



FIG 7-14 En face position between the parent and infant can be significant in attachment process.

Several studies have attempted to substantiate the long-term benefits of providing parents with opportunities to optimally bond with their infants during the initial postpartum period. Although there has been some evidence that increased parent–child contact encourages prolonged breastfeeding and may minimize the risks of parenting disorders, conclusions about the long-term effects of such early intervention on parenting and child development must be viewed cautiously. In addition, some authorities claim that the emphasis on bonding has been unjustified and may lead to guilt and fear in parents who did not have early contact with their infants. There is concern that the literal interpretation of “sensitive” or “critical” times for bonding might imply that without early contact, optimum bonding cannot occur or, conversely, that early contact alone is sufficient to ensure competent parenting.

The nurse should stress to parents that although early bonding is valuable, it does not represent an “all or none” phenomenon. Throughout the child's life, there will be multiple opportunities for development of parent–child attachment. Bonding is a complex process that develops gradually and is influenced by numerous factors, only one of which is the type of initial contact between the newborn and parent.

In a concept analysis of parent–infant attachment, [Goulet, Bell, St-Cyr, et al \(1998\)](#) describes attributes of parent–infant attachment as proximity, reciprocity, and commitment. Within these attributes are further dimensions, which include contact, emotional state,