



Episode 5: Pure Bonding
with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Pure Bonding

The importance of skin on skin contact and baby massage.

Tiffany: Hi everyone, we're joined today by Katrina from Weleda. Katrina is a registered naturopath and massage therapist since 2005. She's also a mother to Agatha and Arabella. I'm really excited to be discussing baby massage techniques and the importance of skin on skin contact today.

Hi Katrina, thanks so much for spending time with us today. How are you?

Katrina: Yeah, I'm great, Tiff. Thanks for having me on.

Tiffany: It's great to have you. Thank you so much for coming on. Can you firstly tell us a little bit about Weleda? I think a lot of people out there might not know so much about the brand and I think it's really important to understand the background of someone before we get started today.

Katrina: Yeah, absolutely. So, Weleda are an organic and biodynamic skin care company and we've been at the forefront of skin care since 1921. Our origins date back to the teachings of philosopher and a natural science doctor, Rudolf Steiner, which some of your listeners may have heard of. Today, we continue to be the leader of sourcing and manufacturing raw materials with respect to nature, people and the planet.

It's all about biodiversity for us as well and all of our products are free from synthetic and artificial preservatives, fragrances, silicon oils, or petro chemicals. So, there's obviously no animal testing or GMOs in all of our products. We have a mother and baby range, but we also do make a facial and body care range, bath and shower, oral care and some natural deodorants.

Tiffany: Wow, you've got a massive range there. I actually know a little bit about Rudolf Steiner myself and I've grown up with Weleda, so it's great to have a bit more information there for our listeners. I felt you might be able to add some more layers of knowledge and some deeper understanding today on how both of these amazing tools can help, I guess, mother and baby or parent and baby. Can you tell us a little bit more about your background and experience so that we can get a bit of an understanding about how you're going to help us out today?



Episode 5: Pure Bonding with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Katrina: Yeah, absolutely. I returned to University as a mature age student and I qualified as a naturopath and a massage therapist in 2005, and I began working in the industry immediately after I graduated. Then I was blessed with my first daughter Aggie, or Agatha, in 2008, and then later had my second daughter Arabella in 2011.

I started working with Weleda in 2009 so, it's been quite a long time that I've been with Weleda, and I also started private practice as a naturopath and massage therapist in 2011, so it certainly has been a juggle throughout the years.

Tiffany: Very busy!

Katrina: But an amazing journey as well at the same time, so it's great. And I did train in baby massage, so I do know about some of the really important aspects are with skin on skin contact and can definitely testify to the benefits from my point of view, and also from teaching other people as well.

Tiffany: Yeah, great. I think it's so nice to know a bit about that and I'm also an infant massage instructor myself, and I know a lot about the benefits of skin on skin, but I think it's great having you today to talk us through a bit more.

You've certainly got a lot of relevant experience under your belt there, so it'll be great to have this episode taking us through some of the other things that we might need to consider before we do massage.

I'd really love to just let everyone know that today might be a good idea to grab a notepad and pen and jot some things down. There's going to be a lot of techniques we're going to talk about today, and don't forget if you've missed anything you can read more about in our blog which you can find in our episode description.

So, to start today if you can give us a bit of a run down on baby massage and some of its benefits, that would be great!

Episode 5: Pure Bonding
with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Katrina: Yeah sure, absolutely. So look, baby massage is a time of pleasure and it's very relaxing for baby. It's also very beneficial for baby and as well as helping to relax the baby. It also can develop a unique bond between the parent and the child, so it's important for the first few years of development for the baby and during the first few months of their lives a baby can correct their fetal position by stretching their muscles and learning to control movements.

It can certainly help to stimulate the baby muscle coordination, flexibility and blood circulation, it can regulate heart rhythm and breathing, it can activate the metabolism, and certainly create a more alert and specially oriented child, and it relaxes the baby. So, it reduces the production of the stress hormones, allows baby to fall asleep faster, and generally sleep for longer and more deeply. This can often mean that there less irritable when they're awake.

Tiffany: Yeah that's it, that's all great. I think it's so important to think about the overall benefits of these types of tools to be able to use in your home with your little one. It always brings a smile to my face remembering the times I share with my babies performing baby massage with them actually, and although I didn't have my qualification, I did use it just here and there when I felt it was appropriate.

Thanks so much for that overview about baby massage think it's really important to understand some of the really important health benefits. So, what are some tips on how to relax your baby and prepare for massage before you actually undertake it?

Katrina: Yeah, so it is important to do a few things before we get started into that. I generally say to parents really take the time to focus completely on the baby and you let go of all potentially distracting thoughts, so it's just a special time between the parent or the carer and the baby. It's important to remove all jewellery, such as rings, watches and bracelets - anything that might get caught on the baby's skin, and we always try to make sure that the environment is pleasantly warm. Cover any parts of the baby's body that you're not massaging, just to prevent them from getting cold, which is really important through our winter months when it is cooler. Talk softly and gently to the baby. You don't want to talk constantly, no one needs a massage where somebody's talking constantly and baby's the same as us. They like a nice, quiet, enjoyable massage, and they like to have that in peace and calm during that time as well.



Episode 5: Pure Bonding with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Katrina: (cont...) So, we recommend using calendula baby oil in the hands. We want to warm up that oil, so you can rub your hands together first, or warm the oil before you start so that it's not such a shock touching the skin straight away with cold hands or cold oil.

We want to start with nice, gentle strokes so that the baby becomes accustomed to the movement over their skin. I always say get into a really comfortable position, make sure your arms and shoulders are relaxed, because you don't want to be in pain as well. The hands should be flexible and always be in complete contact with the baby's skin, even when you're reaching for more oil just to try and maintain that contact with the baby, so you might have one hand on the baby whilst you're reaching for more oil.

Use long firm strokes and be careful not to tickle the baby, you want to find the right touch for the baby that they are comfortable with, and also the right moment to be massaging your baby. That could be after a nap, or you know half an hour after feeding - you don't generally want to do it straight away after your babies eaten, that's not going to be a good time, but find the right time that's working for you and baby.

Tiffany: Yeah, I think all those things make a lot of sense and it is really important with that preparation before you start. Thanks, so much for sharing those basics to consider first, I think that's really important. Could you now take us through some of the few ways to perform baby massage? I think a lot of people may have heard a few tips and tools here or may have heard from a friend about the benefits, but don't really know how to practice it. If you could take us through some basics, that would be awesome.

Katrina: Yeah, absolutely. Look, I always start with a foot massage, and who doesn't like a foot massage right? You can basically hold your hand in a v-hold, so you place your baby's foot between your index and your middle finger, so you're making a V with your hand. This way you can actually follow the baby's flexion and extension movements of their foot whilst you're doing the massage. If you're doing it right, you should be able to use both thumbs and to massage the sole of your babies' foot, all the way from the heel, to the toes. You can also add in the ankles, and you can do that in a circular movement as well. So, you'll find that they flex at the same time and children love this, who doesn't?



Episode 5: Pure Bonding with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Katrina: (cont...) Both feet should always be massaged equally, so you want to do around the same amount of time and the same pressure on both feet and just avoid applying too much pressure to the sole of the foot, you will feel what's the right pressure for you as well.

Tiffany: Yeah, good.

Katrina: Yeah, and then a back massage. So, with the back massage, generally speaking I always say it might be easier if you can hold the baby with their chest on yours, and so you might want to be slightly reclined, if it's more comfortable for you and the baby, just so that your shoulders and your arms are in a relaxed state as well. You're holding the baby in a reclined position, place your right hand on the baby's left shoulder, relaxing your arm and then you're sliding your hand down towards the baby's right buttock, so you're going from their shoulder all the way down, with a nice, gentle but firm movement over the back.

Then, you use your left hand and place it on the right shoulder and do the same movement down from the shoulder down to the baby's buttock, and you can get that nice fluid movement with both hands going from the shoulders down to the buttocks. You always want to make sure that you're keeping contact with the baby at all times, you don't want to have both hands off at one time obviously or making it so that it's not that nice, fluid movement.

You can also do some circular movements around the shoulders and down the back as well. You should have that nice harmonious movement at all times, and you know use a firm but gentle touch so the massage is more than just a caress, it should be a nice, firm massage for baby.

Tiffany: Yeah, perfect. I think these two are really great ones, as you said, "who doesn't like a foot massage?" "Who doesn't like a back massage?" Everyone loves it, so I think it's really great to be able to have a few tips on how to perform that, it can be tricky to know how to hold the baby and how you going to perform that.



Episode 5: Pure Bonding with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Tiffaney: (cont...) Also, I know that a lot of babies can suffer from colic and constipation, gas, that type of thing. Can you take us through some of the baby massage techniques that can help relieve some of these ailments? That can be often such a difficult thing to deal with, and you don't necessarily want to have to jump to using medication straight away, so, having some natural ways to help would be so awesome. If you could take us through some of those techniques, that would be great.

Katrina: Yeah, absolutely. They sure can suffer from these things, and it is good to try some natural ways first. Generally some massage tips that can help relieve colic, constipation and gas - again you want to time it right, so you don't want to be massaging your baby just before or after a meal or when they need a nap, it's just never a good time. Again, taking any of your jewellery off, making sure that your baby is on a nice, soft, warm towel, and you can put them either in the centre of the bed or on the floor, depending on the age and where they're at with everything as well, in terms of rolling and movement.

I generally then get the lotion or the oil in the hands before touching your baby, and you want to warm your hands up again. Just watch the baby's reaction to each movement to make sure that they are liking what you're doing as well, they will give you feedback on whether they feel like it's a good thing for them.

Tummy spirals are a really good way to help to relieve that colic and that gas. Place your forefinger near the baby's belly button and you start to move in a clockwise motion, spiraling out to the edge of the belly. You progress from one finger, gently circling, to the whole palm of your hand gently pressing down on the tummy. Once you've finished doing that circle movement, just hold their tummy to finish, so you have your hand over the tummy to finish, and the warmth of your hands will certainly sooth and calm the baby.

It's really important to know when you're doing the tummy spirals always make sure you're moving your hands in a clockwise, circular motion - the same way as the clock moves, you want to go that way. It follows the baby's line of digestion and it will help to create that internal movement of wind and gas as well, so that's one option. That's the tummy spirals.

Episode 5: Pure Bonding
with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Katrina: (cont...) Toes to nose is another option that we can choose. You place your babies feet together so the soles are touching near the stomach, so their knees are pointing out towards the sides of the body and holding that shape, you can just rock your babies feet as far towards their nose as is comfortable for them, and then return back to the starting position. You just repeat this movement, so this is great for shifting stubborn wind in the bowel as well.

Another one is twists. You can straighten your babies' legs or bend the knees, and you just slowly rock their hips from side to side - aiming to keep the top half of the body flat, so the shoulders should be flat on the floor. You're only just moving the base, so from the hips and the legs down and you're rocking, and that will squeeze the digestive system. This is really great for helping constipation in particular.

The last one is what we call jumping. You can hold your baby's feet and gently push their knees up to the belly button before straightening the legs out as if they were doing like a little jump. You're moving their feet up and repeat that action in a rhythmic manor. So, you move the feet up and then straightening the legs back out again. It can be a really great, effective way of releasing the wind immediately for a baby, which you know, certainly is difficult for a lot of new parents in feeding as well.

Tiffany: Yeah, I wish I knew some of those particular ones around colic and wind and that sort of thing before I had my first. She suffered from some of these things so it would have been really beneficial. As I said before, I didn't do my massage course until my kids were a bit older, so I just did some basic sort of relaxing things with my daughter, so, I think having some of these things that we've talked about now will help everyone out there.

Did you use some of these things with your kids at all?

Katrina: I did. My eldest was always a good feeder and a good sleeper, so I was a bit shocked when I had my second, my world fell apart actually! She was the total opposite and had lots of wind, so I used to have to do some of these techniques even in the middle of the night just to get rid of the wind. I find even if it's a cold winter night, you might do that nice circular movement on the tummy.



Episode 5: Pure Bonding with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Katrina: (cont...) You're not having to undress the whole baby, but you know you can still be holding them and be doing that circular movement even if it's three in the morning and they're crying from colic, it's a good time to do that as well.

Tiffaney: It's great to hear that you've used those techniques and I think that's what a lot of people out there, the listeners, are wanting to hear as well, that these things have actually helped someone. Knowing that they can really be something to give a go if things are really tough one night or you are having a day where baby's really struggling.

Now that subject that we've covered is done, I think we might move onto skin on skin contact. I think that's such an important element and not only full-term babies need this, premie babies do as well and I know there's a lot of information out there about skin on skin now, and they're finding out more all the time. Can you tell us a little bit more about why skin on skin contact is so important, Katrina? I think that a lot of people don't actually know how to practice it or what the benefits are.

Katrina: Yeah, absolutely. It is really important and there is a growing body of evidence. It can help to relax both the mother and the baby, and it can regulate the baby's heart rate and their breathing. It can definitely help them to better adapt to life outside the womb, while it can also stimulate digestion and an interest in feeding. It can regulate the body temperature for the child, and it's also really important to enable colonisation of the baby's skin with their mothers' friendly bacteria, which can provide protection against infection as well. It can also stimulate the release of hormones which can support breastfeeding and mothering as well. So, it's really got so many important factors there.

There are also additional benefits for babies that are in the neonatal unit as well. So, skin on skin is shown to improve their oxygen saturation levels, reducing cortisol - which is their stress levels, and particularly when that's following painful procedures. It can encourage pre-feeding behaviour, and it can assist with the growth of the child, and it also might reduce hospital stays as well, which is really important for parents and babies. If the mother expresses following a period of skin to skin contact, generally her milk volume will improve, and the milk expressed will contain the most up to date antibodies as well.

Tiffaney: Wow.



Episode 5: Pure Bonding
with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Katrina: So, it's very important there. Do you want me to go through what skin to skin contact actually is as well?

Tiffany: Yeah, that would be awesome. I think we all need to know a little bit about how to practice it, but also what happens when you've had that skin on skin contact. You've said a little bit, but if you could go into that in a little bit more detail, I think the listeners really would love to know a bit more about it.

Katrina: Yeah, for sure. Look, it's usually referred to as the practice where babies lay directly on the mothers bare chest after birth and so both of them are covered in a warm blanket and left for at least an hour until after the first feed, and so this skin to skin contact can take place at any time of baby needs comforting or calming, it can help boost mothers milk supply, so even when mum gets home after they've had their child, then they can practice this as well.

Basically, it's often known as 'kangaroo care' in neonatal units and it helps parents to bond with their baby as well as supporting better physical and developmental outcomes for the child. When the mother holds the baby in skin to skin contact after birth, it initiates that strong instinctive behaviour in both the child and in the mum, and so the mother will expressed that surge of maternal hormones and she might begin to smell and stroke and engage with her baby and babies instincts after birth normally drive them to follow a unique process, which if that's left uninterrupted will often result in them having a first breast feed. They are enabled to familiarise themselves with their mother's breast and they can achieve self-attachment, and then that's very likely that they will recall this at subsequent feeds and that helps to result in fewer breastfeeding problems later on.

Tiffany: Awesome.

Katrina: It can be very helpful!

Tiffany: Everyone wants to hear that because it can be really challenging with breastfeeding.



Episode 5: Pure Bonding with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Katrina: Absolutely. It can be used when nothing else is seeming to work for the child as well, skin to skin contact. So, it's really important if you just can't comfort your child you know you can at any time of the day or night have that bare chest and the baby's bare chest with yours and sometimes babies just want to be held and be comforted and being on the skin and close to you, they can then hear your bodily sounds and your heartbeat, smell you, feel the warmth of this skin and hear your voice, and sometimes, that can be all they need to just calm down, feel comforted and safe as well.

Tiffany: Yeah, I think knowing a bit more about how you can settle your baby and utilise these tools outside of maybe the stereotypical ways in which you think it might be used is really beneficial. I think all the things you talked about now is so helpful.

Katrina: Absolutely, yeah. You know, you just have to go with how you feel with that the baby needs at the time. It's really important with all of these techniques with massage, with skin to skin contact, you know, you're the parent, do what feels right for you, and if it's not working change it and try something else.

Tiffany: Yeah, I think all the first-time parents out there will definitely be taking on some of these tips and then listening very closely and hopefully taking a couple of notes. What would be your final takeaways from today's episode in regard to skin on skin and baby massage? What would be the things that you really feel would be to take away?

Katrina: Yeah, absolutely. I think before anyone handles a newborn, it's important to have clean hands. Always wash your hands with soap and warm water before handling your baby and just take some time to hold your baby close. Knowing that skin to skin contact is an important element to consider when it comes to general care and well-being of both yourself and the baby. It can stimulate growth in low birth weight babies, it can also assist in boosting the babies immune system, it can aid in reducing stress in both the parent and the baby, it can create a feeling of belonging and it can also forge the connection between a mother and their child. It can help regulate a baby's body temperature in a way that even incubators cannot do. It can also just be a great time to practice some mindfulness and relaxation for the parent and also the baby as well.

pure parenthood

Episode 5: Pure Bonding with Katrina Wright (Weleda)

Katrina: (cont...) Some days are particularly challenging with a newborn and this can be a really lovely time to be quiet together and just reflect on your baby. How much you love them and how grateful you are for them to be in your life and in your family. There's some really important things to take away and you know, why we tend to think about skin to skin contact as something inherently between a mother and father and the newborn, it's just a practice that any of the family members can do as well, so it can be great for siblings if they want to get involved in that also.

Tiffany: Yeah, thank you so much for the information today, Katrina. It's been really insightful and thanks so much for joining me. It's been so helpful, and I think everyone listening at home feels a lot more informed and ready to give these incredible tools a try when they welcome their own baby into the world.

Katrina: Yeah, my pleasure! Thanks for having me on today.

Tiffany: It's been great. So, if any of our listeners are keen to learn more about baby massage, please head over to www.weleda.com.au, you can also find them on Instagram [@WeledaAustralia](https://www.instagram.com/WeledaAustralia). Take care and bye for now everyone.