

THE EVOLVED NEST

SELF-DIRECTED CURRICULUM



**A Guide To Restoring Our Baselines
for Wellbeing Through Our
Evolutionary Pathway To Flourishing**

**Based on the award-winning science
and research by Darcia Narvaez, PhD**

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* Note: The material shared here was created for the general public, so it is mostly communicated in a reader-friendly, non-academic manner. The evidence gathered is from multiple disciplines in science (evolutionary systems, anthropology and ethnography, development, clinical and neurosciences, medicine) to yield a transdisciplinary insight: the evolved nest is vital for fostering healthy, happy, cooperative human beings.



The Evolved Nest
Nested Children, Flourishing World
www.EvolvedNest.org

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NESTED CHILDHOOD, FLOURISHING WORLD



The Evolved Nest

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When we follow our wellness-informed pathway, we fulfill basic needs and promote thriving. We reach our full humanity.

Discover the award-winning science, self-directed learning center, and resources:

EVOLVEDNEST.ORG

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Components of the *Evolved Nest*

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5. Self-Directed (Free) Play with Multiple Aged Mates
6. Stable Responsive Caregiving
7. Alloparents or Multiple Supportive Relationships
8. Nature Immersion and Connection
9. Regular Healing Practices

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"We are immersed in species-atypical spaces growing species-atypical human beings. Our baselines for what we think is normal have shifted so much we do not realize how atypical we are.

Atypical environments leave us dysregulated, easily upset, and disruptive. Species-typical childhoods nurture a healthy neurobiology, sociality, and compassionate morality.

Species-typicality, our evolved nest, is needed for species and planetary wellbeing."

— Darcia Narvaez, PhD
Growing Children And Adults:
What Does Species-Typicality Look Like?

Read Evolved Nest posts
by Darcia Narvaez, PhD,
on www.KindredMedia.org

PREFACE: A NOTE ON BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

When I write about human development and human nature, I use as a **baseline**, or take what is normal for our species, the 95-99% of human genus history—the context of **small-band hunter-gatherers** (Fry, 2006, 2013; Hewlett & Lamb, 2005; Lee & Daly, 2005). These are “immediate-return” societies with few possessions who migrate, following food sources to hunt and forage. They have no hierarchy or coercion and value generosity and sharing. They exhibit both high autonomy and high commitment to the group. They have high social wellbeing (Narvaez, 2013, 2014).

I write about the **slippage in baselines, creeping normalcy of abnormality**, regarding assumptions about how children should be raised, what human nature is, and what kind of sociomorality to expect from children and adults. *Baselines* is a concept that came from marine biology when Pauly (1995) found that researchers assumed that the ocean they experienced as a child was the normal/good/right way it should be. This approach missed the changes that occur over generations, as there are fewer fish in the seas but more acid and plastic. There are also fewer birds in the air, fewer insects, and so on, that people do not realize unless they

pay careful attention. I think the same thing has happened for how we view human nature, child raising and human behavior.

It is startling to learn about the characteristics of non-industrialized communities before colonization and globalization of capitalism (Ingold, 2005; Sorenson, 1998). They exhibit vast cooperation, calmness and contentment with very little material wealth. Their lives are/were full of social and ecological wealth. They have capacities beyond our own (Tarsha & Narvaez, 2021). I credit it largely to the evolved nest.

How do we build a human being? Converging evidence suggests that it begins with experience in early life when epigenetics and plasticity are shaping the trajectory of a life. Epigenetics refers to the expression of the genes a child has. Genes are inert blueprints that must be activated or shut down by experience, they do not act alone. Supportive experiences activate genes that support health and wellbeing. Children not only inherit genes but epigenetics from their parents and grandparents. So if parents or grandparents experienced toxic stress at critical points in development, it can affect the child too.

What supports human health and wellbeing in early and later life? Like all animals we evolved a system for raising the young optimally. We call this the evolved developmental niche or *evolved nest*. Its components largely resemble those of all social mammals (who initially arose over 30 million years ago). Nest components were so adaptive (for survival) of our ancestors that they have been conserved for these millions of years and even longer across other species.

The Evolved Nest was shaped over generations to build our health and wellbeing. All *evolved nest* characteristics are linked to health in mammalian and human studies (for reviews, see Narvaez, Panksepp, Schore & Gleason, 2013; Narvaez, Valentino, Fuentes, McKenna & Gray, 2014; Narvaez, 2014; Narvaez & Bradshaw, 2023). Thus, shifts away from the *evolved nest* baseline are risky and evidence against an *evolved nest* component must be supported with longitudinal data looking at multiple aspects of psychosocial and neurobiological wellbeing in children and adults. **No such evidence exists.**



The good news is that it is possible to break this Cycle of Competitive Detachment and restore the Cycles of Connected, Cooperative Companionship.

Cultures can and do change. It begins with each one of us realizing our inherent nature to be empathic, flexible, and sovereign beings, and taking steps to heal and restore our core nature.

We can reclaim our ancestral heritage by breaking the cycle. Discover the award-winning science in the new short film.

www.BreakingTheCycleFilm.org



What happened? How did we slip away from our full humanity? Adults got busy with other things, mostly forced into becoming less nurturing to children. Over time the community provided less and less of the evolved nest to children, not realizing that the increasing disorder in society is related to the undercare (lack of evolved nest) provided to children and the distressed adults it produces. Read more about that [here](#). Instead of returning to millions-year-old practices, societies reacted to

symptoms with punishments and other sanctions. Such societies began to believe that selfishness and aggression were central parts of being human—an incredible belief system to members of communities that still nest their children.

In short, modern adults lost their wisdom about raising children to be fully human.

Therefore, we have constructed the Evolved Nest Curriculum to facilitate a restored connection to evolved nest capacities whose dormancy is only waiting to be rekindled in the Modern Age.

Learning about the evolved nest is the first step towards restoring our and our children's birthrights. This knowledge can influence us as individuals, family and community members, practitioners, and policymakers. It provides a blueprint for growing children's wellness but also to growing and maintaining health throughout life.

Learning about the Evolved Nest can benefit you today. Ongoing experience of the evolved nest supports physiological regulation of stress, endocrine, and immune systems. It supports psychological wellbeing through relational attunement to others, including the rest of the natural world. It increases a sense of peacefulness, centeredness, and wholeness. When you are calm and connected, you are better able to listen and be present to others. Your self-regulation passes on your calmness to others, whether your children, friends, family members, co-workers or strangers.

Through what you learn here, we hope you will find the encouragement you need to nest yourself, your family, and community.

WELCOME AND DIRECTIONS

Welcome to The *Evolved Nest* Curriculum. The goals of this curriculum are:

1. To familiarize you with each component of the *evolved nest*—why it is important and what it looks like
2. To give you a chance to assess how nested you are—how well your life is currently nested
3. To offer suggestions to re-nest yourself, and
4. To encourage you to support nesting your community.

You will be offered questions to write about — if you are going through the curriculum on your own, or discuss — if you are going through the curriculum with a group.

START HERE: Watch the welcome video from [Darcia Narvaez here.](#)

The Evolved Nest
Nature's Way of
Raising Children and Creating
Connected Communities
Darcia Narvaez, PhD and G.A. Bradshaw, PhD
FOREWORD BY GABOR MATÉ

Read Chapter One:
Nature's Way

Gay Bradshaw, PhD
Darcia Narvaez, PhD

Check out the sites below for events to Meet the Authors

www.KindredMedia.org
www.EvolvedNest.org

Click on the graphic to read the first chapter of The Evolved Nest book!

DIRECTIONS FOR COURSE COMPLETION

1. Complete the introduction to the course.
2. Select your path through the nine components. You can choose all of them (which we advise) and go in order. Or, you may choose your own order, or select a subset.
3. There is no pressure to complete the modules in a given timeframe. You can stop and start up again as you like.

4. Grab a notebook to keep track of your writing, reactions, and next-step plans.

5. For each component (after the introduction):

1. Take the self-test before delving into the material.
2. Learn *what* the component is.
3. *Why* is the component important?
4. Learn what it *looks like* by reading, listening and watching material.
5. Learn some *facts* about the component's importance by reading, listening and watching material.
6. *Write or discuss.* Questions and suggestions for deeper processing will be offered. Independent learners: write some reactions and ideas based on what you learned.

Babies Are Not Machines

By Darcia Narvaez, Phd

“

Approximately 37.2 trillion cells in her body are each performing millions of complex reactions every second. **They just need your cooperation.** Your role is to provide the supports that keep the flows going, but also to stay out of the way so you don't disrupt the unfolding creation of your child's unique spirit and beauty.

www.KindredMedia.org



Groups: discuss your reactions to the material.

7. *Re-take the self-test.* See the correct answers at the bottom of the section.
8. *What to do now.* We suggest ways to learn more or to try new behaviors.
9. *Application.* As a professional or community member, we suggest discussion questions and ideas for how you can support or supply the component.
10. *Self-assess* your current nestedness on the component. And assess how you can help others achieve nestedness in that component.
11. Submit your questions to EvolvedNest.org, we will respond as soon as we are able.

D. Closure session: After completing all component units, organize your next steps to apply the *evolved nest* components in your life or to your target group.

Along the way, if the information makes you anxious:

- Take a break and go into the natural world.
- Write down your feelings to unpack what you are experiencing.
- Move on to another reading/podcast/video and possibly return later.
- Pause the curriculum for a while.
- Connect with a friend.
- Pray or meditate.
- Practice the 28 days of self-calming: <https://evolvednest.org/28-days-of-self-calming>

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

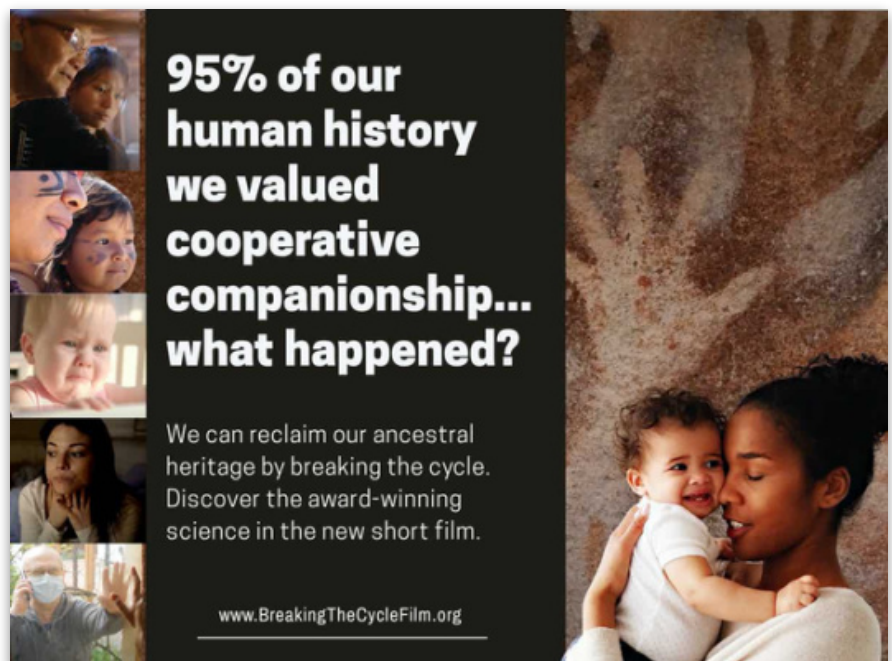
A. Self-Test your overall knowledge (select True or False)

1. The *evolved nest* is a recent invention. TRUE FALSE
2. The *evolved nest* promotes healthy development. TRUE FALSE
3. The *evolved nest* is just for kids. TRUE FALSE

B. What is our *Evolved Nest*?

The *evolved nest* is the developmental system our species developed to optimize normal development. It is millions of years old. For young children, the *evolved nest* consists of soothing gestation and birth, on-request extensive breastfeeding and positive touch (no negative touch) and movement, a welcoming social climate, self-directed play with multiple aged mates, warmly responsive nurturing from mother and others, nature immersion and connection, and healing practices to repair miscommunication or hurts. For everyone beyond early childhood (beyond perinatal and feeding experiences), the nest components support health, wellbeing, sociality and compassionate morality. Well-nested children and adults demonstrate social and moral flexibility, adapting to situations and others with emotional and spiritual intelligence.

C. Why is the *Evolved Nest* important?





"Humans develop good bodies and brains with loving, supportive care - the Evolved Nest is love in action."

Darcia Narvaez, PhD

 EvolvedNest.org

We all want to be healthy, and this begins with the *evolved nest*. The *evolved nest* represents the type of support babies, children, teens, and adults need to grow and maintain physical, mental, and social health. Nine components have been identified. **Two components apply to infancy and early childhood, but the rest apply to every age group.** In infancy we need soothing perinatal experiences and extensive on-request breastfeeding. But throughout life, we need the rest of the nest components to grow to our full potential. The *evolved nest* or evolved developmental niche is the ecological system of care provided by families, teachers and communities that aligns with the maturational schedule of the child, satiating the evolved needs of infants and

children, allowing them to flourish and develop compassionate spiritualities. Yes, along with the *evolved nest* components we'll discuss, children learn compassion from the ceremonies, stories and practices they observe and imitate. Children are biosocial creatures such that their biology is constructed by their social experience.

The *evolved nest* components support the development and maintenance of our humanity—our cooperation and wellbeing. We now know that early life experiences are vital for promoting lifetime health—physical, psychological, social, and moral.

D. Why should you know about the *Evolved Nest*?

There is a lot of misinformation about young children and their needs, and parents are often encouraged to ignore baby's signals. Bad idea. Babies are "half-baked" at birth and have much to learn with the help of physical and emotional support from caregivers. Responding to baby's needs is an investment that pays off with a happier, healthier, more cooperative child and adult.

Every community member, whether parent/grandparent or not, can be informed about child development and how best to meet children's needs. Their understanding of children's needs will be made apparent in their advocacy of policies and practices that support meeting the needs of children and families. **The *Evolved nest* is fundamental to understanding what children need.**

E. What facts should you know about the *Evolved Nest* today?

The baselines for normal childrearing have shifted in the USA. Many people seem confused about what children need and what appropriate childrearing is. With little attention to our deep history, it is easy to believe anything. Parenting seems more about how little of children's needs can be provided to children and still have them reach adulthood intact.

Provisioning the *evolved nest* has deteriorated in the capitalist-industrialized world, so much so that human health and wellbeing around the world are deteriorating in turn. The USA exports its ways to the world, so attention to its wellbeing is worthwhile. The USA has been experiencing a decline in child and adult physical and mental wellbeing for some time. In a study published in 2013, everyone in the USA under age 50 at that time, regardless of background, was at a health disadvantage compared to other advanced nations (e.g., National Research Council, 2013).

Children's health and wellbeing have been deteriorating (Organization Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2007), young children's aggression and psychotropic medication levels have been on the rise even before the pandemic (Gilliam, 2005; Powell, Fixen & Dunlop, 2003), and [anxiety](#) and [depression](#) are at epidemic levels for all age groups (e.g., United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).

The pandemic created even more distress and illbeing. Mental health has not improved. In 2023, the US Surgeon General put out a [report](#) on the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness.

International Comparisons.

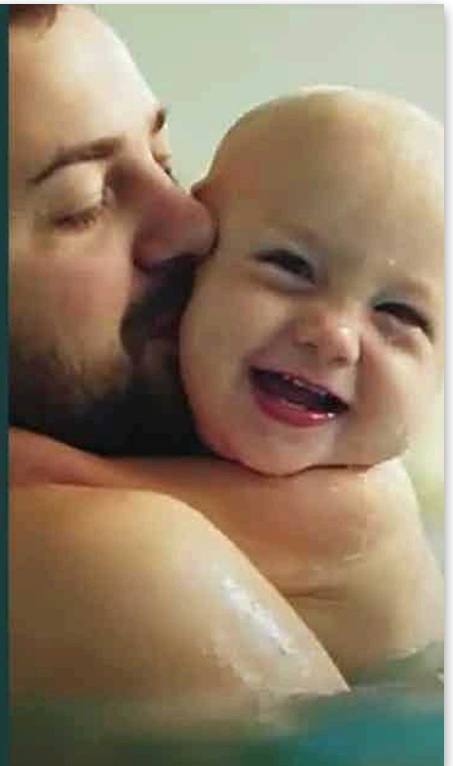
International comparisons are available for country wellbeing, but you must understand that world organizations tend to focus on economic wellbeing (e.g., income) and physical wellbeing (e.g., clean water) and not usually on social wellbeing (social capital, sense of belonging and mattering) or ecological wellbeing (the health of ecological systems, biodiversity, lack of pollution, etc.).

You can check for your country's

**"Babies require
an external
womb
experience to
grow and
connect with
others."**

We can reclaim our ancestral
heritage by breaking the cycle.
Discover the award-winning
science in the new short film.

www.BreakingTheCycleFilm.org



health status here:

- <https://www.oecd.org/wise/better-life-initiative.htm>
- <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/happiness-wellbeing-index/>
- <https://www.ghsindex.org/> (global health security)

F. Now, watch the [Breaking the Cycle Film](#).

G. WRITE down your reactions to the film or DISCUSS with the group.

1. What stood out for you?
2. What experiences of cooperative companionship have you had? What experiences of competitive detachment have you had? Which do you prefer? Why?
3. Think about and write down why you want to learn more about the *evolved nest*. What brings you to the curriculum? Perhaps it is valuing children or the wellbeing of your community. Perhaps you want to understand yourself. Perhaps you are just curious and want to know more. You can discuss your motivations in your journal or with your group.

H. What to do now? Learn more:

1. Read: [“Wellness-Informed” Versus “Trauma-Informed” Foundations For Practice](#)
2. Read: [How Modern Societies Violate Human Development](#)
3. Read: [What does “spoiling a baby” mean?](#)
4. Read: [Babies are Not Machines](#)
5. Read: [Baselines For Babies – The Best Parenting Style For...](#)
6. Read: [Baby Care: Baselines For Mental Health](#)
7. Read: [Baby Care: Baby Care: 3 Rs for Raising a Happy Child](#)
8. Read: [Be Worried About Boys, Especially Baby Boys](#)

I. Application

It might be that you had little or none of the *evolved nest*. This may trouble you as you learn more about why each component is important. The attitude we recommend is to understand that humanity is relearning many things it has forgotten in recent centuries when machine thinking took over the dominant culture and natural processes were disparaged. This means we can take in the new information and pledge to change our ways going forward, forgiving ourselves or our parents and families for their lack of knowledge and knowhow.

J. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. Did you learn something?

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

EVOLVED NEST COMPONENT 1: SOOTHING PERINATAL EXPERIENCES

Soothing Perinatal Experiences



Connection and respectful attention.

A. Self-Test your knowledge (select True or False)

1. It is important for babies not to be stressed in the womb. TRUE FALSE
2. Babies are scheduled to grow 75% of their brain after birth. TRUE FALSE
3. Babies are resilient, so crying for more than a few moments is not harmful. TRUE FALSE
4. Babies are sensitive to experiences, so it matters what experiences babies have. TRUE FALSE

B. What are *soothing perinatal experiences*?

Soothing perinatal experiences are the supports that the mother and child dyad receives during pregnancy and birth, as well as during the early days and weeks after birth. The dyad feels welcomed and calmed by others during pregnancy and birth with ongoing social support.

In a naturalistic setting, childbirth is triggered by the baby's signaling readiness to emerge. Birthing follows the interrelational rhythms of mother and child, empowering mother to follow her inborn instincts with little interference. The child is empowered to crawl up mother's belly after birth to initiate breastfeeding. Mother and child are not separated but are allowed to bond fully in the first hours together, skin-to-skin. They stay together much of the time in the first weeks when family and community members wait on mother who "lies in" with baby, healing and learning to recognize baby's signals, and reciprocally communicating with the newborn. The child signals needs with minute gestures and the mother or caregiver responds in kind.

C. Why are *soothing perinatal experiences* important?

Soothing perinatal experiences are vital for brain and body health, for both the mother and baby.

Lack of social support or excessive stress affects the fetus and the mother. Expectant mothers who are excessively stressed biochemically transfer that stress to the fetus, shaping

What If Your Birth Plans Did Not Work Out?

Perhaps you planned for a home birth but then had complications that led to medical intervention. Perhaps you planned for a drug-free birth but ended up with drugs to induce labor or to minimize pain. Or perhaps you had an unexpected C-section. In our modern world, a detour from birth plans is very common for so many reasons, and out of the control of the birther.

As with every evolved nest component, we do our best under hostile circumstances and make up for it in other ways of being responsive to the needs of the child, mending the relationship. It is always good to put your heart in the right place and speak to the child as a partner you are accompanying in life, apologizing if needed, reassuring the child of your presence.

baby's brain to be more stress reactive. Too much stress can cause premature labor and delivery. Premature babies can have a host of developmental delays and compromised health.

Childbirth is generally timed to indicate when the child is ready to be born, which varies according to the individual infant by 55 days (Montagu, 1968, in "Brains, Genes, Culture, Immaturity, and Gestation").

Modern medicalized practices of pregnancy and childbirth can cause trauma. They often interfere with baby's timing (due dates are guesses) and force the baby out early. Instead of a naturalistic birth, medical interference (physiological monitors that prevent the mother from moving at will) and psychological interference (e.g., anticipation of pain) are common, causing maternal fear or intellectualizing, resulting in the contraction of muscles instead of relaxation. During unimpeded labor, natural oxytocin and epinephrine are released by the mother suppressing pain and coordinating uterine contractions; these hormones also support post-birth emotional bonding, facilitating memory, social reward and responsiveness (Buckley, 2015; Lévy et al., 1995).

Vaginal birth may parallel the extensive licking that other newborn mammals receive from their mothers (Montagu, 1978), which jump starts various physiological systems—respiratory, digestion, immunity. Vaginal contractions support brain and intelligence development: the physiological stress of natural birth triggers high levels of mitochondrial uncoupling protein 2 (UCP2) which is related to nutrient utilization critical for normal development and survival of hippocampal and other brain neurons, affecting memory and other functions into adulthood (Simon-Areces et al., 2012). To mimic the pressure of a natural birth, cesarean-birthed babies can be massaged so as to prevent respiratory, digestive and elimination problems.

Baby's first impressions are carried forward and they should be supportive. All nest components are designed to help baby feel secure and connected so they can grow, instead of stopping growth which happens during distress.

1. Read: [Raising a Baby Well: Like Climbing Mount Everest](#)
2. Read: [Five Things NOT To Do To Babies: The Don'ts Of](#)

[Babycare](#)

3. Watch: Joseph Chilton Pearce: [Mother-Infant Bonding & The Intelligence of the Heart](#)

D. What do *soothing perinatal experiences* look like?

1. [Watch](#) or [listen](#) to Evolved Nest Explained: Soothing Perinatal Experiences.
2. [Watch](#) *Evolved Nest Explained—Birth*, with Suzanne Arms, author of New York Times bestseller, *Immaculate Deception*.

E. What facts should you know about *soothing perinatal experiences*?

1. Read: [Nurturing Starts Before Birth](#)
2. Read this series on birth:
 - [Routine Institutionalized Trauma](#)
 - [What's the Use of Doulas and Midwives?](#)
 - [Painkillers for Childbirth? The Few Pros and Many Cons](#)
3. [Listen](#) to Evolved Nest Podcast #23: Dangers Of Separating Children.

F. WRITE or DISCUSS

What have been your impressions or experiences of pregnancy, birth and post-birth in your own life, in community settings, and/or in the media? If you are a pregnant or expectant parent, think about the love you have for your child and imagine how you will show them love.

G. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. What did you learn?

H. What to do now?

1. If you are pregnant or anticipating being pregnant, see the text box, What To Do In Pregnancy and Birth, on the next page.
2. Everyone, go deeper to learn about what happens

What To Do In Pregnancy and Birth

- Relax during pregnancy as much as possible.
- Reduce or eliminate environmental toxins (air, food, water, consumer products) which can not only impair brain function and intelligence, but make one feel less well and socially withdrawn. [Environmental Working Group](#) has lists of product ratings.
- Avoid social and emotional stress because it gets [transferred to the baby](#).
- If at all possible, prepare for a naturalistic birth in a birthing center. Read: [Make America's Kids Healthy: Soothing Birth](#)
- Avoid trauma and induced pain to baby at birth which come from:
 - Separating baby from mom after birth
 - Painful procedures (scrubbing baby, poking with needles, eye gel)
 - Bright lights, chemical smells, rough touches
 - [Circumcision \(causes PTSD in many children, plus long term physical and psychological impairments\)](#). See [Doctors Opposing Circumcision for lots of information](#).

to baby in the womb: <https://www.inuterofilm.com/>

3. Everyone, learn about contemporary birth practices: MOVIE: *Business of Being Born* ([trailer](#))

4. Go deeper to learn about infant circumcision effects:

1. Listen to Darcia Narvaez's [interview of John Geisheker](#), Executive Director and General Counsel of [Doctors Opposing Circumcision](#) (D.O.C.), about what parents should know about infant circumcision.
2. Watch: <https://circumcisionmovie.com/>
3. Read: [Myths About Circumcision You Probably Believe](#)
4. Visit: <https://www.doctorsopposingcircumcision.org/>
5. Visit: <https://www.intactamerica.org/>

I. Professional and Community Application— *Soothing perinatal experiences*

1. Community members: Discuss how you can support pregnant people and the fetuses they carry in the workplace, in the neighborhood, in the community. How can you help them relax and feel welcomed?

2. Medical professionals: Discuss how you can encourage birthing practices to be soothing for mother and baby. Watch videos of natural births to reset your understanding of what is normal for the millions of years of humanity.

J. DAILY SELF ASSESSMENT OF NESTEDNESS— *Soothing perinatal experiences*

Of course, a current self-assessment on experiencing *soothing perinatal experiences* personally is something outside your control. As a teenager or adult, you could find out about your mother's gestation, birth and post-birth experiences with you, if your birth parent is willing to discuss them. If you find out that your mother was very stressed during pregnancy, it may provide a clue into ongoing anxiety and reactivity. If you find out that your birth or post-birth was traumatic, it may give you some insight into body pains, attitudes or bonding issues with your parent. Safe somatic therapy may help find and remedy the source of mental health challenges such as depression or anxiety.

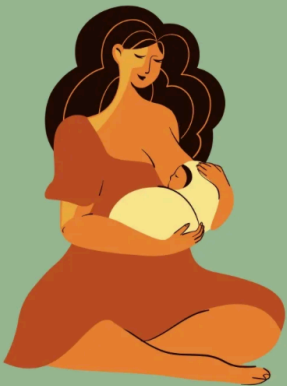
You can self-assess whether you have seen a childbirth, in real life or on video. You have likely seen a Hollywood version of birth (with women lying down, screaming for pain killer). These are not our human heritage. If you have not seen a natural birth, you might look them up, such as a [water birth](#).

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

Self-test responses: 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T

EVOLVED NEST COMPONENT 2: BREASTFEEDING ON REQUEST

Breastfeeding



**On-request
breastfeeding, occurs
for several years.**

A. Self-Test your knowledge (select True or False)

1. Infant formula is just as healthy as breast milk. TRUE FALSE
2. Formula feeding is more convenient than breastfeeding. TRUE FALSE
3. Breastfeeding leads to greater intelligence. TRUE FALSE
4. Children who were never breastfed or who were prematurely weaned experience increased illness throughout all of childhood. TRUE FALSE
5. Breast milk provides the essential building blocks for the immune system. TRUE FALSE

B. What is *Breastfeeding on Request*?

Breast milk is an extraordinary gift that parents can give to their children. *Breastfeeding* refers to the nourishment a mother provides her child from her body. Each species has a unique milk, some have more fat so mother can leave the offspring to go hunting, and some have less fat, meaning that mother stays with the young for frequent feeding. Human milk is thin and should be ingested frequently as it provides the bath of nutrients to build a healthy brain, body, and immune system. The action of breastfeeding also builds the jaw and skull properly, tunes up the vagus nerve (the 10th cranial nerve that innervates all major organs), and keeps oxytocin (the ‘cuddle hormone’) flowing in mom and baby. Breastmilk is tailored to the needs of the child, providing antibodies when needed and greater fat during a growth spurt. It contains energizing agents in the morning and calming agents in the evening. Night milk is particularly important for brain building.

On-request feeding means following the child’s signals for suckling and feeding. The newborn’s stomach is tiny and, because our milk is thin, ingestion typically takes place several times an hour to provide the bath of biochemicals needed for healthy growth. The child will signal a need with a facial grimace or body movement. These early signals should be paid attention to so as not to increase stress hormones in the child. As hunger increases, the child will root, turning the head towards anything that feels like a breast (like a finger on

the cheek). In traditional societies, suckling is used to calm babies, who take months to learn to exist outside the womb.

C. Why is *breastfeeding* important?

Human mothers, who provided immunity through the placenta, continue to provide immunity after birth, first with colostrum immediately after birth and thereafter with breast milk. Although infants have gastric enzymes for digesting their mother’s colostrum and milk, digestive enzymes for other foods do not develop for several months.

Breast milk abounds with infection fighting agents that foster immune and digestive health in the young child. Specific to the environment in which the mother and infant find themselves, mammalian milk produces antibodies for various infective agents (e.g., Slusser & Powers, 1997). Breastfeeding frequency and length matter for mom and child’s long-term health—the longer the better for both. Learn more below.

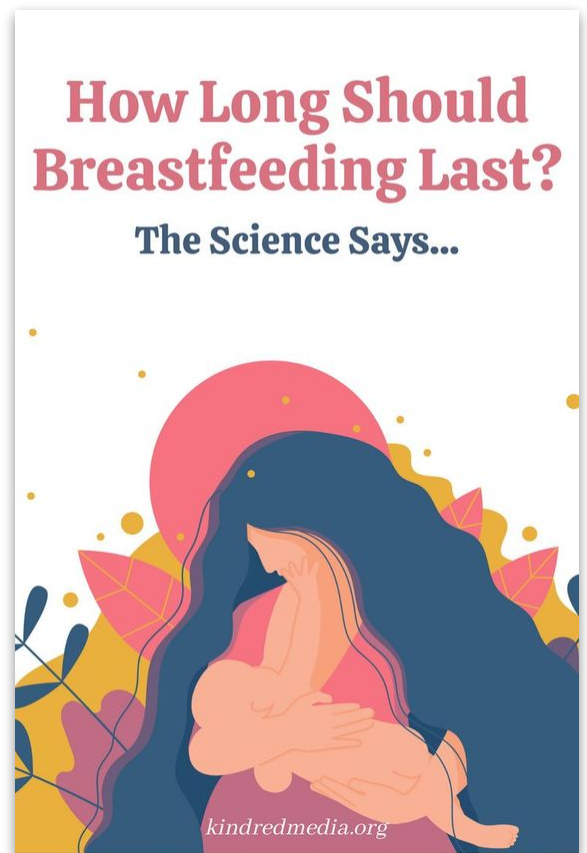
1. Read: [Breastfeeding’s Importance—What Science Tells Us, Part 2 Of...](#)
2. Listen to the *Evolved Nest* Podcasts # 6. The Tremendous Benefits of Breastmilk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcX6wWN7N2w>
3. Read: [Breast Milk Is Medicine For Babies](#)

D. What does *breastfeeding on request* look like?

1. Read: [Why African Babies Don’t Cry](#)
2. Watch *Evolved Nest* Explained: Breastfeeding: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaW0XBBhAug>
3. Read: [Safe Infant Sleep and Breastfeeding Are Partners](#)

E. What facts should you know about *breastfeeding*?

1. **Read:** [Breastfeeding In The USA—A Little History, Part 1 Of 2](#)
2. **Breastfeeding frequency.** Mammalian milk is species specific for each of the over 4,000 mammalian species (AAP, 2005). Human milk is of the thin, rather than thick, variety,



which is related to frequent ingestion or at least suckling (on average every 20 minutes for infants as recorded by anthropologists; see Hewlett & Lamb, 2005; Konner & Worthman, 1980).

2a. Read: [Breast Milk Keeps Time And May Set Baby's Clock](#)

2b. Read: [Safe Infant Sleep And Breastfeeding Are Partners](#)

3. Breastfeeding length. In the ancestral context, breastfeeding took place on average from two to five years (weaning at age four on average; Konner, 2005; 2010). These patterns are still evident in aboriginal populations little influenced by outside cultures. According to Dettwyler's (1995) review humans should be breastfeeding much longer than they are, based on what other primates do in relation to offspring maturation schedule. The end of the range, age six to seven, is when the immune system reaches adult levels and much of the brain is completed (Parham, 2004).

3a. Read: [How Long Should Breastfeeding Last? The Science Says...](#)

F. WRITE or DISCUSS the new facts you learned about breastfeeding and breast milk. What misinformation did you have that was overturned by what you've learned here?

G. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. What did you learn?

H. What to do now?

1. Support mothers who are breastfeeding, whether at home or in public.
2. Go deeper to learn about contemporary challenges to and opportunities for breastfeeding:

WATCH the *Milky Way* Documentary. The *Milky Way* is a documentary exposé about breastfeeding in the United States. It will make every viewer rethink how we treat mothers. The film will empower women to trust their body, their baby, and themselves in their unique journey. Watch the film free, with ads, at [Amazon here](#).

See more clips from the film on their dedicated YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@themilkywaymovie4362/videos>

3. Explore and Learn More:

(a) Kindred's [Breastfeeding Features](#) and [Video Series](#)

(b) Read Darcia's Breastfeeding Posts on Kindred:

What if you tried but were unable to breastfeed?

The lack of successful breastfeeding in some parts of the world has many causes, primarily due to institutional and social obstacles (Brown, 2018). If you were unsuccessful and feel badly about it, please honor your grief, your sadness, rather than feeling shame. The rest of the evolved nest components will do wonders for the wellbeing of your child.

[Skimmed: Breastfeeding, Race and Injustice, A Book Review](#)
[Breastfeeding Moms Face Illegal Discrimination At Work](#)
[What Do You Know About Breastfeeding?](#)
[Breastfeeding As Companionship: An Ancient Tradition](#)
[The Myth Of “Breastfeeding Is Optional”](#)
[New Book, Unlatched, Explores Whether Breastfeeding Is Vital](#)
[What Do You Know About Breastfeeding?](#)
[Breast Milk Is Medicine for Babies](#)
[The Tremendous Benefits of Breast Milk](#)
[Breastfeeding: What Is It Good For?](#)
[Why Breastfeed? Build a Better Brain](#)
[It’s Breastfeeding Week: Why should you care?](#)
[Your Assumptions About Infant Formula Are Probably Wrong](#)
[Myths you probably believe about infant formula](#)
[TREMENDOUS Benefits of Doing What is Normal: Breastfeeding](#)
[5 Things You Thought You Knew About Breastfeeding](#)
[Breastmilk Wipes Out Formula: Responses to Critical Comments](#)
[Is Pushing* Formula Evil?](#)
[The REAL Truth about Breastfeeding](#)
[Stand Up For Breastfeeding](#)
[Breastfeeding Facts to Know and Discuss](#)
[Breastfeeding Resources](#)
[To Doubters of The Importance of Breastfeeding](#)

For Breastfeeders

If you are pregnant or planning to be pregnant or planning to breastfeed, please see the list of resources below. And here is some information you should know **to optimize**

breastfeeding:

- Provide the breast whenever the baby indicates rooting and other signals of need for the breast. This is part of responsive parenting described above.
- Don’t make the baby wait or stress hormones start to flow.
- Breastfeed for at least a year if not two (recommended by the World Health Organization), or even four or five years as in our species-normal societies. Night milk is especially important.
- If you are unsuccessful at breastfeeding, you might look into breast milk banks and breast milk sharing opportunities.

I. Professional and Community Application—*Breastfeeding*

1. Discuss how you can support global and local efforts to encourage breastfeeding. How does your workplace support breastfeeding (and not discourage it)? Visit the [Center for Worklife Law](#) for breastfeeding on-the-job rights and resources. How does your neighborhood support breastfeeding?
2. Support, join or learn from one of more of the organizations in the list of resources.

J. DAILY SELF ASSESSMENT OF NESTEDNESS – *Breastfeeding*

Breastfeeding is scheduled by our species' evolution for the first years of life, so you can't really assess what was your ongoing experience in infancy when you are a teenager or adult. For this component, you may be able to find out whether you were breastfed and for how long. Your breastfeeding experiences in early life may provide some understanding for your current health. If you were not breastfed or not for very long and you have digestive or other health issues, you might consider looking into probiotic treatments, which are becoming more available, though data about them are still being collected. There are also several other things you can do now to help rebuild your body as a result of possibly not getting adequate breastmilk such as eating nutritiously, getting sufficient exercise and social support.

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

Self-Test answers: 1. F 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. T.

List of Resources for Breastfeeding

ASSISTANCE WITH BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding Hotline. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women’s Health offer a breastfeeding help hotline. The hotline is helmed by trained breastfeeding peer counselors and provides support by phone. **The phone number is 800-994-9662 (TDD 888-220-5446).** The hotline is open Monday-Friday 9am-6pm. You can call after hours and leave a message. A breastfeeding peer counselor will return your call on the next business day.

[International Lactation Consultant Association](#) Professional association for lactation consultants and breastfeeding promotion advocates

[La Leche League](#). Our Mission is to help mothers worldwide to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information, and education, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother.

[Milk Mob](#). The Milk Mob, now known as the Institute for the Advancement of Breastfeeding and Lactation Education, IABLE, is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to optimize the promotion and support of breastfeeding for families in the outpatient sector. The Milk Mob is dedicated to building Breastfeeding Friendly Medical Systems and Communities, through:

1. Education of medical staff, providers, and other outpatient community breastfeeding supporters,
2. Guidance in the development and sustainment of breastfeeding support networks within medical systems,
3. Collaboration of breastfeeding support between hospitals, outpatient medical systems and community institutions for collective impact,
4. Provision of educational resources for breastfeeding

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hotline@worklifelaw.org

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educators, such as sharing of educational materials, creation of audiovisual media, and tools for community supporters that promote consistent, evidence-based support of breastfeeding dyads.

INFORMATIONAL SOURCES

[Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine](#). The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine is a worldwide organization of physicians dedicated to the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding and human lactation. Its mission is to unite into one association members of the various medical specialties with this common purpose.

[Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative USA](#) Non-profit organization implementing the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in the USA which is intended to promote breastfeeding rather than undermine it.

[Breastfeeding and Child Custody Toolkit](#). The Michigan Breastfeeding Network has published the “[Breastfeeding and Child Custody Toolkit](#)” as part of their [Breastfeeding Roadblock Kits series](#). The toolkit guides readers through the issues surrounding breastfeeding and child custody, including information on the legal landscape. It includes template letters to the court, resources for parents, and a platform for sharing stories.

[CDC Breastfeeding Resources](#). CDC’s Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO) is committed to increasing breastfeeding rates throughout the United States and to promoting and supporting optimal breastfeeding practices toward the ultimate goal of improving the public’s health.

[College Campus Breastfeeding Policy Toolkit](#). A Model Policy providing best practices on pregnancy and parenting accommodations, leave, and non-discrimination, in compliance with Title IX and other federal law. The text can be adapted as a memo or included in your institution’s existing policy.

[National Breastfeeding Awareness Initiative](#). On this website, you can learn more about breastfeeding. You also can find tips and suggestions to help you successfully breastfeed, whether you decide to breastfeed for two weeks, two years, or more.

[United States Breastfeeding Coalition Directory](#). Find your state breastfeeding coalition.

[United States Breastfeeding Committee](#). USBC is an independent nonprofit coalition of more than 50 nationally influential professional, educational, and governmental organizations that share a common mission to drive collaborative efforts for policy

and practices that create a landscape of breastfeeding support across the United States.

[World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action](#) Generates information on World Breastfeeding Week.

[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) Read the WHO International Breastfeeding Code.

MILK SHARING

[Eats on Feets](#). Community Breastmilk Sharing. Eats On Feets facilitates a world-wide network of parents and professionals who have made the informed choice to share or support the sharing of breastmilk.

[Human Milk Banking Association of North America](#). Human milk is a precious resource. Even with milk banks, the availability of donor milk is very limited. Sometimes, a mother chooses not to breastfeed, or for whatever reason is unable to breastfeed. Some babies MUST receive human milk in order to survive. In these cases, doctors will prescribe human milk for the child. In a perfect world, all babies would receive breastmilk, either from their mother or from a donor, and the artificial milk industry would be very limited. Wouldn't it be wonderful if "formula" were only available by prescription?

[Human Milk 4 Human Babies, HM4HB](#). HM4HB is a global milksharing network, a virtual village, comprising thousands of people from over fifty countries. We are mothers, fathers, adoptive families, grandparents, childbirth and breastfeeding professionals, volunteers, supporters, donors, and recipients that have come together to support the simple idea that all babies and children have the right to receive human milk. We use social media as a platform for local families to make real-life connections and come together as sustainable milksharing communities where women graciously share their breastmilk. HM4HB is built on the principle of informed choice: we trust, honour, and value the autonomy of families and we assert they are capable of weighing the benefits and risks of milksharing in order to make choices that are best for them.

[International Milk Banking Initiative](#). The International Milk Banking Initiative (IMBI) is a group of milk banks and health care providers interested in establishing an international association of non-profit milk banks globally through the development of better communication. The IMBI was founded at the International HMBANACongress held in Washington DC area in 2005.

SUPPORT AIMED AT PARTICULAR COMMUNITIES

Black Breastfeeding Week. Black Breastfeeding Week was created because for over 40 years there has been a gaping racial disparity in breastfeeding rates. The most recent CDC data show that 75% of white women have ever breastfed versus 58.9% of black women. The fact that racial disparity in initiation and an even bigger one for duration has lingered for so long is reason enough to take 7 days to focus on the issue, but here are a few more.

Black Mothers Breastfeeding Association. BMBFA is a non-profit organization. Our mission is to reduce racial inequities in breastfeeding support for African Americans by building foundational networks of support and strengthening systems to overcome historical, societal and social barriers to breastfeeding success.

National Association of Professional and Peer Lactation Supporters of Color. Our mission is to cultivate a community of diverse professional and peer lactation supporters to transform communities of color through policy, breastfeeding, and skilled lactation care.

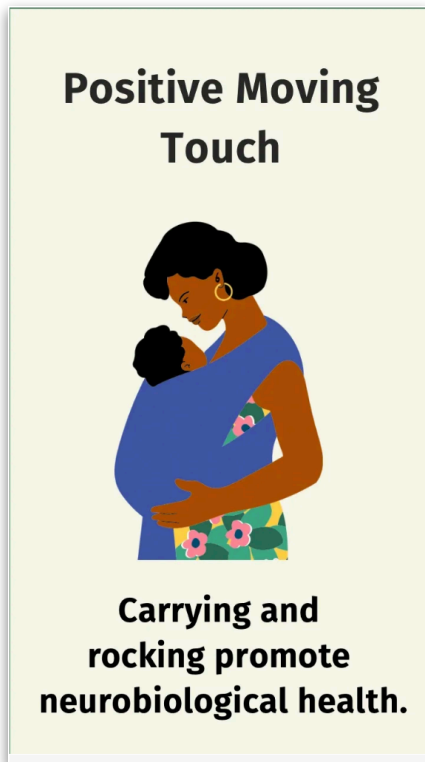
Racial Equity Learning Community. The United States Breastfeeding Committee has been funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to host this community as part of an inclusive learning and transformation process for the “First Food” field. The community will build the capacity of the breastfeeding field to apply both an “equity lens” to inform and guide our external strategies and activities, but also an “equity mirror” to examine our internal structures, culture, and policies.

Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere, ROSE. An organization dedicated to addressing the breastfeeding disparity among people of color nationwide through education programs, advocacy and other efforts. The organization’s pioneering work was recently rewarded with a more than [\\$1 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.](#)

Uzazi. Black Infant Mortality Walk. Uzazi Village’s mission is to decrease the maternal and infant health disparities found at the urban core, particularly among African-American women, but also other at-risk populations residing there.

EVOLVED NEST COMPONENT 3:

POSITIVE TOUCH (& NO NEGATIVE TOUCH)



A. Self-Test your knowledge (select True or False)

1. Babies expect to be physically in touch almost 24/7. TRUE FALSE
2. Spankings are important for discipline. TRUE FALSE
3. It is important to cuddle. TRUE FALSE
4. Touch can help you calm down. TRUE FALSE

B. What is *positive touch*? What is *negative touch*?

Positive touch, such as cuddles, hugs and cosleeping, is needed throughout life to maintain our wellbeing through hormonal activation (e.g., oxytocin). Welcomed, positive touch calms us and makes us feel connected.

In early life, *positive touch* is provided constantly to a baby to ensure healthy growth and maintain a sense of security. Feeling loved through affectionate touch opens the heart and builds relational attunement. Being in arms or in slings on

backs is what babies evolved to expect—frequent *movement* and jostling, moving from the arms of one caregiver to those of another. At least six hours daily of carrying and holding appear to be needed. When there is a lack of affectionate touch, and/or lack of moving touch, neurobiological systems may not be established properly (e.g., Weaver et al., 2004) and the child may feel out of balance and cry more.

Negative touch is anything that induces pain from one person to another. In babyhood, such experiences will shift the trajectory of normal growth, undermine trust in self-direction and in relationships. In childhood, negative touch (e.g., corporal punishment) results in outcomes similar to those of physical abuse—e.g., greater aggression, less concern for others.

C1. Why is *positive touch* important?

Positive touch is needed in childhood to grow body and brain systems in healthy ways. Welcomed *positive touch* makes us feel like we matter, like we are loved.

Most studies of touch are done with other animals (using techniques considered unethical with humans) but they give us indicators of effects. Human babies are much more social and malleable than are other animals, so any conclusions drawn must be cautiously applied to humans. Any effects would likely be much stronger in human babies. Studies of offspring separation from mother show:

- Losing contact with the parent is distressing.
- Physical separation activates painful emotions (Ladd, Owens, & Nemeroff, 1996; Panksepp, 2003; Sanchez, Ladd, & Plotsky, 2001)
- Multiple systems are regulated by the presence of the mother, and quickly become dysregulated when she is physically absent (Hofer, 1994).
- Even a few minutes of separation in rat babies causes lifelong changes in stress response (Levine, 2005). Mild and graded separation when a child is older may help the offspring cope with the stress of separation (Katz et al., 2009), though every child is different and must be sensitively responded to.
- Monkeys isolated from adults when babies spend their lives with deficits of 5-HIAA, a main metabolite of serotonin (critical for intelligence and happiness, social behavior) (e.g., Kalin, 1999; Suomi, 2006).
- Children left in Romanian orphanages with only physical care (diaper changes, bottles) and no affection show deficits in brain white matter (the myelination that enable brain cell communications) years later as do children who are neglected (McLaughlin et al., 2017).

Mothers separated from their babies also suffer. Their bonding to the child can be impaired as hormonal systems are not activated as physiologically expected. As a result, separation can trigger depressive reactions (Buckley, 2015).

Adolescents and adults also need affectionate touch—for oxytocin release, reassurance, calmness, connection. Isolation can make us ill. Solitary confinement can bring about psychosis (Gawande, 2009).

FIND OUT MORE:

1. Watch: VIDEO: [Evolved Nest Explained: Touch](#)
2. Read: [Cuddling Alters Genetics for Years](#)

C2. Why is *negative touch* harmful?

Inducing pain through physical force is called corporal

Touch Advice for Parents, Grandparents and Caregivers

- Carry, hold, rock your baby as much as possible.
- Stay physically close to baby (mostly touching) 24/7. For nighttime, check out cosleeping.nd.edu
- Practice skin-to-skin contact as much as you can.
- For older children, play with them in whole body ways. Cuddles and roughhousing!

punishment. It includes not only spanking but pinching and slapping. Studied for decades, it has long term negative consequences (Gershoff et al., 2012), such as depression, drug use, antisocial behavior, self-injurious behavior and suicide. In other words, spanking has the same effects as physical abuse.

1. Read: [The Dangers Of Spanking A Baby](#)
2. Read: [Research on Spanking: It's Bad For ALL Kids](#)
3. Read: [Dear Parents, No Spanking Says The APA](#)
4. Read: [Why Adults Spanks Kids and What Are The Alternatives?](#)

D. What does *positive touch* look like?

1. Read: [How to Respect a Baby Through Positive Touch](#)
2. Read: [Ten Reasons to Wear Your Baby](#)

E. What facts should you know about *positive touch* and *negative touch*?

1. Read: [Make America's Children Great Again, Part 2: Affection](#)
2. Read: [Hugs and Cuddles instead of Spanking](#)
3. Read: [Kangaroo Mother Care](#)
4. Read: [Ending Corporal Punishment Of Children: A New Report](#)

F. WRITE or DISCUSS your experience of positive touch. Cultures and families differ in how much touch they habitually express. How much and what kind of touch did your family share? Have you noticed cultural and family differences? What kinds of touch do you prefer? Do you touch others? How do you convey affection to others if you don't touch?

G. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. What did you learn?

H. What to do now?

1. If you are single or live in difficult circumstances for positive touch, for ideas watch <https://www.jordangrayconsulting.com/physical-touch-when-youre-single/>
2. Going deeper to learn about the lack of positive touch and the impact of negative touch: Watch *Origin of Love and Violence*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTwzJe-rvUs> _

I. Professional and Community Application—*Positive touch*

Positive touch is a challenge in USA institutions today with the fears of sexual harassment and abuse. But one danger of not getting enough affectionate touch is seeking a replacement for it, such as harsh touch or opportunistic sex.

1. Write or discuss the rules of touch at your workplace. Have you explicitly discussed touch practices? Ask others what they prefer instead of making assumptions. How can you make touch a part of your daily routine at work?

2. Reflect on whether people (positively) touch in your neighborhood? One traditional way to do this is through folk dancing, and other forms of dancing. Free play (chase/tag, wrestling) also is a way to promote positive touch (check out [Original Play](#) for guidance).

J. DAILY SELF ASSESSMENT OF NESTEDNESS – Touch

MY TOUCH EXPERIENCES

1. Did I get enough positive touch today? YES NO

If yes, think about the experience and plan to enjoy that experience again.

If no, for at least 20 minutes, cuddle with a person or a pet, hug a tree, lie on the earth.

2. Do I regularly get enough positive touch? YES NO

If no, here are some ideas, besides the ones above: Develop a habit of greeting friends with a hug. Ask friends for hugs. Hugs are best if they last for 90 seconds with deep breathing. Use a heavy blanket at night. Use an earthing blanket. Get a touch-friendly pet like a dog, cat, a gerbil, hamster, or rabbit. Practice self massage.

3. Did I receive negative or harsh touch, touch that I did not want?

If yes, talk to the person who treated you this way using a nonviolent communication approach: “I feel [xxx] when you [action] and I would like you to stop that.” You could tell them how you expect to be treated instead.

TOUCHING FAMILY AND FRIENDS: For most people, friendly positive touch reassures and connects. If you don’t have habits of touching friends and family through hugs and holding, you could discuss a possible change. You can ask others if they would like a hug before you hug them. Notice their reactions if you touch them on the arm. Discuss touch preferences.

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

Self-test responses: 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T

EVOLVED NEST COMPONENT 4:

WELCOMING SOCIAL CLIMATE



A. Self-Test your knowledge (select True or False)

1. Our species is highly social and welcoming. TRUE
FALSE
2. I know how to welcome someone. TRUE FALSE
3. Welcoming young children is especially important. TRUE
FALSE
4. People are competitive instead of cooperative. TRUE
FALSE

B. What is a *welcoming social climate*?

A *welcoming social climate* means being in a group where you feel like you matter, like you are connected, safe, and wanted. You are able to make others smile and laugh and vice versa. For babies a *welcoming social climate* is conveyed through physical means like nearly constant touch and skin-to-skin contact during feeding. Baby's continuum of physical connection is never intentionally broken. With mobility, a child expands a sense of connection to things she can approach, touch, and test, in the natural world. Nature forms part of the welcoming committee. A sense of welcome follows the child almost everywhere they go.

Each of us needs to feel welcome throughout life. That means we are not categorized as a member of a group but are seen as unique individuals with gifts to offer. We can treat others in welcoming ways to encourage such treatment in return.

C. Why is a *welcoming social climate* important?

We evolved to be a highly social and cooperative species. Our early life experiences help shape how cooperative we become. When our caregivers are empathetic and supportive, our neurobiology grows in such a way to shape our personality to be the same.

A welcoming community of support promotes positive emotions and fulfills our need for a sense of belonging.

Welcoming support is particularly important for mother and fetus/baby/child. Human mothers evolved to have a built-in safety net of other adult support throughout their motherhood (Hrdy, 2009). Supportive social contact is known to be a positive influence during birthing and post-natal mother-child communication (Klaus & Kennel, 1976), and in fact, three attentive adults (parents and/or alloparents) appear to be optimal for children to thrive (Sagi et al., 1995; van Ijzendoorn, Sagi, & Lambermon, 1992).

1. Read: [Welcoming Social Environments For Babies](#)
2. Read: [Why Keep Baby Happy? A Baby's Cry Is A Late Signal Of...](#)
3. Read: [Ten Things Everyone Should Know About Babies](#)
4. Read: [Natives Foster Happy People Without Overthinking](#)

D. What does a *welcoming social climate* look like?

Welcoming children:

1. Watch: Jean Liedloff on *The Continuum Concept*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmnrTBFu6hg> (15 minutes) or
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yff0eL74tGE> (54 minutes)
2. Read: [Bullying Starts With Babies](#)
3. Read: [Early Partnership Childhood Care: What Should Centers Provide?](#)

Welcoming everyone:

4. Read: [Earth Home Economics: Rebecca Adamson And "Enoughness"](#)
5. Read: [Your Attention Matters](#)

E. What facts should you know about a *welcoming social climate*?

1. Watch [Evolved Nest Explained on Companionship, Responsiveness, & Attachment](#)
2. Listen to [Evolved Nest Podcast #14: Peace](#)

Welcoming social environment if you are going to be a parent/grandparent:

1. Plan a "laying in" after childbirth, where others wait on mother and baby. This is common practice in traditional societies.
2. Get a community of support together for mother and baby (ideally other adult relatives are supportive of helping provide the evolved nest).
3. Read: [Building a Support Network](#)
4. Join a support group:
 1. [Attachment Parenting International](#)
 2. [Holistic Moms Network](#)
5. [Click here](#) to see the checklist we have developed for parents to determine how much a child care center matches up with the [evolved nest](#).
6. Read: [Teaching Your Baby American Sign Language](#)

Ethology

3. Read: Making America's Children Healthy Again: Togetherness

F. WRITE or DISCUSS about a time when you were new to a group but felt included. How did one or more group members help you feel welcomed? What did they do? Contrast that with a time when you felt excluded. What was different?

G. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. What did you learn?

H. What to do now?

1. Learn from wiki-how [How to Welcome New People](#).
2. One way to experience a welcoming environment is to build one yourself. You can do this by making food or gifts for others in your group or neighborhood. You can sponsor a pot-luck get-together. You can organize an outing together.

I. Professional and Community Application— Welcoming social climate

1. Find out more about a welcoming work climate: <https://talentmap.com/top-6-ways-to-create-a-welcoming-culture/>
2. Discuss/Write:
 - a. How does your workplace welcome everyone? What improvements could be made?
 - b. How do you send welcome messages to the children and youth in your community? To newcomers? To people different from you?
3. Learn more: Kindred articles on [Paid Parental Leave](#) and [Paid Family Leave](#); Kindred articles and videos on [Worksite Breastfeeding-Friendly Law](#)
4. How welcoming is your community to children, the elderly, and newcomers? Discuss/Write about ways to create practices that support the wellbeing of the whole community.

J. DAILY SELF ASSESSMENT OF NESTEDNESS— Welcoming social climate

1. WELCOMING: Did I feel a welcoming vibe today? YES NO
If yes, think about what made it welcoming and plan to enjoy that experience again.
If no, call/text a friend or acquaintance who always shines on you.
2. TOGETHERNESS: Did I feel connected to other people enough today? YES NO
If yes, think about what you did and plan to enjoy that experience again.
If not, contact a friend or acquaintance and plan a get together.

We can help others feel welcomed too.

1. WELCOMING OTHERS: Did I express a welcoming vibe today? YES NO

If yes, think about what you did and plan to behave that way again.

If not, think about one or more ways to express welcoming tomorrow.

2. TOGETHERNESS WITH OTHERS: Did I help others feel connected to the community (including the rest of the natural world) today? YES NO

If yes, think about what you did and plan to enjoy that experience again.

If not, think of ways to help others you meet feel connected to the community and rest of the natural world.

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

Self-Test responses: 1. T 2. – 3. T 4. F

EVOLVED NEST COMPONENT 5:

SELF-DIRECTED (FREE) PLAY WITH MULTIPLE AGED MATES

Self-Directed Social Play



Frequent play with multi-aged mates.

A. Self-Test your knowledge (select True or False)

1. Children should be taught to learn, not play. TRUE FALSE
2. Play is the best way to learn. TRUE FALSE
3. Playing should stop after childhood. TRUE FALSE

B. What is *self-directed (free) play*?

Self-directed play is play that brings about feelings of freedom, joy and creativity. It is self-directed in that the individual (child or adult), is free to interact with others, including non-humans, in a way that promotes overwhelming feelings of positivity, connection and mutual relation. It is a shifting set of spontaneous interactions between persons, human and/or non-human. It is characterized by a sense of safety, trust, and fun. It is creative and changing based on the interests of the players. Best examples are chase or tag, wrestling, and creative drama. Self-directed free social play does *not* refer to play organized by adults, like sports or clubs.

In our ancestral context, free play occurred with multiple ages. We were not stuck in same-age peer groups but lived and played with people of different ages, throughout life.

C. Why is *self-directed free play* important?

Humans are mammals. Young mammals play when they feel safe and well but will not play when they feel afraid or unwell. Rough-and-tumble play is expected by most young children and helps with brain development in various ways. People who grow up with little self-directed social play experience tend to be more aggressive and have other behavior disorders (e.g., van den Berg et al., 1999), as well as diminished academic achievement (Barros, Silver & Stein, 2009). All ages play in our ancestral environment, keeping connectedness and **positive** emotion predominant. Playing with people from different ages helps individuals learn to adjust to different player partner interests and capacities.

1. Listen to PODCAST #18: [What is Free Play?](#)
2. Read: [Does Too Much Screen Time Make Kids Sick?](#)
3. Read: [Why Is Play Good For Young Children?](#)
4. Read: [Parent Touch, Play And Support In Childhood Vital To Well-Being As An Adult](#)
5. Read: [Social Play: A Longstanding Way To Cope](#)

D. What does *self-directed play* look like?

1. Watch [Evolved Nest Explained video: Play](#)
2. Watch [Original play](#) (2.5 min)
3. Watch [O. Fred Donaldson on Original Play](#) (12 min)
4. Watch [examples of parent-child play](#)
5. Watch [New Zealand's School with No Rules](#)
6. Read: [How To Play As An Adult](#)
7. [Watch: The Power of Play with Mallory Nezam](#)

E. What facts should you know about *self-directed play*?

1. Read: [Children May Be Playing, But Their Brains Are Working](#)
2. Read: [Is Pretend Play Good For Kids?](#)
3. Read: [Attachment Social Play For Self-Transformation](#)
4. Watch: [Play vs Screen time](#) (1 min)
5. Watch: [The Role of Play in Any Setting](#)

F. WRITE or DISCUSS ways that you played in childhood. Did you have time for *self-directed (free) play*? Did you play with differently aged playmates? What were your favorite activities at different ages. How do you play today? Do you play every day? Do you have favorite play mates?

G. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. What did you learn?

H. What to do now?

1. Try the 29 Days of Solo Play for Adults [found here](#).
2. Check out these resources
 - [Original Play](#)
 - [Free Range Kids](#)
 - [How to Encourage Free Play](#)
 - [Let's Play America](#)
3. Go deeper: Watch "[Surprising truths about play in the natural world](#)"

4. Learn more from **blog series on play:**

1. [Happiness and Growth Through Play](#)
2. [Playing with Heart](#)
3. [Children May Be Playing, But Their Brains Are Working](#)
4. [Is Pretend Play Good For Kids?](#)
5. [Playing at School: More Important Than We Thought?](#)
6. [Infant Couch Potatoes](#)
7. [What's Better: Indoor or Outdoor Play?](#)

I. Professional and Community Application— *Self-directed play*

1. WRITE OR DISCUSS: How is your workplace playful? Play is part of creativity. Friendly social play is part of staying connected to others and the spirit of the universe. How can you encourage more play at work?

2. Does your neighborhood play together? Read about how to set up play days in your neighborhood:

1. [The Play Lady Tells Us How to Become Play-ers](#)
2. [How to Start a Play Committee in Your Community](#)
3. [How to Plan a Play Day in Your Community](#)
4. [Pushing Play in the Community](#)
5. [Why Close a Street to Play as a Community?](#)
6. [Make Play Part of a Planned Community Event](#)
7. [Inter-generational Games Night](#)
8. [Community Service: Teens Make Great Play Advocates](#)



DAY ONE

28 Days of Solo Play

Doodle dramatically whenever, wherever you can.

kindredmedia.org

9. [Start a Play Club in Your School](#)

10. [The Benefits of Play Events in Your Community](#)

**J. DAILY SELF ASSESSMENT OF NESTEDNESS—
*Self-directed free play***

MY PLAY:

1. Did I play freely enough today? YES NO
2. Did I get silly enough today to make me laugh (more than once)? YES NO

If yes, think about what you did and plan to enjoy that experience again.

If no, play right now. Here are some suggestions:

- put on music and wiggle different parts of your body
- put on music and dance like different animals
- keep a ball of paper in the air with different parts of your body,
- talk or sing in a goofy way.

Think about tomorrow: Who can you be silly with? Where can you find a safe place to play?

OTHERS' NESTED PLAY:

1. Did I get playful enough today to make someone else laugh? YES NO
2. Did I encourage others to be silly today? YES NO

If yes, think about what you did and plan to enjoy that experience again.

If no, make plans or be ready to do so tomorrow.

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

**Play Advice for
Parents/
Grandparents/
Caregivers:**

- Try not to interfere in your child's natural play instinct. For example, create a space where you can let baby and toddler explore on their own without interference.
- Build into your child's day several self-directed social playtimes.
- Let your child be outside on his or her own when possible.
- Encourage social play with differently-aged playmates. Although adult-directed sports or other play activities might be good too, self-directed free play is different and important.

Self-test responses: 1. F 2. T 3. F

EVOLVED NEST COMPONENT 6:

STABLE RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING

Multiple Allo "Mothers"



**A village of stable care
promotes health.**

A. Self-Test your knowledge (select True or False)

1. You can spoil babies with too much attention. TRUE FALSE
2. Babies don't remember their early experiences. TRUE FALSE
3. Babies should be taught independence. TRUE FALSE
4. Babies are self-absorbed and don't remember their caregivers. TRUE FALSE

B. What is *stable responsive caregiving*?

Responsive caregiving will vary by developmental age and other factors. For children 0-3, responsive caregiving keeps baby calm and content. *Stable responsive caregiving* means the child develops relationships with the same set of people over years. Young children feel known by and learn to attune to a stable set of caregivers who resonate or magnetically connect with baby's growing brain.

Across ages, *responsive caregiving* is warm and tender and not violent or coercive. Throughout our lives, we need attuned, responsive care that assist in meeting our basic needs, helping us stay regulated in calm contentment and connectedness.

C. Why is *responsive caregiving* important?

1. Watch video on attachment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjOowWxOXCg> (7 min)
2. Read: [Bronco-Buster Parenting: Baby Unwise](#)
3. Read: [The Single Most Important Thing To Know About A Baby](#)
4. Read: [Killing Mothering, the Center of Society](#)
5. Read: [The Science and Art of Mothering](#)
6. Read: [New Moms Need Social Support](#)
7. Read: [Why Babies Need Dads Too](#)

D. What does *responsive caregiving* look like?

1. Read: [Respecting Babies And Young Children](#)
2. Read: **The “What Happened To Mothering” Series:**
 - Part 1: [Mother Love Used to Matter](#)
 - Part 2: [What Is “Good Enough Mothering” of a Baby?](#)
 - Part 3: [Why Provide Empathic Care for Infants?](#)
 - Part 4: [Disbelieving the Importance of Mothering](#)
3. Read: [What Good Enough Mothers Do: And What Infants Need](#)

E. What facts should you know about *responsive caregiving*?

1. Read: Blog post: [The Dangers of “Crying It Out”](#)
2. Read: [Can You Spoil A Baby?](#)
3. Read: [Why Keep Baby Happy?](#)
3. Read: [Parents Misled By Cry-It-Out Sleep Training Reports](#)
4. Read: [The Roots of Pathology](#): Authoritarianism Towards Babies

F. WRITE or DISCUSS your experience of responsiveness from caregivers in your childhood. Did you feel like your needs were met? Who in your childhood helped you feel loved?

G. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. What did you learn?

H. What to do now?

1. Be responsive to babies and young children you meet. Careful not to be too intrusive or act too quickly or they might get scared.
2. Be convivial with everyone you meet, growing connection even with just a hello.
3. Go deeper: Watch MOVIE: *Babies* ([trailer](#))

I. Professional and Community Application—

Parents/ Grandparents/Future Parents/ Grandparents:

- Learn the cues your baby gives to signal needs. Skin-to-skin contact is especially good for this in the early hours, days and months of life.

- Watch *Serve and Return*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_5u8-QSh6A (1.5 min)

- Learn to move in with a response before your baby cries—in order to keep baby in optimal arousal. Otherwise your baby will practice becoming distressed as part of his personality.

- See [28 Days of Baby Care](#) to hone your sensitivity.

- [Learn more about co-sleeping:](#)

- Read: [Safe Infant Sleep and Breastfeeding Are Partners](#)

- Investigate the information at: cosleeping.nd.edu

Responsive caregiving

1. Write or discuss ways that your workplace can help encourage parents and community members to be responsive to the needs of children. How do you support stable caregiving—with babies-to-work or in-house day care? Do you have right-sized furniture? Does the workplace have activities for visiting children? Are there regular family-friendly gatherings?

Some communities put together retirement communities and child care centers to encourage cross-age relations. Could your community do this?

2. Write or discuss your neighborhood's caregiving support for children and families. How can you help ensure that parents can provide stable support to their children? Are neighbors friendly to children? Are there playgrounds nearby? Are children encouraged to play outside together?

3. Start an initiative to increase support for caregivers and children. Check out the [resources](#) at the Search Institute.

J. DAILY SELF ASSESSMENT OF NESTEDNESS—*Responsive caregiving*

In the audio podcast, *What Adults Did to Me at Birth: A Baby's Point of View*, Darcia Narvaez speaks as the persona, Babyheart, to explain experiences of disconnection from the newborn's point of view. Listen [here](#).

YOUR CHILDHOOD: Becoming aware of how responsive your early life experiences were may provide light on how to help accelerate your personal healing journey going forward. You might have a sense of it already. You could take some meditation time to put yourself back in that time period to 'feel out' what you experienced. This is best done with a therapist. Then you can take steps to re-nurture yourself in the areas where a deficit is felt—e.g., self-esteem, social relations, motivation.

RESPONSIVE RELATIONSHIP NOW:

Do you have one or more friends to whom you can turn for support when needed? Are you able to call, text, email or see them in person? Do they listen to you? And do you listen to them?

If you don't have a supportive friend, decide to find new friends by doing one of the following: join a club, take a class, volunteer at a local nonprofit, join a social group. After you become more acquainted, you can ask people out for a walk, for coffee or other event. Start slow and build to a comfortable pattern. Don't become discouraged if someone turns you down. There are many people out there looking for friendships.

RESPONSIVENESS TO OTHERS: Regardless of your own childhood experience, you can choose to be responsive and friendly to others now. You are part of the universe of relationships around everyone. Just a smile or a wave can help people feel like others care. Not expecting a response, especially if this is a new behavior, is a good place to start. Remember that they may feel disconnected and need help reconnecting. Then, over time you can build rapport through listening and friendly conversation.

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

Self-Test answers: 1. F 2. F 3. F 4. F

EVOLVED NEST COMPONENT 7:

ALLOPARENTS or MULTIPLE SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Responsive Relationships



Responsiveness to needs and cues.

A. Self-Test your knowledge (select True or False)

1. In a supportive relationship, you are listened to.
2. In a responsive relationship, you are punished when needed.
3. In a supportive relationship, you can be yourself without fear.
4. Support can come from strangers.

B. What are *allop*arents or *multiple responsive relationships*?

Allop

arents are caregivers who are nurturing and respond to children like a loving parent. In early life traditionally, mothers are nearby while the allop

arent is attending to the child's needs. As the child matures, they are able to choose which allop

arent to approach for support for a particular issue. Throughout life, we all need supportive mentors and guides as we face the challenges of life.

C. Why are *multiple responsive relationships* important throughout life?

During the period of rapid brain development that occurs in the first years of life, babies and young children need rapid attention to their needs for comfort, affection and play. It's too much for one person, so our species evolved a village of care (Hrdy, 2009). Allomothers, allop

arents or other nurturers support mother during pregnancy and throughout the life of the child, providing responsive care, positive touch and play.

However, every age needs responsive relationships, guidance and mentoring. Even you.

1. Read: [Allomothers: Our Evolved Support System For Mothers](#)
2. Read: [What Wise Elders Know](#)

3. Read: [Allomothers: We Were Never Meant To Mother Alone](#)

D. What do *multiple responsive relationships* look like throughout life?

1. Read: [What Does It Mean to Matter?](#)

2. Read: [What Do Good Mentors Do?](#)

E. What facts should you know about *multiple responsive relationships*?

1. Listen to [Evolved Nest Podcasts #8: Attachment Companionship](#)

2. Watch [Evolved Nest Explained: Allomothers/Alloparents](#)

F. WRITE or DISCUSS: Name two or three people that have helped you out in a memorable way. Sometimes it is a stranger who says the right thing at the right time. Then think about how you help support and mentor others in your life today.

G. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. What did you learn?

H. What to do now?

1. Teens, if you need/want a mentor, check out [this advice](#).

2. Adults, if you need/want a mentor, check out [this advice](#).

I. Professional and Community Application—*Multiple responsive relationships*

1. Discuss: How do you mentor others in your work and daily activities? What practices does your institution have in place to help new members? To help people from diverse backgrounds? What more could you do?

2. Discuss: How does your neighborhood pay attention to the relational wellbeing of all members? Do you have gatherings that bring all ages together?

3. Explore the [resources](#) for supporting relationships in multiple contexts at the Search Institute

J. DAILY SELF ASSESSMENT OF NESTEDNESS—*Multiple supportive relationships*

1. RESPONSIVENESS: Did I get listened to enough today? YES NO

If yes, think about how it happened and plan to enjoy that experience again.

If not, communicate with a friend or write in your journal.

2. MENTORING SUPPORT: Did I get the guidance I needed today? YES NO

If yes, think about how it happened and plan to enjoy that experience again.
If not, contact a friend or mentor and plan a conversation.

Let's also think about nesting others.

3. RESPONSIVENESS TO OTHERS: Did I listen to others enough today? YES NO

If yes, think about how it happened and plan to enjoy that experience again.

If not, plan to be more responsive tomorrow.

4. MENTORING/SUPPORTING OTHERS:

a. Was I open to helping others today? YES NO

b. Did I help others today (respectfully, without intrusion)? YES NO

If yes, think about how it happened and plan to enjoy that experience again.

If not, plan to be ready to help if needed tomorrow.

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

Self-Test answers: 1. F 2. F 3. F 4. F

EVOLVED NEST COMPONENT 8:

NATURE IMMERSION AND CONNECTION



A. Self-Test your knowledge (select True or False)

1. Getting outside can calm you down. TRUE FALSE
2. Humans have always been separate from nature. TRUE FALSE
3. Humans can cooperate with animals and plants. TRUE FALSE

B. What is *Nature immersion*? What is *Nature connection*?

Nature immersion refers to embodied experience with the rest of the natural world. Ideally, it is a full embodied experience, as in lake, ocean or forest bathing where the senses are fully engaged with Nature. Nature immersion can also take place through play with animals, gardening, and other person-with-Nature experiences.

Nature connection refers to the feeling of oneness with Nature, including feelings of empathy and concern for the wellbeing of natural entities in nature, like waterways, Plants and Animals. It is expressed in behaviors of mindfulness and desires to learn how to be more respectful and attuned to the needs of Animals and Plants.

C. Why are *Nature immersion and connection* important?

Although many adults in high-income nations emphasize early reading experiences for children—*book literacy*—a contrary view is supported by neurobiological development. In the early years of life, the right hemisphere is scheduled to grow more rapidly than the left hemisphere. Healthy right hemisphere development is fostered by whole-body experiences in self-directed play, developing social and emotional intelligences. Healthy right hemisphere development is also cultivated through immersion in Nature where children learn to attune to and get along with the living Earth. This is the initiation of *ecological literacy*. Ecological literacy continues throughout life with careful, responsible learning of the use of plants and animals to support human lives and respectful treatment of soil and waterways in everyday living.

Teaching book literacy too soon, shifts brain development away from right hemisphere development. This is because reading (in most languages) resides mostly in left-hemisphere processes. To shift a young child's development to left brain functioning undermines normal development of the right hemisphere and the social and ecological literacy that it provides. Children require the whole-body experiences that grow the right hemisphere—self-directed social play and free play in a wildish natural landscape.

One of the known causes for the planetary crises humanity is facing currently (e.g., global warming, climate instability, melting glaciers, toxic pollution, biodiversity loss) is the lack of caring for the rest of nature and a sense of separation from it (T. Berry, 1999; W. Berry, 2013). Our species evolved to be a creature of Earth and has evolved to be connected with the rest of the natural world, which preserves us. Early nature immersion builds a sense of connection to the natural world that is carried throughout life.

1. Read: [The "Death of Birth" and Losing Nature](#)
2. Read: [We Are in a Climate Emergency—How Can Psychology Help?](#)
3. Read: [Humans Defeat Nature - as Prescribed - Now What?](#)
4. Read: [Analysis of Inactions Toward the Ecological Crisis](#)
5. [Nature Heals, Restores, and Comforts](#)
6. Listen to [PODCAST # 19. Overcoming Nature Deficit Disorder](#)

D. What do *Nature immersion and connection* look like?

1. Read: [Daily Practices That Increase Nature Connection](#)
2. Read: [Learn Again to Be an Earth Creature](#)
3. Read: [Socially Distanced? Get Closer To Nature](#)
4. Read: [Getting Connected to Nature](#)
5. Read: [A Good Life: Embodied, Earth-Centric or Controlled, Detached](#)
6. Read: [Changing the Human Psyche for Living Sustainably](#)
7. Read: [Living Virtuously— With the Land](#)
8. Read: [Nurturing Genius in Children through Nature Connection](#)

E. What facts should you know about *Nature immersion and connection*?

1. Watch: Trees: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjvBBWsNlgY>;
2. Watch: Nature connection capacities: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8m7rfMF_zs0
3. Watch: [5 Pathways to Nature Connection](#) (2.3 min)
4. Find additional **short films** here and select the ones that interest you: <https://www.conservation.org/nature-is-speaking>

F. WRITE about or DISCUSS how you connected to Nature in childhood. What different experiences did you have? How frequently? How do you connect to Nature today? How frequently?

G. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. What did you learn?

H. What to do now?

1. Try out EcoAttachment.Dance (28 days of nudges to Nature connection). [Click here to follow the dance on Instagram](#). Select three things you will do everyday to increase your nature connection.
2. Read more essays:
 - [Overcoming Nature Deficit Disorder](#)
 - [Daily Practices That Increase Nature Connection](#)
 - [Kindred's articles on Nature Connection](#)
3. Go deeper and watch this movie about nature connection: [Living in the Future's Past](#).
4. Get comfortable spending as much time as possible outside. Select a "sit spot" that you visit regularly, for even a few minutes, where you open your senses and observational skills. Ask yourself what is happening around you? What life do you sense (see, hear, smell, feel)?
5. Go camping, even on your own, in state or national parks.
6. Learn about your local native plants, trees & birds, and how to support them.
7. Learn plant foraging for food, medicine & craft-making.

Parents/Grandparents/Future Parents/ Grandparents

- Take up suggestions from [Richard Louv](#), such as in his book, [Vitamin N](#). Select activities according to the interests and abilities of you and your child.
- Let your child wander around outside exploring the natural world.
- Hike or camp in local, state and national parks with your child and let them have as much freedom as possible.
- Talk about the rest of the natural world as part of your community.
- Learn about local animals and plants and what they need to thrive.
- Get involved in local outdoor family clubs.
- Learn one or more of the [Nature songs](#) Darcia created.

I. Professional and Community Application – *Nature immersion and connection*

1. Write/Discuss how your workplace could help workers and clients connect to Nature each day. There are many ways to incorporate Nature into workplaces: opportunities to enjoy sunshine and fresh air, eat lunch outdoors, host plant life indoors, nurture workplace "pets."
2. Reflect on what you (or your group) do in your community to promote the wellbeing of Nature. How do you protect nearby waterways? The soil, the air, native plants, animals? What could you improve?

3. Go outdoors someplace where there is dirt, grass, or some other plush and gentle landscape. Take off your shoes and socks and feel the ground on your feet. Pay attention to the sensations you experience. How does it feel to be connected to the earth in this way? Lie on the ground if you can. How can you share the experience with family, neighbors, co-workers?
4. Join a local environmental club to learn how to support native plants and wildlife. International groups include the [World Wildlife Fund](#) which focuses on endangered species. Find nation specific groups [here](#) that cover a range of environmental issues.

J. DAILY SELF ASSESSMENT OF NESTEDNESS—*Nature immersion and connection*

1. NATURE IMMERSION: Did I get enough grounding on the earth? YES NO
2. Did I spend time contemplating the beauty of the Earth? YES NO
3. Do I feel connected to Earth's gifts around me right now? YES NO

If yes, think about how it happened and plan to enjoy that experience again.

If not, spend 5-20 minutes connecting to nature (the sky, clouds, trees, insects, plants, animals).

ENCOURAGING NATURE CONNECTION IN OTHERS:

1. When conversing with others, did I speak respectfully about Nature today? YES NO
2. Did I model respect for Nature today? YES NO
3. Did I encourage others to connect to Nature today? YES NO

If yes, think about how it happened and plan to enjoy those experiences again.

If not, plan different behavior for tomorrow.

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

Self-test responses: 1. T 2. F 3. T

EVOLVED NEST COMPONENT 9: REGULAR HEALING PRACTICES

Healing Practices



Individual and group practices mend a wounded self or imbalanced relationships.

A. Self-Test your knowledge (select True or False):

1. Once you've been traumatized, you can never get over it.
TRUE FALSE
2. People are resilient so you don't have to worry about traumas.
TRUE FALSE
3. You only need to go through healing once. TRUE FALSE

B. What are *regular healing practices*?

Regular healing practices are the ways that we rebalance our bodies, minds, relationships, and communities. Day to day it is easy to become unbalanced, one way or another. Many communities have developed ways to restore balance regularly with group ceremonies, sacred dances, laying on of hands, prayer, group meditation and singing, on a daily or weekly basis. These practices helped realign body-mind-spirit. Individuals can design their own regular healing practices like Nature immersion, chanting, vagus nerve tapping, dancing, or yoga.

C. Why are *regular healing practices* important?

Fear, panic, anxiety and anger are survival-oriented emotions that we are born with which can take over our personality, making it hard to get along with others or even feel well. They are distressing emotions and can put us in mindsets that leave us vulnerable to harmful attitudes and behaviors toward ourselves or others. They are also not good for physical health as they promote inflammation, an underlying cause of many diseases.

Experiences of healing benefit everyone, the individual, their relationships, the community, including the rest of the natural world. We all need and long for healing, at some level, because we all make mistakes, whatever age we are. Sometimes parents make mistakes. Sometimes children live for years with primal wounds from those mistakes.

At any time, we can get out of balance physically, emotionally, psychologically or spiritually. For example, we can get caught up in thinking too much, striving too much, or trying to control

others. We can forget how to be present, in the moment and to others. We can be distracted off the path to fulfilling our deeper purpose.

All of us need regular healing of unexpressed or gripping emotions like resentment, anger, grief and sadness. We need to let go of our emotions, or else they can inhibit our ability to be present to others, including our children. They can make us do things we regret later.

Healing practices can mend a wounded self or a weakened relationship. So it is good to build routines for relational healing as well as self-healing.

Self healing might be needed when one notices distraction and lack of focus (“something is bothering me”) or when one feels emotionally detached from a situation where it would be expected otherwise. In a relationship, signals include bitterness, resentment or contempt, or withdrawal and distrust. One learns to nip these in the bud before they get deep roots and completely destroy the relationship.

We can get out of balance relationally with the natural world, forgetting our partnership responsibilities to the living earth to respect waterways, soil, insects, plants and animals. Relational healing is required here too. Daily mindfulness and gratitude practices are needed.

1. Watch [Trauma and the Nervous System: A Polyvagal Perspective](#)
2. Watch [Evolved Nest Explained: Routine Healing](#)

D. What do *regular healing practices* look like?

1. [How to Get on the Path to Self Actualization](#)
2. Practice belly breathing
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysYO69Oxdhc> (< 4min)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Um2Whbdhy-c> (6.5 min)
3. Learn vagus nerve stimulation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUx5kLFyx-M>
4. Watch [Trance-Based Self-Learning with Four Arrows](#)

E. What facts should you know about *regular healing practices*?

1. [Understanding the Integrated Brain](#)
2. Read: [Attachment Social Play For Self-Transformation](#)
3. Listen to [The Scope of Healing](#)
4. Read: [We Can Heal The Shock We Carry: 10 Steps To Resolving Shock](#)

F. WRITE or Discuss what kinds of healing practices your family practiced, and what you’ve experienced in your life. What do you do these days to help yourself calm down and relax?

G. Take the self-test again. Check your responses. What did you learn?

H. What to do now?

Individuals can practice self-healing, though it may be better started with some help from a therapist or friends who are good, patient listeners. Practices include journaling about one's day or one's feelings (one might need to practice this for a while if one has learned to "stuff" feelings away). Creative approaches include drawing or painting or singing or dancing out one's feelings (in safe ways). Even yelling (so as not to hurt self or others) can help, like yelling out the car window by a freeway that muffles the sound. Sometimes one has to get angry/sad to let go of long hidden old, old wounds. To heal relationships, we can take up practices that everyone agrees to try.

For parents and children, play acting can be a way to work through unmet needs, resentments or fears. Stuffed animals or other toys can be used. Parents should let children lead the way. (See the book, *Playful Parenting* by Lawrence Cohen.) Sometimes, playing chase or wrestling can release the feelings and bring about connection. Creative arts can also be helpful if the child is in charge of the expressions.

For adult relationships, play acting can work too. Whatever leads the partners to mutual laughter is always beneficial. Giving each other the benefit of the doubt and forgiving each other a dozen times a day can help lower expectations that the other is supposed to perfectly do one's bidding.

A nonviolent way to solve problems or heal broken relationships and trust is a talking circle. These can be used within the family, among friends or community members. The format is egalitarian. Talking circles have particular rules with the basic assumption that the circle "talks" when everyone listens. In fact, the most important aspect of a talking circle is listening: listening to what others say without judgment or resistance, making room for different truths, without agenda or thinking about what you will say. Everyone has the opportunity to speak when they hold the "talking stick" (or other item) passed around from person to person. No one has to speak when their turn comes. The circle can continue until it feels completed to all members (or until the time frame concludes). What is said in the circle is confidential, not to be shared. Each person expresses their feelings from their "heart," (e.g., using "I feel" statements).

Talking circles can take some time, but restoring trust among members is vital for successful cooperation on subsequent projects.

1. Try **28 Days of Self-Calming**: These daily practices are intended to give you ways to calm yourself down. You may find that some work better than others. These are the ones that you should continue to do.

2. Resolve to take 5 minutes every day to help yourself rebalance and maintain calmness.
3. Here are short videos of practices you can use:
 - [10-minute video on calming self-touch](#)
 - [8-minute video on tapping](#) for vagus nerve stimulation
 - [6 minute video on tapping](#) (EFT):
4. Find an app that you like to help you with self-calming.
5. Practice a self-healing exercise for a week and then write about your experience. How did you do it? What was it like? Did it work? What kinds of adjustments did you take to make it work for you? Would you recommend it to others? What will you try next?
6. Gather with friends and/or family to use healing practices together (e.g., Tai Chi, singing, dancing, meditation, contemplation, creative art).

I. Professional and Community Application—*Regular healing practices*

1. Does your organization have regular ways of healing/rebalancing relationships—such as regular meetings to resolve conflicts? Play time together? If not, work with colleagues to find ways to start a regular voluntary practice.
2. Does your neighborhood have regular gatherings to make decisions together and take care of disagreements? Do you have regular times of celebration? If not, get together with neighbors and plan a get together.

J. DAILY SELF ASSESSMENT OF NESTEDNESS—*Regular healing practices*

SELF HEALING: LETTING GO: Did I have a chance to heal any hurts or wounds today, to let go of resentments? YES NO

If yes, think about whether it was satisfactory or whether you might use another technique. If not, write on paper now and throw it away when you are done. Or yell outside.

SELF HEALING: REBALANCE: Did I get a chance to rebalance physically, mentally and psychologically, and feel good? YES NO

If yes, think about how it happened and plan to enjoy that experience again.

If no, put on some music to dance or sing to, or journal about your experiences like you are talking to a friend. Then respond as a friend.

RELATIONAL HEALING:

1. Did I try to strengthen or heal a relationship today? YES NO

2. Did I offer a listening ear to others in distress today, without getting triggered myself? YES NO

If yes, think about how it happened and plan to extend those actions.

If not, reflect on your relationships and identify places where they could be healed or strengthened. Select one step you can take tomorrow.

K. If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

Self-test responses: 1. T 2. F 3. T

CLOSURE

Congratulations for Completing the *Evolved Nest* Curriculum!

OUR HOPES AND SUGGESTIONS

We hope that you have learned a lot about each component of the *evolved nest*—why each is important and what it looks like. You can always return to review or learn more.

We hope that it was helpful to and learn ways to advance your nestedness and assess a bit how nested you are in each component—how well your life is currently nested. We hope that you took up and benefitted from suggestions to re-nest yourself. The nest is a lifelong need. Although we don't need to be carried past childhood, we still need things like affection and positive social support---feeling like we belong—as well as community membership and involvement.

- [Check List for Early Childhood](#)
- [Check List for Childhood](#)
- [Check List for Adulthood](#)

We hope that you are motivated to support nesting your community. Below are further resources to help you in changing community practices. Community practices refer to everything outside a particular family, so that means policies and practices of neighborhoods, counties, cities, states, schools, and workplaces. Institutions that govern our lives also need to be responsible to promote flourishing in children.

Here are *evolved nest* articles on community and cultural support, and how they are missing in the USA:

- [Five Ways Many Americans Are Impoverished \(Beyond Money\)](#)
- [The Layers Of Structures That Support Individuals, Families](#)
- [Early Partnership Childhood Care: What Should Centers Provide?](#)

Here are some ideas for ways for community practices to support children and families.

- [Local communities](#)
- [Government Policies](#)
- [Professional Organizations](#)
- [Researchers](#)
- [Ethics](#)

ORGANIZE YOUR NEXT STEPS

We encourage you to formulate concrete next steps. Look through your notebook and prioritize the steps you will take:

1. To nest yourself: What will you do today, tomorrow, and next week?
2. To help bring the nest to your workplace: What will you do today, tomorrow, and next week?
3. To help bring the nest to your neighborhood: What will you do today, tomorrow, and next week?
4. Decide on accountability, a way to check on your plans. For example, make an agreement with the group or friend you've experienced the curriculum with to check in monthly or regularly on your progress. Or, write in your journal or in your calendar particular steps you will take and deadlines for those steps. Celebrate milestones with friends.

STAY CONNECTED TO THE MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

How can I continue to learn more about the science of the evolved nest? How can I normalize humanity's evolved nest in my society?

We offer a few ways to stay connected to the movement for change.

Read: [Why Do Babies Need a Bill Of Rights?](#)

[Subscribe to the *Evolved Nest's* newsletter](#) for updates on the science, research, and Darcia Narvaez's publications.

[Subscribe to the Kindred newsletter](#) to follow the *Evolved Nest's* posts and podcasts, and other thought leaders helping us to Share a New Story of Childhood, Parenthood, and the Human Family.

Follow the Evolved Nest on social media. [Links are here.](#)

[Join the Evolved Nest community](#) discussions at our Mighty Networks platform, a dedicated social media venue and app with no spam, trolls, or distractions from our messaging and work.

Find your *Evolved Nest* Community on our [Mighty Networks platform here](#). Join the monthly **Breaking the Cycle Discussion Groups** by registering for these events through Zoom.

Watch the rest of the [Evolved Nest Videos](#)

Dr. Narvaez discusses the nature of the human species. Humans are unique animals with sets of basic needs: animal, mammal, social and human basic needs. Dr. Narvaez discusses the evolved basic needs of babies and how they are met through a unique application of ethics within a responsive environment. Participants learn about human rights and how babies' rights need to be respected. Babies cannot reach their full potential without the human *evolved nest*.

Listen to the rest of the Evolved Nest [podcasts](#).

Listen to our [parenting book reviews](#).

If you have any questions, please email EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com

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