

Skin-to-Skin Contact Recap

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By Cheryl L. Hepfer

If there's one worry every new parent shares, that worry might be sleep—or, rather, the lack of it. When the disturbances are unpredictable, the needs incommunicable, and the stress overwhelming, a baby's crying drowns out everything else. Forget work, chores, quality time, or your own sleep schedule. Getting your baby to doze off can become a full-time job unto itself.

Fortunately for anyone toiling away right now, one of the simplest sleep-inducing solutions is also one of the most effective. Plus, it's an excellent bonding ritual with benefits for both the baby and parent. David G. Allan, editorial director of CNN Health, Wellness and Parenting, calls it the "100 strokes" method: count to 100 through "slow back-and-forth sways" while holding your baby close, or through "100 calm and steady rubs" of the baby's back.

According to Allan, the method not only frequently puts babies to sleep (well before 100), but also has a calming effect on the parent. He writes:

"The number 100 became like breaths in meditation; I couldn't hold complex thoughts on top of counting, so deeper emotions surfaced, specifically love and appreciation for the small person I was holding and touching. I was less likely to get pulled away by superfluous streams of thought and soon began to deeply enjoy these moments of seemingly forced mindful parenting."

When Allan dug deeper, he found out that science supports this method as well. Physical touch between baby and parent encourages the release of chemicals associated with happiness and relief: oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine. This can confer all sorts of positive health outcomes:

"In one study, daily massage therapy was associated with a 47% weight gain in preterm infants. In another, researchers measured the stress response in the brain when subjects anticipated an electric shock and how that response was tempered if their arm was being stroked by a loved one. There's even some evidence that touch may reduce anxiety and depression among Alzheimer's patients.

By holding and rubbing our children, we are conveying safety and trust, relieving stress and activating our bodies' vagus nerves, triggering a compassion response. This is what actual bonding with your child looks like."

Read ["Give me some skin: A nighttime ritual to bond parent and child."](#)

A lawyer probably can't help you calm your baby, but if you're losing sleep over a legal issue, the attorneys of Offit Kurman's Family Law Practice Group can help. To learn more about our team the services we provide, [click here](#).

