

# Babywearing



Shaughn Leach RM, IBCLC, DipT

1

- ‘There are as many ways of caring and loving as there are families’



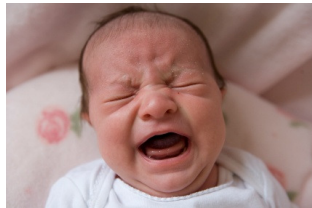
Pinky McKay, 2001, p3

2

# Crying is not healthy

- Cortisol floods the brain during intense crying and other stressful events

– Destroys nerve connections in critical portions of the baby’s developing brain



Schore, A. N. (1996).

3

# Crying is **not** healthy

- Persistent crying problems = increased risk for hyperactivity problems and academic difficulties

• Wolke, D., Rizzo, P., & Woods, S. (2002). Persistent Infant Crying and Hyperactivity Problems in Middle Childhood. *Pediatrics*, 109(6), 1054-1060.

4

# Research 1986

- Hunziker and Barr.
- Hypothesised that ‘normal’ crying could be reduced by supplemental carrying (extra to that which occurs during feeding and in response to crying).

- Method:
- RCT
- First born, breastfeeding
- 49 supplemented (asked to carry baby in their arms or in a carrier for 3 hours a day) and 50 controls

5

- Researchers concluded that parental carrying was associated with a substantial reduction in crying and fussing behaviour in these first born, breastfeeding infants during the first 3 months of life.



6

- The increase in carrying could have systematically predisposed these mothers to detecting their infant's demands and to shortening the response time to infant distress, thereby facilitating a more synchronous mother infant interaction.



7

- Alternatively, the increased carrying may have acted to reduce infant demands by maintaining the infant's state of quiet alertness.
- The supplemental carrying could have the effect of increasing parental **responsivity** and/or lowering the infants' arousal levels throughout the day.

8

### Important for breastfeeding?

- Because parents commonly perceive crying as **hunger**, elimination of the crying peak may remove one impetus to engage in formula changes, **discontinue breastfeeding**, or begin early solid food intake.



9

### Important for breastfeeding?

- The associated increased feeding frequency noted with the carried infants might also facilitate early weight gain, **prolong breastfeeding**, and diminish the insufficient milk syndrome in breastfeeding infants.



10

### Cache or carry

- Our milk composition tells us which category we fit into.
- Mammals
  - Extensive contact
    - carried by
    - hibernate with
    - follow the mother
  - Intermittent contact
    - young are cached in secluded places
    - left in nests or burrows while the mother is absent for extended periods

Lozoff, Brittenham 1979 p478

11

### Cache or Carry

- Breastmilk composition reflects the intervals between feedings
  - Long intervals: high protein and fat – feeds 2-15hrs
  - Shorter intervals: lower in fat and extremely low in protein (human milk)

Lozoff, Brittenham 1979 p478

12

### Creating a rod for our own back?

- !Kung – hunter-gatherers
  - The close responsive relationships and extensive body contact do not seem to create overly dependent children. Autonomy and independence are generally early and gradual, so that by two to four years of age children spend more than half the day away from the mother in the company of peers



Lozoff, Brittenham 1979 p478

13

- If you consistently soothe your child's distress over the years and take any anguished crying seriously, highly effective stress response systems can be established in his brain. These will enable him to cope well with stress in later life



Margot Sunderland 2006 p37

14

- Ainsworth Bell, Blehar, 1971
  - Infants whose mothers had provided much tender holding during the first quarter sought contact less often during the fourth quarter but when contact occurred, it was rated as more satisfying and affectionate.



15

### Babywearing and benefits to breastfeeding

- Baby is in close physical mother
- Stimulation of oxytocin receptors
- Observation of baby increased
- Early response to cues/feeding behaviours
- ?

16

### Benefits of babywearing

- Less crying
  - More they are held the less they cry
    - Babies parented with 'proximal' care cry 50% less
      - (St James-Roberts, 2006)
    - 43% overall and 51% less during evening
      - (Hunziker & Barr, 1986)
    - Except in RCT for 'colic' with 2 groups – 1x3.9 hrs 1x6.1hrs
      - (Barr, 1991)



Photo © Leona Glover – used with permission

17

### Benefits of babywearing

- Maternal sensitivity in the first quarter was associated with more harmonious mother-infant relationships in the fourth quarter. Babies whose mothers had been highly responsive to crying during the early months now tended to cry less, relying for communication on facial expressions, gestures, and vocalizations.

S.M. Bell and M.D.S. Ainsworth (1972) *Infant crying and maternal responsiveness*, Child Development, 43,1171-1190

18

### Benefits of babywearing

- More calm and content
  - Encourages baby to feel secure and content
  - ‘The frequently made observation that carried infants are calmer was supported by our documentation of a mean activity score of 0.47 in the horizontal infant sling condition compared with 1.06 in the pram.’



(Stening 2002)

19

### Benefits of babywearing

- Sleep more peacefully
  - When do you sleep best?

Chwo (2002)



20

### Benefits of babywearing

- Breastfeed more often and gain weight better
  - ‘Proximal’ care parents fed their infants more often (14 feeds in 24 hours).

• St. James-Roberts, L., Alvarez, M., Cijpke, E., Abramsky, T., Goodwin, J., & Sorgenfrei, E. (2006). Infant Crying and Sleeping in London, Copenhagen and When Parents Adopt a "Proximal" Form of Care. *Pediatrics*, 117(6), e1146-1155.

- Preterm babies gained more weight per day by discharge (3.6g/day)

• Conde-Agudelo, A., Diaz-Rossell, J. L., & Balizan, J. M. (2003). Kangaroo mother care to reduce morbidity and mortality in low birthweight infants. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*, 2, CD002771.

21

### Benefits of babywearing

- Digestion benefits?
  - Anecdotal evidence only
    - Small and frequent feeds
    - Spill less
    - GER – can keep baby in more upright position



22

### Benefits of babywearing

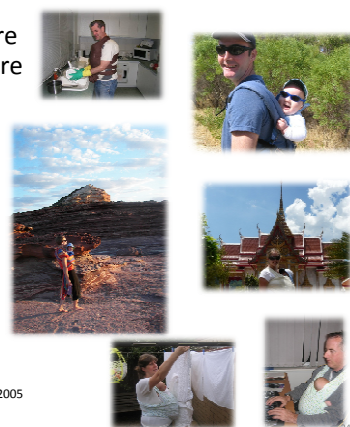
- Muscle development?
  - Decreases the amount of time spent in ‘static’ cots, prams and seats
  - Carrying baby is ‘tummy time’



Photos copyright © Iain Lindoff. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with Permission. www.cotnamuseum.org

23

When babies are carried they are a **in** life not just observing it



Maria Blois, 2005

24