

LASTING BOND



Illustration by Denise Daffara.

MOTHERS CONTRIBUTE TO A GREATNESS THEY MAY NOT BE FULLY AWARE OF

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Mothers mean so much. The impact of a mother can map the route to happiness or otherwise. Of course, for many, the absence of a mother can forge incredible bonds with fathers or other significant carers. However, of all the relationships we form over the course of our life, the relationship between a mother and child is one of the most important. Some mothers have little concept of their significance and some worry too much!

What fascinates me is how much that relationship can develop and change during our lives. Our well-being provided by a feeling of safety from a healthy attachment depends on the patterns of interaction with our parents. Our brains are perfectly capable of having different styles with each.

When mother and infant enjoy satisfying connectedness such as during breastfeeding or eye and skin contact, they are rewarded with oxytocin and dopamine. As parents respond to and anticipate the baby's needs in their first two years of life, their neurons are connecting to each other and our early attachment experiences shape this process. It's a bit like the scaffolding that prepares a building which helps it weather the elements for years to come. That is, we lay down the structures for us to healthy "self-regulate" our responses in the future.

The product of that stable attachment includes a healthy regulation of the heart and being in-tune with your own bodily functions, attuned to others, managing fear, as well as analysing risks and managing impulses. Massive, isn't it? In summary, when the child has this early safe connection, they're more likely to approach a wonderful life and its challenges rather than avoiding it.

Due to gender-role ideology, do mums feel the pressure to be inherently interested in and good at parenting? Maybe you're hoping to be a mother, missing yours or wishing for that seemingly unreachable parent-child relationship? I wonder if anyone struggles during these stages, questioning if they're doing it right.

How much of a mess of it we potentially make is exactly where we grow from reaching out to others?

Maybe the worn-down, anxious, fearful and exhausted "I can't do this" feeling is exactly where your transformation begins? In honour and respect of all imperfect mothers in all forms - I'm sure you've contributed to greatness you may be unaware of. You deserve love and self-compassion.

More on the fascinating stages of motherhood next week.

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