent. So, here we were sitting in a Thai restaurant in Santa Barbara. She had this thick notebook with all of these little section markers in it, and she said, “I want to start a graduate institute. It is too hard to get prenatal and perinatal psychology degrees into a traditional program somewhere. So, I want us to open a new institute ourselves.”

I said, “Well how do we do that?” She very proudly showed me the book. It was the book with all the regulations and what you had to do from the state to open a new school. I said, “How do you know how to do this?” She opened the notebook and said, “I don’t! But we will start on page one and take it section by section.” Marti’s willingness to take on totally new things, adventure into the unknown, and risk, are wonderful attributes in pioneering a new field! When you don’t know how to do something, you don’t stop, you just begin at the beginning! Whether it was coming up with the name, mission, and vision, or our synergistic education, or the degree curriculums with over 52

course syllabi that we had to come up with before we had even met one student, Marti was enthusiastic and fearless in her pursuit of giving pre and perinatal psychology a graduate level educational home.

**52?**

Yep. We needed the six degree program curriculums mapped out before we had even had our first class. And it was in a field that had little consensus-valued research. So, it was a huge undertaking and it was a beautiful experiment. Marti and I were the primary architects of the first PPN graduate programs and curriculum and then we drew from the top people in PPN to come teach the specialty courses. A favorite memory I have was the day when Marti come over to my house to begin creating the degree programs. There had never been PhDs in our specialty, so we were starting from scratch. We cleared the floor in my play therapy room. We put a big white piece of paper down and had a pile of post-its. We asked ourselves, from our experience and everything that we have learned in pre and perinatal field, what is important for these students to learn? I remember us laughing, “We get to choose what is important to learn?! We get to do this!?” There seemed to be such freedom and power in being the creators. We kept coming up with so many things we thought to include in the curriculum, “This material is so important, we have to include this! And the education needs to be integrated with clinical experience, so we need to include this.” We were high on all the possibilities and that we could teach, what we really felt was leading-edge, and what held the integrity of the new lens and therapies. That initial creative process of what PPN education could be was one of the most wonderful moments for me. It was just an amazing adventure, and then came all the practical limitations. We couldn’t fit it all in. We would read something in the regulations or various traditional curriculum needs. “To meet the marriage and family therapist credential, we have to have that many hours of what courses!?! Oh, you mean we don’t have room for that PPN course? Oh no!” So it seemed the actual PPN content and experiences kept needed to be contained in fewer and fewer courses and offerings as we met all the various degree and licensure requirements. I would shake my head because I thought this is so much like incarnating. We begin by encountering vast possibilities for our next human exploration. And then we get compressed and the vastness becomes siphoned and held in such a narrow vehicle, and we live the best we know how within the confines of this smaller container in our physical reality. That is fun little story about the very beginning. I definitely like the post-it stage!

***One of the things I really want to talk with you about is the spiritual aspects of our work. You hold that more than any pioneer, Wendy. Can you tell me more about that?***

I value a spiritual perspective as core to PPN understandings, yes. When I first went to the APPPAH Congress in 1988, the person I identified with most was David Chamberlain. He was so direct in talking about the consciousness of babies and their innate intelligence their capacities, their sentience. He talked about human consciousness beyond/before biology. And, I so identified with that.

***Alright, so this is a sticky point. I do a lot of dialogue with people and there is disbelief that a baby can have an experience in utero and that it can have an implication later on either in their birth or even later on in life. I am wondering, Wendy, can you tell a story here of either a direct experience of your own either in your personal experience or clinical to help some of these people really grasp that babies have these experiences and they communicate about them?***

I have stories in my book, *Welcoming Consciousness*. Again, I just let people be skeptical. I just let them know I understand their skepticism, that I was too was skeptical. But, that once I started having direct experiences with babies, something in me changed. The more I grew to trust that babies can remember, communicate, and interact meaningfully, I saw beautiful new possibilities

open up. Babies were expressing more of who they are and our relationships were becoming something much more. I have experienced the reality of how much more is possible and how healing it is for not only babies, but for everyone. When we are willing for babies to be more than what we thought they were during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it opens up a whole different realm of relating with babies that I find extremely beautiful and inspiring. But, I was skeptical until I had my own experiences.

When I teach, I like to present theory and practice, and I like to present stories that portray those practices. My teaching reflects a set of principles about the PPN paradigm. But it is always the stories that people can relate to and therefore it is the stories that bring the principles to life. The principles might trip people up still, but they can hold the stories and get it in their heart. I get feedback from parents saying, “You know, I heard that story you told and I went home and I decided to talk with my child about their birth.” For example, a woman heard me speak at a conference and found me again at another venue months later. She said, “What you said has changed my life, changed my child’s life.”

When I speak, I often talk about how helpful it is to have a really sacred conversation with your child about what happened at birth or in the womb—the genuine story, the authentic story—that includes both dark and light, lovingly including the difficult parts too. I encourage parents to talk about the real feelings and events, rather than just the nice story that we used to think as a way to protect children since we thought kids didn’t have memory of that earlier time anyway. And, I encourage parents to hold their children’s feeling and experience sacred—what they felt or express about that earlier experience.

So, this woman told me that she realized with each of her kids on their birthdays she would tell them the story of their birth, but it was always just the positive story. And she told me that after hearing my talk, she decided to talk to her child about his difficult birth in a more genuine way. I think the child’s age was about four when she talked to him. Even though I say make the storytelling a sacred moment, she started the story to me with, “So we were in the car, just him and me.” She was driving and he was in his car seat in the back.

Her story of her talk with her son went like this:

She said, “Do you remember when you were born?”

He said, “No silly mommy.”

And she said, “Well, there are some things I have not told you,” and she starts telling him about how she wanted to have him at home, but they had to go to the hospital because he wasn’t coming and she was in a lot of pain.

Suddenly, her son said, “Baby was backwards.”

And she said, “What? What did you just say?”

And he said, “I did not say anything.”

And she said to her son, “Well the baby was backwards. You were posterior! When you came out, you had a big bruise and a big indentation in your forehead. You cried really, really loud. And I had some problems and I could not hold you. They took you and I heard you cry and cry and cry until you were hoarse. I could not come get you. That must have really hurt being born, and I am so sorry I could not come and hold you.”

That is all she said and he did not say anything.

It was just one conversation in the car. That night at dinner she noticed something was different. She realized it was her son. From the time he was a baby he cried very loudly and as a child, he spoke very loudly, at a shouting level. He had always been very loud. They had his hearing evaluated. They did behavioral therapy with him. They often did not go to events because he was so loud, it was disruptive. So their world had revolved around that pattern. At dinner that night she realized was he was talking at a normal level and he never went back to shouting like that again.

What I believe and what she believed was that his newborn primal screams of distress and pain, that whole experience for him, never had gotten acknowledged and held. Even though it was in

the car, not even having eye contact, she had told him more of the real birth story, acknowledged his experience, and empathized with him as the baby. And that was what he needed. The whole pattern changed after that one conversation.

I call that a “homeopathic drop” of naming, acknowledging, and empathizing. The biggest thing that mother did was holding the possibility that her child could understand at a deeper level what was going on, had unmet needs, had feelings and reactions that could be effecting him today. She trusted me and the possibility that addressing his birth could be important for her son. She trusted that it could be therapeutic to really talk to him about it, and that experiment gave her a direct experience that changed their lives. And that is the thing I find with all families, and Kate, I am sure you and other people reading who have been working with families have had many similar experiences. Once a family has a direct experience and an “ah-ha” moment, their world opens up to more. It changes them. In my work now I am highly focused in working pre-conception and prenatally because the more the parent-baby relationship can open up to a true mutuality of being together before preconception and during the pregnancy, it changes the potential of their birth. It changes everything from there forward.

***So, what you are saying is for the parents to be really conscious about conceiving and knowing that the little one on the inside is listening and is having experiences. So your message, is: include the baby even on the inside.***

Absolutely. Building intimacy, rhythm, and rapport between mom and baby from the beginning of life that includes ongoing communication and shared experiencing. Yes, can change everything from there forward.

I'd like to come back to your asking about the spiritual perspective in my PPN work. Earlier I mentioned how important it was to let myself be immersed in the pre and perinatal world and direct experience, and to discover what I could learn directly from babies and children. *They took me* beyond biology and the physical world into the spiritual realms, into non-local avenues of knowing, perceiving, and communicating, by revealing more of who they are and who they can be when we relate to their fuller consciousness from the beginning of life utilizing these avenues.

When we started SBGI, I had to come out of my PPN immersion period where I purposely suspended my traditional training and consensus models of who babies are. Then we opened SBGI. As we developed the PPN curriculum and I was teaching many of the PPN courses, we needed to interface pre and perinatal information with the rest of the world of early development, especially infant mental health, developmental neuroscience, and attachment. I felt a tremendous tension trying to interface PPN with the consensus lens. Our students were going to be right in the middle of this grand discussion of who babies are and the curriculum had this fundamental split between mainstream theory, research, and practices based on the biology-first premise and the expanded multidimensional territory that PPN uncovers. In teaching my PPN courses, I saw a need to acknowledge the consensus biology view of early development AND pre and perinatal consciousness-based findings, to make sense of this dichotomy, and to present a new evolution of how to think about early development theory and models that included both. How do we bring them together?

Along with articulating a new early development model that included PPN findings, I also felt a strong need to evolve PPN from primarily a trauma-based orientation to an optimal, healthy early development orientation. The field of pre and perinatal psychology was steeped in therapeutic treatment of trauma, unmet needs, and the loss of human potential because of how we carry, birth, and misunderstand babies—all the suffering. From hearing thousands and thousands of stories, from adults, children, and babies, we have identified many of the causes for so much pain and life-long difficulties arising from this developmental period. All of these are critical to understand how early experience effects the growing baby and leads to life patterns. I felt a very strong desire to evolve that into a mainstream discussion of how we support optimal development and the new picture of what “normal” development is. I am not the only person who has done this in our field.

What I wanted to contribute was saying, wait a minute, our PPN field is not all about trauma and unmet needs. It is also rewriting what “normal development” is. And, it is even going further

than that. What we discovered in our therapies to heal early trauma and unmet needs also greatly informs us about how we can now support greater levels of wholeness, of coherence, of human potential from the beginning of life. Isn't that an incredible treasure out of all this darkness, a new light of what is possible emerges? At that first APPPAH congress I attended, the other "ah-ah" moment for me was when William talked about following-up on the babies he treated. He discovered more than he expected. Not only had predicted symptoms and trauma patterns been relieved, new life-enhancing patterns had emerged in these kids, what William called "positive psychology traits." These treated babies as children were more often described as more empathetic, had greater mutuality, were able to hold more psychological complexity, and were individuating with their own creative pursuits from a young age. Those positive human potential findings, along with the direct experience of the baby in the session—inspired me profoundly in his APPPAH presentation. It was the awe I felt from seeing that grander capacity of humanity and a way of being that is already there in babies if we learn how to support them that impressed me.

What were we not supporting, not acknowledging and nurturing, that could help us be more of who we truly are? When we relate to babies, even when they have had difficulty, in recognition of who they are and what they went through, not only does it heal trauma and reconfigure unmet needs, but it releases a greater wholeness and coherence within them. It supports babies to be more of who they are. Fast forward to SBGI days, and I felt that we needed to normalize how we portray early experience in the pre and perinatal period. People from outside our field often conveyed seeing pre and perinatal psychology and our view of early experiences as just trauma, trauma, trauma. But I was resonating with the beauty of *normal* human development from a multidimensional lens and what was possible during the pre and perinatal period when we support the fuller incarnating being.

Everybody that studies pre and perinatal psychology or everybody that works with children reads attachment theory, neuroscience, and other early development theories. Most of the time, the theories and models are about infants and older children. I wanted to write about a model of early development that begins at pre-conception and holds the continuity of early development forward, emphasizing the immensely important prenatal and perinatal developmental period as a foundation upon which later development unfolds. We were right on that edge where the whole world view was gaining momentum towards a consciousness-based multidimensionality paradigm of reality and human nature. It was a time when many fields of inquiry and authentic spirituality, were exploring the multiple planes of reality and awareness; wherein the physical biological body is held as but one aspect of who we are, with the non-local consciousness as primary.

In 2003, I got an academic grant, took a year to review PPN and mainstream material and the emerging consciousness-based research and worldviews. I developed a new "normal" early development model that included both the biological and transcendental perspectives portrayed by babies during our preconception through newborn period and forward. PPN findings could now be situated within the new consciousness-based world views. This multidimensional model could hold more of what we were finding out about who babies are, what they need, what they are looking to us for, and how we can help them. *Welcoming Consciousness: Supporting Babies' Wholeness from the Beginning of Live—An Integrated Model of Early Development* was the book in which I developed this multidimensional lens of early development. It became a core text in the PPN program.

As I began to gather all the PPN writings, trainings, therapeutic experiences together during that year, I realized that at the core of things, babies were showing us that they come in with two very distinct different voices or perspectives. One is that human perspective and the other one is the transcendental, that spiritual non-local consciousness level. The first person in APPPAH I read that talked about that was Jenny Wade in her paper about physically transcendent awareness in the *Near-Death Studies Journal* (1998). Jenny Wade is quite the academic researcher and she did a beautiful job with this paper. I highly recommend everybody reading it. She looked at near-death experience and specifically the subgroup that no longer had brain functioning during their near-death experience. She looked at David Chamberlain's mother-child paired research and how they expressed their birth-related memories. She compared the qualities and types of memories expressed in the near-death reports and those pre and perinatal experiences reported during hypnosis and found so many similarities between them. She also was the first person that I know of that



originated a major theory of consciousness evolution that included pre and perinatal psychology perspectives, and articulated these in her book, *Changes of Mind: A Holonomic Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness* (1996).

***I am very impressed with your book Wendy, especially how you said people can more easily believe in near-death experience than in babies having experience. Can you speak a little bit to that?***

You know, I think comparing near-death and pre and perinatal consciousness is the most natural thing in the world.

***So tell more because I think the belief that babies cannot have experiences has been in place a long time. Why is it easier to believe in near-death experiences?***

There are so many similarities between near-death and pre and perinatal reports that I think the comparison between them can be a wonderful place to lead into a discussion of babies' experiences. People are often more familiar and more comfortable with near-death experience. For many people, it is easier to believe that a near-death experience is possible. It is easier for someone to relate to an adult having an experience than to imagine a baby having lucid experiences and memories. It's not entirely rational, but adults have already formed themselves and now they are having this experience, even though it can be with the brain offline. It is a whole different ballgame when you say transcendental awareness and capacity in little babies.

I have found it is challenging even for some experts in consciousness studies to wrap their mind around the PPN notion of transcendental capacities and perspectives being a part of human capacity from the beginning of life. Most consciousness studies focus on adult capacities. There is also an interest in childhood spirituality and transcendental experiences and abilities. What I found in conversations even with professionals steeped in these notions for adults and children, when I would suggest that we (PPN) see a continuity of these abilities pre-conception and the beginning of human life forward, there can be a glitch. Just can't go there... Yet!

***Why?***

We have become so distanced from our transcendental roots and knowing. For generations and generations, the worldview and beliefs of biology-first are so engrained. From the time we are conceived, most of us are marinated in the modern worldview of our family and culture—the prevailing view of babies as biological beings whose capacities are brain-based. Literally, from the beginning we are marinating in our parents' belief systems in the way they perceive us. We adapt to it, we absorb it, and then we forget who we are until something awakens that within us. Something has to awaken that within you to believe that babies are spiritual beings that come with a sense of self and capacities for meaning and communication. It is like almost a knee jerk reaction to resist this and of course many of us have unresolved material from that period that is at the core of human self identity. It was surprising to me that believing that babies portray transcendental abilities was a “Teflon area” for even seasoned consciousness and holistic leaders. I have never called it that, but that is what it felt like.

I have been in the position of “defending pre and perinatal” a lot in those circles. I try to stay open and compassionate, and let people be where they are without losing the beauty I feel, the truth I feel, the glory of this multidimensional unfolding of more of who we are as we come into human life. We are just at the beginning stages of truly understanding. I feel like such a beginner on how to tap and how to relate this information. We have had centuries of shutting all this down. So, I feel we are at the beginning of opening up and understanding what being a multidimensional being in the 21<sup>st</sup> century really means and how we welcome and carry for our multidimensional babies. But we are learning. Many people start by trying to talk to their babies. Then we ask how do we listen? How do

we perceive babies communications with us? How do we build rapport with the baby? Well, many start by doing it in a meditation.

For me, I help families and see families in the future awakening to a whole new level of family mindfulness, one with heart where we live a much more multidimensional life—integrating our transcendental and human perspectives, steeped in an expanded experience of the seen and unseen realms. And we welcome and meet our babies there.

***I am right there with you. John Chitty talks about the baby as a super sentient, and that sometimes you can resonate with a message on the inside and the baby will get it.***

Oh, absolutely.

***You and I know that, but for our culture it is much harder, especially if birth or the prenatal experiences are difficult.***

I understand and we each can play such an important part in this cultural shift. It was quite a personal journey for me to write *Welcoming Consciousness*. I asked myself, who am I to say all of this? Who am I to put this theory out there? I am not the best writer. I am not the best clairvoyant. I am not the best researcher. I am not the best anything. I knew people in each of those arenas that were much more talented than I was. And, several times during my process of formulating my model, I had well-known experts and professionals just dismiss what I was bringing to the table. I remember for instance one night just practically shaking in my boots, afraid to speak my truth in this book because of being dismissed by one leading “authority.” Did I have the courage to articulate this early development model that included our transcendental roots even when our consensus experts and even some PPN leaders did not support a consciousness approach? I know so many of our students and the professionals I support have gone through their version of this. Do I speak up and take a stand even if dismissed or whatever?

What I came back to was that I wanted to humbly express to the best of my ability more of what babies and children are showing us when we hold that possibility that they are more—the beauty of who babies are, what I have discovered, how they respond, their gratitude, their blossoming into the being more of who they are, the joyfulness of it. So, even though I wasn’t the best for the job, I was the one who wanted to do it! We need this and I have got to let go of what other people think. My beginning contribution was *Welcoming Consciousness*, and my early human development model. I did it out of the beauty of what I held for who we are, for what we are learning from babies, and what can happen when we come from this possibility.

When I get deflated or discouraged by those unreceptive, I return to the families, babies, kids, and everyone I’ve worked with who have been so grateful for the transformations and healing they have received. Those who thank me for writing what they intuitively have believed for so long. I think about the people who are so thirsty and willing and want more of what we can bring them.

One last thing, I want to encourage PPN people to situate the neuroscience, polyvagal theory, epigenetics, and other leading-edge biology-based theory and research within a consciousness-based understanding of babies and early development. I understand wanting people to be willing to listen to the importance of the prenatal and perinatal period. I hear people using the biological sciences that are pointing to earlier and earlier developmental times as critical periods as the bridge. But, if we stop there, if we play it safe so to speak not to rock the boat, we have lost what I believe to be the most important finding from PPN—our transcendental core nature who comes into human life with non-biological fundamental capacity and who is seeking a much deeper connection and relationship with us. So, I come full-circle in our discussion to say how important our holding our inner knowing and experiences of babies from this expanded lens as a way to hold the resonance, the field, and be the guides to the physical and non-physical realms of being.

***You said it right there, and that would be the message that I would want to broadcast as well. Could you speak a little bit about who you are now? You went on from Welcoming Consciousness and you are involved in energy psychology, right?***

Well, it is interesting, in 1988, I had that pivotal period of transformation, and I am experiencing myself in another one right now. It is almost as if all that I have learned and all the different avenues I have employed such as teaching, writing, and working with families and professionals are undergoing another evolution. It is humbling because in some ways it does not have its natural direction or articulation yet. There is a picture of a baby in one of my slideshows that shows the state I am trying to capture. The slide is of a baby in a Buddha-like position, eyes closed, soft smile on his face, looking deeply content. I know that place and in some of my latest presentations I am trying to convey that state of being. You know, we each have a transcendental non-local self and human self. It is that primary relationship between them, that wholeness of self and the connection between them that I want to support. I am working on ways to preserve that sense of Source, spiritual and individual expressions that we are as we come into our human experience. I want for our human experience as babies to be kept integrally imbedded and connected in that womb of being of our grander transcendent self. How do we do that? If we do that, we can transform families and evolve the way we live as human beings in families. In some ways having that baby and wanting to have a baby that way can be the motivation for doing lots of transformation work for the whole family. That is what I love doing with families.

Babies' transcendental self is so present and available to come into relationship with us. And the transcendental self holds a higher octave of capacity of who we are for deeper connection with Source and with others. Supporting and relating to a baby's transcendent and human selves supports his or her capacity for higher avenues of awareness through intuitive perception. This way of relating also supports nonlocal awareness, higher levels of knowing through primary knowing and Gestalt knowing, higher ways of communicating such as telepathy, that mind to mind, that field to field knowingness. Having that knowingness, that spiritual sense of connection to all creates a sense of connection.

I believe that higher octave of being is at the core of the current evolution of human consciousness. How do we support ourselves embedding that, imprinting that, experiencing that as a connected way of being from the beginning of life? As I have said in my presentations this last year, Anita Moorjani and Alexander Eben have written books and give talks on their near-death experiences and the transformations following them. They are both wonderful. They are each quite different. But both of them when they had their near-death experience came back fundamentally changed. They came back more connected and living from that union between, and more profound integration of, their transcendental self and human self. They did it through direct experiences with Source, with having a direct experience of "I matter, I am loved. I am one with." In the beauty and the gratitude and the grace of it all, that grander view of existence and that grander felt sense of who they are, I AM, those experiences changed their core human perspective and ways of being once they returned.

I love this quote from Anita Moorjani, which I have shared in my talks this last year that says on her Facebook page, "Right now I feel I am home. I have no desire to be anywhere else. It makes no difference now whether I am 'here' or on the 'other side,' it is all different parts of our experience of our greater expanded self." So many people crave more connection to Source and their destiny, wish to be back on spirit side, or find the physical world so difficult. After having her near-death experience, Moorjani said, "I have found my true home within me and it will follow me wherever I go." She is so situated in her being-ness as this integrated, transcendental self that is in human experience. She feels home.

My whole message is for us to hold the vision that babies are this grander transcendental being coming in to human experience. We want to hold them, greet them, support them, holding that spiritual vision of them as much as possible so that they have the feeling of: I love being here. I love this experience as a human being. It is messy. There are highs; there are lows. There is pain. There is feeling lost, but there is also holding all that in this grander picture of something beautiful in our

being here as a connected spiritual human being. That image of the baby so content, holds that place for me. That is where I am going.

***Wow, I love it.***

So, I will begin to write and teach and be from this next octave for me. I am going to give a keynote that will be about this at the APPPAH Regional Conference in the fall of in Seattle. I want to share how I put all my work together, really situating it in this way of working with families. I also will be giving a 2-day post conference workshop on how to incorporate energy psychology tools, like EFT, with families, that directly includes babies in the unique style I have of integrating the transcendental and human realms of being.

***Thank you so much, Wendy. I look forward to seeing you at that event. It was a pleasure speaking with you.***

It was a pleasure, thank you Kate.