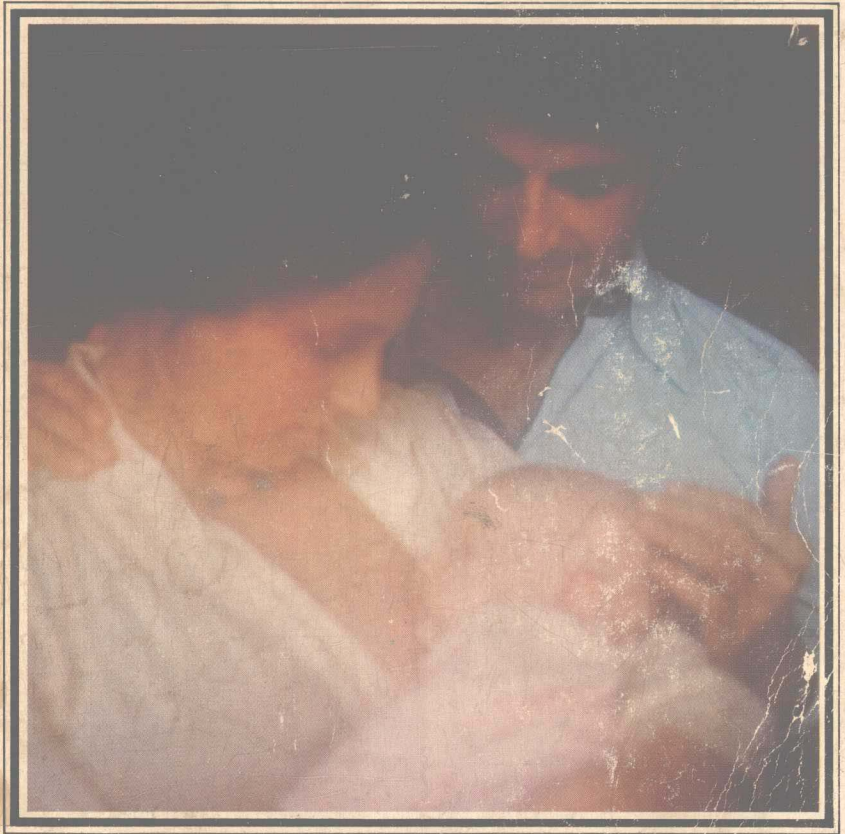


Baby Massage



Amelia D Auckett

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Foreword

Amelia Auckett has written a very important book. It is important as an impetus towards a new age in which humanity regains the capacity for touch, and bodily intimacy from birth, with fellow beings on the planet Earth. Touch is love actualised — through hands, through skin, through genitals, through all the organs of feeling.

The pendulum is reversing. No longer do we consider the body sinful — to be repressed, denied. We humans begin to ‘own’ our own bodies again. That we own the body is good. I believe God created it from head to toe, from skin surface to the mucous lining of the gut, from lips to genitals. We are no longer as fearful of our nudity; we no longer prohibit our children as much from the exploration of their body surfaces — of themselves, of others. We are more accepting of the pleasure of the feeling flow, which is our birthright, the well of bubbling, joyous aliveness in the here and now.

Flickering like the Aurora Australis (Borealis) in the night sky, our life energy aura responds, luminates and moves under the field of energy emanating from the palm of another who touches. Touch can re-connect longitudinally from head to foot, the broken segments of our life energy flow across cramping barriers. A lump in the throat dissolves as a tender mother strokes her child from face to chest; a spastic diaphragm of a colicky baby relaxes and the lowest rib no longer retracts under the light butterfly stroke from the chest to belly.

Touch was present all around the fetus as the warm uterine wall, buffered by amniotic fluid and lined by a smooth amniotic membrane, continuously rocked the unborn. Natural birth was experienced as a titanic, intermittent ‘being squeezed’. The experience of emerging into the new world of air and light, into separate existence, may have been overwhelming. Whatever the experience, the memory of birth and neo-natal life is retained in the ‘memory cassettes’ into adulthood.

The ‘natural law’ requires that babies remain bonded to mothers (and vice versa) physically and energetically in the post-natal period. This is achieved primarily by being close, skin to skin. To separate babies and mothers post-partum is a crime against humanity, for thus one ruptures the connection between the energy fields surrounding these two organisms and so interferes with the development or maintenance of the babies’ life-supporting link.

The objective reality of energy fields is demonstrated by Kirlian photography, which shows that living bodies are surrounded by an energy field which extends **beyond** the limits of the skin.

The baby massage described by Amelia Auckett in this book can repair the hurt after a difficult birth experience. It can re-bond the ruptured relationships of the family members by re-connecting the energy fields; it can promote natural growth in the untraumatised and traumatised alike.

The beginning of life is the foundation of the whole life time. Those who receive enough touch early, like well-watered and tended seedlings, have a chance to thrive and grow into healthy plants. Separated babies become cold, pale, under-nourished — they sustain a contraction of the life energy field, which can last a life time. Touch can reverse this energetic contraction and stimulate energetic expansion; the pale baby can suddenly become pink, rosy and glowing with sweet warmth.

Loving touch is nurturing, normal. We are not ‘spoiling’ the baby by using it. Good parenting involves early nurturing, with later release to autonomy and independence. Touch is a precious gift. It is a gift which has value only in the glad acceptance, so it should never be forced on the unwilling. Nor should it be only mechanically applied; and the more delicate the touch, the more delicious is the inner perception in the receiving person, young or old.

Always be responsive to the baby. When the baby has had enough, stop. Touch in baby quantities, delicately and rather briefly, and be sensitive to special needs; if you start in the new-born period, skip over the umbilicus and do not touch it until completely healed.

Touch is natural mammalian behaviour. We must return to this behaviour if we want to become fully human; for touch is a corner-stone of humanism.

Eva Reich^{*},
Hancock, Maine, U.S.A.

^{*}Eva Reich is a natural childbirth educationist and group therapist. She draws on her experience as a mother, as a Doctor of Medicine in rural, private practice and in assisting home deliveries, as well as a paediatric resident at Harlem Hospital, New York. She is the eldest daughter of Wilhelm Reich, emphasises his concept of self-regulation in her teaching, and uses Medical Orgone Therapy in her group and individual therapy work. She has been an activist in relation to the benefits of birth control, natural childbirth and baby massage, and is in the vanguard of those spreading these ideas around the globe. Countries visited include England, France, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Brazil and Australia.

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There are many people who have contributed their energies and time to this book, so to all the loving friends who have helped, I wish to express my sincere thanks.

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I give special thanks to my teenage sons Paul and John for their co-operation and for their caring and interest in my book.

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Preface

In November, 1979, I wrote the article, 'Baby Massage: An Alternative to Drugs' for the **Australian Nurses Journal** (Vol. 9, No. 5). It had such wide response from parents and professional people from all around Australia, most of them wanting more information, that I decided to write a book.

My interest in the subject began after I became aware of the baby massage work being done at the Mothers and Babies Health Association Hospital in Adelaide, Australia. There, in August, 1977, I met and talked with Jacqui Showell, a physiotherapist at the hospital. Soon after my return from Adelaide, I introduced baby massage at my Infant Welfare Centre, and now hold regular demonstrations and practice sessions for mothers as well as for Infant Welfare nurses and other Child Care professionals.

I have attended a number of baby massage workshops, including Eva Reich's. The adult massage course I undertook with Terry Suckling, a professional masseur and natural therapist, proved invaluable to me in understanding about massage through experiencing it, and being able to teach baby massage effectively. Also, I have learned a lot about baby massage from the babies I have massaged and have continued to see at regular intervals until they reach three or four years old. The mothers give me interesting and valuable feed-back on their babies' responses and their own responses to the massage.

In 1979, I decided to ask Terry Suckling to work with me, as I wanted to include fathers in baby massage. Terry's massage techniques are compatible with baby massage and can be incorporated with family massage.

We continue to hold Family – Baby Massage Workshops at weekends. Each family includes parent/s and baby. After we talk about massage, I demonstrate the massage on one of the babies. The parents then massage their babies with supervision. We usually have six babies at these workshops. After this, the parents and professional people taking part in the workshops can each experience a head and shoulder massage. As one father said: 'This has allowed me to understand what the baby experiences'. It also teaches parents how to give and receive nurturing. Family massage incorporates a positive interaction of the whole family through a shared learning experience, resulting in improved communication, enjoyment, relaxation, awareness and honesty.

I think it valuable for people who want to teach baby massage to learn about massage through experiencing it themselves. I have found this an exciting

and rewarding way to teach parents and others the value of baby massage.

I believe in the effectiveness of baby massage, and I want to share what I have learned with mothers, fathers and people who work professionally with infants and families. I hope, after having read this book, you will **want** to massage your baby, and that you **will** massage your baby and gain as much pleasure and satisfaction from practising the art of massage as I have gained from writing about it.

The ancient art of massage is enjoying a rebirth throughout the world, and it is my hope that this book will make available new ways for people to love and care for themselves and their families. I have included many references to birth, bonding and body contact, because these subjects are all associated with baby massage. It should be noted that I have used 'he', 'him' and 'his' in the text simply to distinguish the baby from the mother.

'Nurturing for Parents' is included as a special chapter because, if nurtured themselves, parents can better care for their children.

Amelia Auckett,
Melbourne
September, 1981

Birth and Bending

Experience this with me:

I'm a very little person.
I'm completely surrounded, supported, nourished,
warmed, cushioned
Swimming in a warm sea
I am one with my mother
At one with my newness
Feeling, hearing a heart beating, blood rhythmically
surging around me, feeling safe and warm.
There is movement, this way and that
I am one with my mother's feelings; I feel it too
when she is angry, sad, loving, happy.
With my mother, I experience other people, hear their
muted sounds, feel their touch.
I am very small, surrounded by a supporting,
nourishing, vast, loving universe.

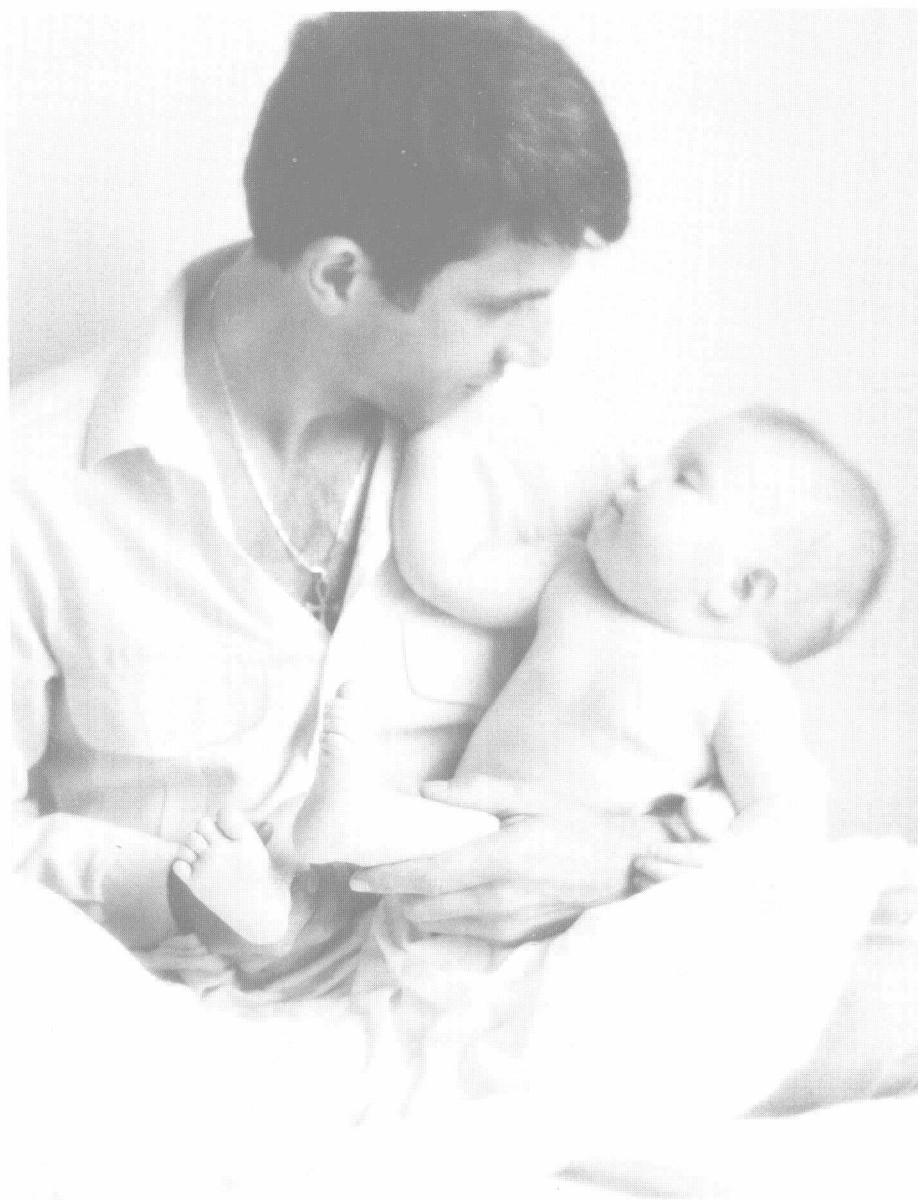
As I steadily grow
My limbs stretch and flex
Against the soft boundaries of my world
And my back is caressed.
Then gradually my space becomes crowded,
I curl up
I curl into a ball
I feel confined, cramped
I long to stretch
To be free!
Then, dawning joy,
Rhythmical pulsations press me
And caress my skin,
Becoming stronger
As I start moving down a narrow tunnel.
Strong emotions and sensations
Surge through me.
It's time to be born!
Time to leave the warm womb
Time to experience my new life
The strong pressure eases

As I emerge —
I am free!

Gentle hands lift me onto
My mother's smooth skin,
We lie belly to belly
I feel her warmth
I hear again the familiar rhythm
Of her heartbeat.
I open my mouth
I cry once, then again,
As air fills my lungs
Then I breathe strongly.
Nuzzling her breast
My face pressed to her,
I find the nipple
Warm food flows into my mouth as I suckle.

Then I feel her stroking my head
And body — my back, my limbs.
My cord is cut,
Ending links with the womb,
Yet I feel safe
With our new bond already strong.
Our energies merge in a flow of love
As we look at each other,
As I hear her voice
And I respond to her touch,
Her smell, her taste.

Here, close to mother
I feel safe, nourished, warm
I belong.
I am.



Inside the womb, the baby has a rich sensory input, the sounds of the mother's own body and sounds from the outside world, movement as the mother moves, and a high tactile input with the baby completely surrounded and supported all around by the womb. Every emotion the mother feels has its physiological effect on her body, and the baby, intimately connected to her, experiences these too.

During birth, the baby undergoes an immensely strong, almost overwhelming experience, squeezed by powerful uterine contractions and moved down the narrow birth canal and out into the world.

By being placed gently on the mother's bare belly before the cord is cut, he will feel at peace and secure as he has eye contact with his mother and is caressed by her, and nuzzles and finds her breast. It is interesting to note that the umbilical cord is generally just long enough so that the baby can suckle at the breast. The stimulation from this suckling releases hormones — oxytocin, which stimulates lactation and contracts the mother's uterus, thus assisting in the expulsion of the placenta, and prolactin, the other hormone, which induces the production of breast milk.

In the womb and during the process of birth, the umbilical cord supplies

all the oxygen the baby receives, until the baby emerges into the air and takes his first few breaths. At this stage, oxygen comes from these two sources, the cord and the air, and dependence on the umbilical cord ceases only when the special valve in the baby's heart closes so that the pulmonary system takes over for the rest of his life. It is, therefore, important that the cord is cut only when it stops pulsating, so that the changes from womb to world, from depending on the mother, to oxygenating his blood with his own lungs, becomes a smooth transition. This is a beautiful time for all, and is involved in allowing mother and baby the close contact they need while they are physically linked and are making the transition to another form of bond.

This is the moment for massage to begin.

Very lightly. Very lovingly.

Since Frederick Leboyer's book, **Birth Without Violence**, was published in 1974, many parents want to have a 'Leboyer birth' for their baby.¹ This is a gentle birthing process that takes place in great silence with low lighting and gentle, loving hands allowing the baby to learn to breathe before the cutting of the cord; then allowing time for suckling at the breast — and for