

Sleep-Wake Cycle

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Along the days following birth, a series of emotional manifestations emerge between the baby and the people around him, especially the parents. Like all people, adults or children, the newborn has a sleep-wake cycle during the day. The newborn's cycle is shorter than that of the adult and is repeated between 6 and 8 times in the first days. Its duration is between 3 and 4 hours. The length of the sleep period is variable ranging from 2 and a half hours to 4 to 5 hours. In the first weeks the newborn sleeps 16 to

17 hours a day. Awake periods last an average of two hours. Around the first month and a half they sleep more at night than during the day. The time of this cycle increases in during the following months due to decreased sleep periods and increased wakefulness. There are a series of important stages that must be known during wakefulness because they generate strong bases for the development of parents and children. They were described by Lier.

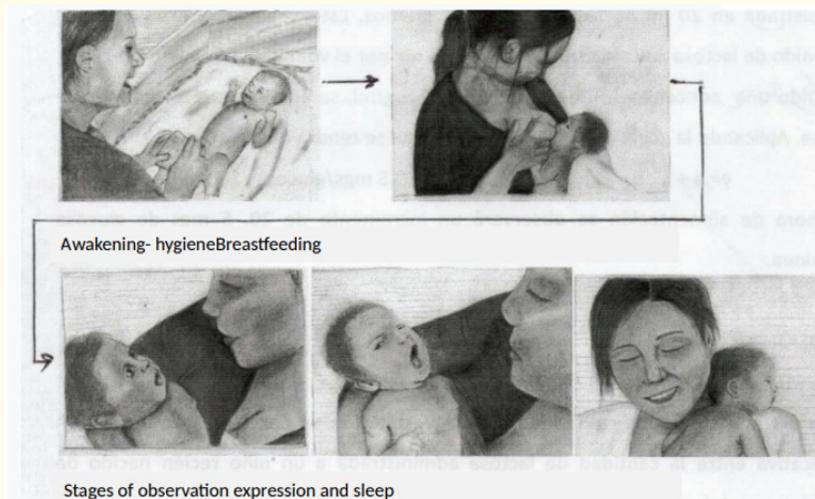


Figure 1: Stages of the waking cycle. Sleep- wake cycle and interaction.

Stage of awakening.

Upon awakening, the baby may be calm or excited. If she or he is excited, makes quick movements with his arms and legs, becomes tense and sometimes cries. It must be soothed and reassured through physical contact. The position taken by the mother, the way she supports her baby and the way of calming the baby when he or she is crying, defines also the mother's relationship with her child. Then food and hygiene

are two very important encounters that naturally bring together the essential components of mother-baby interaction.

Stage of observation

The gaze is at the beginning the privileged way of communication; then smile is added. The child looks attentively at the mother's face (face, facial expression, mouth, eyes) and listen to her voice. The child is attentive and calm. The baby is waiting for people to

talk to him/her and to smile at him/her. This occurs in the first four weeks approximately.

Stage of expression

We can observe the look, the response to the smile called pre-verbal communication. When the mother starts talking to her small child gently or to smile, the child responds with movements of the mouth, tongue, and arms, her/his hands open and close. The child smiles when detects a smile (the true smile usually appears after the first month, previously appears to laugh, but they are contractions of the lips that does not have the component of a smile with oral noise and movements). The baby is sensitive to the mother's voice: to its sound intensity, to changes in her intonation and rhythm. In the first days or weeks the newborn does not associate different sensations, since the baby cannot determinate the origin of a particular noise. As time goes on, the baby can integrate sensations, such as characteristics of the voice that speaks with the face the child is seeing, for example from the mother who speaks repeatedly to the baby, calling her/his attention and is better recognized by the child.

Pause stage

Occasionally during face-to-face mother-child games, the baby begins to yawn, turns his/her head or closes his/her eyes. It is important to recognize this attitude to promote the baby's rest.

Each baby will have a behaviour like the one described previously, however will be unique in every baby and the observation of the mother will let her to know better particular characteristics of her baby and identify the personal features of the baby's behavior.

As the child grows the waking cycle lengthens, this will allow him/her to have a greater awake cycle time in which the child will share with his mother, other people and begins with the handling of objects. This is how the first steps of the independence of the baby arrive, beginning his/her contact with the environment, this is a long learning path for the child, to reach the achievements that will lead him/her to become an adult, and for the parents (and the whole family) that need to help this child who wants and needs to learn. Sequential stages lead to the complete child development, but the attitude of both parties (parents and child) will have different demands, the baby will look for ways to call the attention to captivate adults and the adults will enjoy the gift of the child that is the smile and the signs of satisfaction. Along this path of mutual adaptation, the knowledge between the parents and the child and the strength of the bond that connect them will be constructed.

Children have cheerful spirits who desire loving care, joy in the play, things and places to explore, the chance to dream, sing and dance, and difficult tasks that test the child willingness to move and feel. Their bodies need to move, and their minds need to dis-

cover what is real, imagined and remembered. They do not want 'stimulation', but the best cheerful company that loves them and respects their eagerness for learn. Everything they know and do can be shared with caring partners.

They cannot grow well, make friends, or know if they are tired, hungry, scared, angry, bored or embarrassed, these are constitutional data of human beings from who emerge all social needs and rights arise. Margaret Donaldson calls this the 'human sense'. She says:

"The human sense is the understanding of how to live in the human and physical worlds that children normally develop in the first years of life. Children learn spontaneously during direct encounters with these worlds in which they live daily and inevitably everywhere, beyond cultural differences.

Learning is continuously informed and guided by emotion, that is, by feelings of importance, of value, of what matters. And it is very stable and durable, once established. This is the structural base on which all that follows must be built. "

In summary, child survival and development depend on communication with the caregiver who needs an emotional attachment to care for the baby, but also to maintain and develop a companionship intimately expressed in changing purposes and conscious experiences [1-3].

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