

## 'Click' antenatal classes: just one 'click' away from better mother-baby bonding

June 14 2014

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A one-off 3-hour antenatal class called 'Click' provides prospective parents with the knowledge and practical skills to build strong parent-infant bonds, according to new research from the University of Hertfordshire. The research is being presented this weekend (14-18 June) at the 14th World Congress of the World Association of Infant Mental Health being held in Edinburgh.

The quality of antenatal classes provided in the UK is currently quite variable in terms of length and content; with some receiving nothing, while others attend classes for as much as two hours per week for one month. There is often little or no guidance on the psychological needs of the infant. For example, learning how to think about what the infant is trying to communicate - being 'mind-minded' and recognising subtle expression of the infants emotional needs - this learning is key to secure attachment and bonding.

Importantly, recent research shows that as many as four in ten babies in the UK do not develop the strong emotional bonds with their parents that are crucial to success later in life (Sutton Trust, 2014). The 'Click' antenatal classes discuss the nurturing required to help the infant develop a sense of trust and security in the world enabling them for 'school readiness' and to begin their journey as independent learners whilst minimising unnecessary stress along the way.

The research led by Dr Kondel-Laws involved fifty expectant mothers who were randomly assigned to attend routine antenatal classes or the

'Click' antenatal class. The mothers and children were followed-up with video observation at 9 months to explore the impact of 'Click' on the mind-mindedness of the mothers as well as the observed mother-baby relationship. Finally, the cognitive, language and motor abilities of the children were assessed when they were 30-36 months old.

Dr Tejinder Kondel-Laws, principal lecturer in [clinical psychology](#) at the University of Hertfordshire, said: "Our research revealed that 'Click' classes delivered before the baby was born not only improved the parents ability to 'be in the mind' of their child, but they also reported enjoying their babies more and feeling less hostile towards them.

"When these children were again seen around three of years of age, large advantages in cognitive and motor skills emerged compared to those children whose mothers attended routine antenatal classes. One key area that differentiated the two groups in terms of emotional development was that 'Click' parents reported their child to be 'less clingy' than those who had received routine antenatal care."

ClickParenting uses an evidence-based clinical psychology approach to sharing knowledge about infant mental health with prospective or new parents, so that they 'Click' with their baby and form a strong bond from the start.

Dr Kondel-Laws added: "With up to forty per cent of children missing out on the parenting that they need to succeed in life, we have shown that we can enable parents antenatally; showing them how to minimise stress by 'clicking' with their baby – and we have shown that we can do this effectively and quickly through our 'ClickParenting' approach."

Provided by University of Hertfordshire

Citation: 'Click' antenatal classes: just one 'click' away from better mother-baby bonding (2014, June 14) retrieved 14 July 2023 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-06-click-antenatal-classes-mother-baby-bonding.html>

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