



CHANGING MINDS, SAVING LIVES – PSYCHOANALYTIC INSIGHTS

Welcome to Pamela Nathan’s psychoanalytic series, taking simple gems from the psychoanalytic dreamtime that may become tools for living...

WHAT’S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THE MOTHER-BABE RELATIONSHIP?

By Pamela Nathan
Director, CASSE Aboriginal Australian
Relations Program



Why talk about Mother and Babe? (We won't forget Dads!)

The Mother–Babe relationship is central in personality development. The relationship forms a model for all other relationships.

What happens to Babe – real-life events from birth to one year particularly – can impact on him/her for life.

Internal development in Babe’s first year of life forms much of their adult personality.

Babe can have unconscious phantasies* about what happens. These phantasies make what happens to Babe more exaggerated or fearful or desirable.

All people carry inside them their Babe selves.

Adult feelings and thoughts can be related to early experiences.

Early primitive terrors, phantasies and anxieties can live inside an adult.

The past has a living presence.

Memories can inform the present and the present can inform the past.

Don't forget about Fathers!

Fathers are important, too. The role of Father early on can provide:

- Security and support for Mother so she feels good in body and mind
- A compliment to the role of Mother
- A curtailment to an over-involved Mother
- A parental relationship as a model for children
- A triangular space where the infant or child can be both observer and participant in relationship to two people
- Boundaries and discipline
- A barrier to incest (son to mother)
- Love to weaken the murderous oedipal Father (who wishes in fantasy to kill the son).

**Phantasies – The internal world is full of phantasies, a bit like an underworld of ghosts and demons. Phantasies are different to fantasies. Fantasies are conscious imaginings or daydreams. Phantasies are:*

- *Unconscious*
- *Often violent and aggressive*
- *Internal mental representations of internal objects*

The term 'internal object' means a mental and emotional image or idea of an external object that has been taken inside the self. It may be an image or idea of a person, for example mother; or part persons, such as a breast.

Internal objects develop in infancy and are linked to developmental stages of life. They draw on actual historical events but can be coloured by phantasies.

The Psychoanalytic Insight, 'What's so important about the Mother-Babe relationship' is an excerpt from **'The Milky Way'** an introductory booklet on psychoanalysis by Pamela Nathan.