

Rosie's view of Reciprocity

Reciprocity – the intense and pleasurable interaction between mother and baby. It fascinates me to think that something so special such as the bond between a mother and their child can come from something so simple. An interaction. It's something that continues to blossom through life as each person becomes more and more in tune with the other persons rhythm. Brazleton described Reciprocity as a dance as it's based on one person's initiation and the others response. Picture this – an empty stage with you and your partner under a spotlight in the centre. Your partner makes the first move and lays the palm of his hand out in front of you. That's his initiation. For the dance to continue, you must respond. You place your hand on top of his and the Reciprocity curve begins. You respond to every move he makes and the longer it goes on the more familiar you both become with each other's rhythm. Reciprocity can reach its optimum level where you've both reached your maximum point of familiarity. Think of this as the lift during the climax of your routine. From this point on, the curve declines and as your dance comes to an end, the rhythm and familiarity you've developed enables both people to acknowledge it's about to finish. The process is the same between a mother and their baby.

Reciprocity is a vital element in developing a high quality relationship between two people. Research shows that high levels of Reciprocity are associated with secure attachments and the best quality relationships. 65% of the time an infant's secure attachment is formed with the biological mother and it seems likely that levels of Reciprocity would be particularly high in this attachment. Evidence from Melzoff and Moore found babies could imitate (facial expressions) at 3 days old showing a babies attachment system is active almost immediately after birth. There's also evidence from Grossman's longitudinal study showing at infancy, a child's quality of attachment with the mother influences their attachment at adolescence whereas with fathers, the child's quality of play is what influences later attachment. This displays the differences in gender roles – a mother's being more about nurture and a father's being more about play and stimulation. This could demonstrate Reciprocity in alternative contexts. The need for a Reciprocal interaction between mother and baby during the nurturing stages of the babies development *and* the need for a Reciprocal interaction between father and baby during the playful and experimental stages of their development. Ultimately, Reciprocity occurs in all stages of life and by a baby developing a positive version of it at an early age with someone like their mother, can heavily influence their attitude towards future relationships.