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To mothers holding their newborn babies it will come as little surprise that the “decade of the brain” has lead science to the wisdom of the mother’s heart.

The Science of Mother Love Is Science Catching Up to Mother’s Wisdom?

By Cori Young

Research in neuroscience has shown that touch is necessary for human development and that a lack of touch damages not only individuals, but our whole society. Human touch and love is essential to health. A lack of stimulus and touch very early on causes the stress hormone, cortisol, to be released which creates a toxic brain environment and can damage certain brain structures.

According to James W. Prescott, PhD, of the Institute of Humanistic Science, and former research scientist at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, sensory deprivation results in behavioral abnormalities such as depression, impulse dyscontrol, violence, substance abuse, and in impaired immunological functioning in mother deprived infants.

For over a million years babies have enjoyed almost constant in-arms contact with their mothers or other caregivers, usually members of an extended family, receiving constant touch for the first year or so of life.

“In nature’s nativity scene, mother’s arms have always been baby’s bed, breakfast, transportation, even entertainment, and, for most of the world’s babies, they still are.” says developmental psychologist Sharon Heller in, *The Vital Touch: How Intimate*

Contact With Your Baby Leads to Happier, Healthier Development.

To babies, touch = love, and fully loved babies develop healthy brains. During the critical period of development following birth the infant brain is undergoing a massive growth of neural connections. During this period one

of the most crucial things to survival and healthy development is touch. All mammal mothers seem to know this instinctively, and, if allowed to bond successfully with their babies they will provide continuous loving touch.

“The easiest and quickest way to induce depression and alienation in an infant or child is not to touch it, hold it, or carry it on your body.”

—James W. Prescott, PhD

With only 25% of our adult brain size, we are the least mature at birth of any mammal. Anthropologist, Ashley Montagu concluded that given our upright position and large brains, human infants are born prematurely while our heads can still fit through the birth canal, and that brain development must therefore extend into postnatal life. He believed the human gestation period to actually be eighteen months long — nine in the womb and another nine outside it — and that touch is absolutely vital to this time of “exterogestation.” ■

Editor’s Note: Ashley Montagu’s concept of nine months of “exterogestation” was the inspiration for the name “Nine In Nine Out.”