

individualization, complementarity, sensitivity, centrality, and parent role exploration. The researchers describe the parent–infant attachment process as one that is complex and therefore cannot be evaluated simply by the observations of attitudes and behaviors of parents toward their infants (Goulet, Bell, St-Cyr, et al, 1998). Further research into the reciprocal relationships between infants and parents and the situational factors that influence such relationships is recommended.

One component of successful maternal attachment is the concept of **reciprocity** (Brazelton, 1974). As the mother responds to the infant, the infant must respond to the mother by some signal, such as sucking, cooing, eye contact, grasping, or molding (conforming to other's body during close physical contact). The first step is initiation in which interaction between infant and parent begins. Next is orientation, which establishes the partners' expectations of each other during the interaction. After orientation is acceleration of the attention cycle to a peak of excitement. The infant reaches out and coos, both arms jerk forward, the head moves backward, the eyes dilate, and the face brightens. After a short time, deceleration of the excitement and turning away occur in which the infant's eyes shift away from the parent's and the child may grasp his or her shirt. During this cycle of nonattention, repeated verbal or visual attempts to reinitiate the infant's attention are ineffective. This deceleration and turning away probably prevents the infant from being overwhelmed by excessive stimuli. In a good interaction, both partners have synchronized their attention–nonattention cycles. Parents or other caregivers who do not allow the infant to turn away and who continually attempt to maintain visual contact encourage the infant to turn off the attention cycle and thus prolong the nonattention phase.

Although this description of reciprocal interacting behavior is usually observed in infants by 2 to 3 weeks of age, nurses can use this information to teach parents how to interact with their newborns. Recognizing the attention versus nonattention cycles and understanding that the latter is not a rejection of the parent helps parents develop competence in parenting.

Paternal Engrossment

Fathers also show specific attachment behaviors to their newborns.