

Love Effaces Violence: Panel on Breaking the Cycle of Violence

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Abstract: None available.

Full Text: At CEDIHAC, the Research Center for Human Development Through the Community, we've been working for the past ten years on a lengthy study for which we selected 684 families from the poor ghettos of Caracas. We designed a comprehensive program of enrichment for this group of pregnant mothers and fathers from the prenatal stage (five months of gestation) with follow up until the child is six years old. We especially emphasized attention and affection, caresses, sensory stimulation and inter-uterine communication through auditive, visual and tactile stimulus. The process also includes systematic and rigorous measurements to evaluate the development and growth of the child, the socio-affective relationships with the parents, family and friends and the capacity of language development. We're convinced that prenatal interaction affects the baby's psyche. The prospective parents participated in the program once a week for a period of three months and sometimes longer. If during the scheduled time period the mother had still not given birth, she continued to receive her weekly prenatal lessons from the interdisciplinary personnel, previously trained by the CEDIHAC team, who work in the Venezuelan State Mother and Baby Centers selected for this research. This program yielded very positive results and illustrated that the replication of the "HOLA BEBE" program is possible on an extensive basis. In this program the mothers were highly motivated. They were young (18 to 26 years old) and this was their first pregnancy. They managed to impose the views they learned at the Centers, with the support of their partners, over the horror of the grandmothers, who couldn't understand the body exercise and even less could they understand the idea of communication with the baby. When the mother-to-be talked to us about their babies in gestation, they did so in such a way that you tended to believe that the baby was already born and they referred to him or her as a person. It's wonderful! Generally, the parents are very creative and look for other activities to do with their babies, besides the ones suggested by us, including talking to them, teaching them to associate their kicks with voices coming to them from outside the uterus (the kicking game), singing, telling them a story, playing baroque music, shining a flashlight over the lower abdomen, intensely visualizing the baby and imagining the baby's behavior which they previously studied from slides, videos and ultrasound when they attended prenatal control. We have beautiful anecdotes that demonstrate that the baby is the one who decides when he or she will be born and at that point producing contractions in the mother's uterus. For example, one father in the program had to go on a trip to Europe and would have not been present at the expected time of birth. Labor began earlier than anticipated, the birth was fast and natural and the father was able to be present at the baby's birth. The parents get together and communicate on behalf of their son or daughter in a very special way. They await with great joy the arrival of the baby and when he or she is born, they call the baby by his or her name right away to ensure that he or she recognizes their voices. They play the music they used to play during pregnancy, and which also worked as a pacifier when the child was crying and fussy, managing to calm him. These children are very alert, with wide opened eyes which explore the world around them. They seem interested in everything. They recognize the father's voice and the story he used to tell them in uterus. Eye contact is easily established, they have good control over their heads, visual and auditive follow-up. They show adequate conduct towards stress situations (too much light or noise). Their bodies are relaxed, they cry little, and pay attention and concentrate better than other newborn children, showing at all times pleasure with the stimulation games. Their interest grows along with their own development. Books are like candy for them, they turn the pages, concentrating on the pictures and ask for another story, some of them even memorize the stories. Others in a spontaneous way begin to read (between 4 and 5 years old). Their

language development is very precocious. The fathers have been capacitated to speak to them all the time. They become mediators of the learning experience of the child. We've named them "tourist guides" for their children-calling the babies by their names, telling the characteristics, use and locations of the things, persons and animals surrounding them, without forgetting the notions of time, space and direction. The family integrates through these wonderful activities. They learn very easily, with joy they practice the mediation criteria and its utility becomes a habit (see Table I). WHAT IS A MEDIATOR? A Mediator is an adult who selects, organizes and programs the stimulation games for the child, to facilitate the baby's acquisition of knowledge, their comprehension and capacity to relate, to build concepts which they can use later in a new situation and solve the problems that arise for them.

Table I

Criterion	Application
1.-Intention on behalf of the mediator. He must have clear which is the goal or purpose as to what we want the child to learn	1.-Selection of stimulus. Select the toys or objects that we'll be using during the stimulation activity to achieve the goal or purpose.
2.-Sense of transcendence. To overcome the immediate necessities, further than here and now, in a space and a time. Past experiences should be considered, as well as the real moment and the projection towards the future to be transmitted to the child. This is how the knowledge becomes flexible and can be applied in other situations and moments in which it is useful.	2.-Stimulus programing in space and time. We must delineate the child in a specific time and space and relate him with the time when an activity is being carried out. This will help him plan the future.
3.-Reciprocity Mediator-Mediated: There must exist constant and dynamic interrelations and interactions between the adult and the child, and vice versa. When we stimulate the child we have to wait for his response, the same way we must respond to the kids when they stimulate us.	3.-Imitation. The mediator should be a model to achieve the conduct or goal he's pursuing. It's like becoming a mirror to the child.

Table I Continued

4.-Meaningful experience and sense of being capable. We should transmit our interest and motivation during the activity we do with the child, and feel and show confidence in his capabilities.	4.-Repetition and variation. We should try to develop the function we have proposed. Example: eye-hand coordination in different situations. We should stimulate him, e.g.: when he eats, when he builds a block tower, when he puts things in or takes them out of a box, using different toys and objects, but always with the same purpose.
5.-Impulsivity control: We have to find a way for the child to exercise control and not respond to the proposed activity right away. Kindly we ask them to wait before they respond.	5.-Anticipation. We'll try to make the child anticipate his response, i.e., that he or she intuits before it happens since the kid had previously repeated the activity in many situations. This is why repetition is so important.

The following is the Stimulus-Mediator-Object-Mediator-Response formula through a Mediator (Parent) through a Mediator (Baby) to the Response (Baby's response)

IN SYNTHESIS The benefits of the prenatal educational programs, inferred through the children's behavior, are countless: * Healthier children, alert, interested, intelligent, they like to solve problems, to think, they're creative, they love to learn and interact with other kids and adults. They're affectionate, they show their feelings, ProQuest

including anger without hurting others, they're authentic and respectful, they don't allow injustice or disrespect. * Since they were very young (7 months of age) they resonated with other people's necessities. Empathy. * They're sociable, generous, willing to help, tidy, they show an excellent social intelligence that doesn't allow them to hurt themselves or anybody else, neither do they break the things around them, not even their own belongings. * They're constructive, they compete with themselves, they don't show negative feelings of envy, jealousy, competing with others, selfishness or "evilness." * In a television program, the public was astonished with the socio-affective behavior of these children when they look at how they interact for over an hour with other kids of various ages and higher socio-economic levels. The host of the program couldn't believe that this was the first time they met each other. BENEFITS FOR THE PARENTS * A strong affective bond is established between the child to be born and his parents. * A better communication is established between the couple. * The father gets into the pregnancy and birth process. * They develop great expectations about the baby's capacities and confidence. * They trust their child's capabilities who being so small learned to communicate with them from the uterus. * Learning to understand and respect their baby. They recognize the individual differences, and understand him or her. * To stimulate with pride and in a positive way the baby's achievements. * To teach and learn with love. * We didn't observe violence in the interaction between the members of these families. Love can be taught. We have no doubt that if all the children had the chance that parents and adults around them could receive training, starting at the moment they're aware of the pregnancy, school desertion would be eliminated, as well as delinquency and poverty, which makes them act violently. We're convinced that the results obtained in this research are due more to the prenatal interaction than neonatal and first year, and keep on giving benefits through time without any other systematized educative interaction. AuthorAffiliation Beatriz Manrique, Ph.D. AuthorAffiliation Beatriz Manrique, Ph.D., mother of four, grandmother of six, professor, author, psychotherapist, research psychologist, and Director of the world's most ambitious experiment in prenatal stimulation, is the recipient of the 1995 Thomas R. Verny Prize for exceptional contributions to pre- and perinatal psychology and health. For five years Dr. Manrique directed "Project Family", a unique effort of the government of Venezuela for development of intelligence. She was honored for this work and the program she describes in her paper.

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