



Am I an Attachment Parent?

By Judy Arnall

Many parents ask themselves if they are an "attachment parent" type of Mommy if they don't co-sleep, don't breastfeed and don't carry their baby all day. The short answer is "yes"! Evolution theory ensures that all parents are attached to their babies. It's how babies are protected, nurtured, and properly cared for. When babies cry, all mammals rush to pick them up and comfort them. That's the core of attachment. Nurturing, responsive care is the only parenting style required for babies first year. Sure, co-sleeping and breastfeeding and baby carrying are nice to do, but for many personal reasons, parents can't.

Co-sleeping, extended breastfeeding and baby wearing are called "attachment parenting behaviours". However, the "attachment parenting philosophy" is one whereby parents try to immediately meet the child's needs. The behaviours are only several of many ways to do that. Parents don't need to practice the behaviors to practice the philosophy. Every parent can practice the attachment parenting philosophy if they choose. Trying to understand what baby needs when they cry. Trying in their best capacity to meet those needs to help baby. Taking good care of them selves in order to nurture baby. Recognizing the uniqueness of their babies, and that some don't wish to be carried or co-sleeping. Becoming informed of the risks and benefits on the myriad of parenting choices. Making decisions based on acquired information from a variety of sources, with a vision of what's best for their child, themselves and their families. That's what attachment parents do.

The one behaviour that is probably the most conducive to attachment parenting philosophy is not ignoring baby's distress during daytime activities or nighttime sleep training. I personally have not met any mother who has enjoyed sleep training her infant and enduring long hours of screaming, crying and fussing. That is evolution in action! Parents need to trust their intuition and respond how their instinct would compel them to. If they can ignore the experts telling them to do the opposite, then they are truly attachment parents! Warm, nurturing response doesn't spoil babies. It builds attachment and relationships. And that's good for the continuance of our species!

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