

El Concepto del Continuum

En busca del bienestar perdido



Jean Liedloff

Editorial OB STARE

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Jean Liedloff, Jesús Sanz (Photographer)

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El alimento para sustentar el cuerpo y las caricias para alimentar el alma ni se ofrecen ni se niegan, sino que siempre están disponibles. Ofrecer a un niño más o menos ayuda de la que pide es perjudicial para su desarrollo.

Una vez reconozcamos plenamente las consecuencias del trato que damos a los bebés, a los niños, unos a otros y a nosotros mismos, y aprendamos a respetar el verdadero carácter de nuestra especie, podremos descubrir con mucha más profundidad nuestro potencial para el bienestar.

Introducción

Tres meses antes de publicarse este libro por primera vez en 1975, una amiga me pidió que le dejara la prueba impresa a una pareja que esperaba su primer hijo. Más tarde conocí a Millicent, la esposa, cuando vino a comer a casa con su hijo Seth, que tenía tres meses. Me contó que ella y su esposo Mark, que era médico, estaban convencidos de que mis ideas tenían sentido porque concordaban con lo que sentían. Estaba muy entusiasmada con la idea de que otros padres leyeron el libro, pero le preocupaba que algunos se desanimaran con la idea de tener que mantener un constante contacto físico con sus hijos durante meses.

—Entendí la idea —dijo—, pero estaba segura de que no podría llevar encima el peso equivalente a un saco de patatas de 4,5 a 7 kg, las veinticuatro horas del día. Temo que esto pueda desanimar a la gente. ¿Por qué no sigues solo con la idea de Dejar la compra en el cochecito y llevar en brazos al bebé como he oído que decías por la radio? La mayoría de las madres estarán dispuestas a hacerlo y cuando lleguen a casa desearán seguirlo llevando en brazos. Yo nunca me separé de Seth porque no sentí ningún deseo de hacerlo.

—Esa era la idea —le dije—. Solo funciona cuando el bebé está ahí y tú mantienes un contacto físico con él porque así lo sientes y no porque alguien haya dicho que debas hacerlo. Ni tampoco desearás dedicarte a servir a un bebé hasta ese punto, a no ser que lo conozcas y que te hayas enamorado de él.

(...)

El Concepto del Continuum: En busca del bienestar perdido Details

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From Reader Review El Concepto del Continuum: En busca del bienestar perdido for online ebook

Tanja says

I really enjoyed this book, for the first half. It was interesting to read about the observations between western culture and the indian tribe's culture, but here it ends... She starts talking about homosexuality as being a reaction to a cruel father or a mincing mother... WTH. That small niggling in the back of my mind that had been whispering throughout the book came out screaming during that passage (yes pun intended), WHAT ARE YOUR CREDENTIALS TO BACK THIS UP?

Just because much of the book cooperates with my child rearing belief, doesn't mean that it's good. She assumes a lot of things without, seemingly, any other basis than her observations... and while I agree with a lot of the thing she writes...I cannot in any way recommend anyone read it after this passage on homosexuality. It's just dumb. You can't make a homosexual, there are plenty of men and women with similar upbringings who aren't homosexuals... It's just assuming to much...

I would always recommend Our babies ourselves over this book, it has a more scientific approach and the research is based on far more societies than The continuum concept which is based on two. Assumptions should not be promoted as facts...

Elisa Parhad says

I was expecting much more from this book. While some interesting insights are offered about parenting across cultures, the author's hypotheses are hugely flawed. Backed by very little, if any, science, the author bases a "new" theory of child care to be used by Western parents on her observation of the Yequanna tribe in a South American jungle. She blames homosexuality, drug abuse, fussy babies, loneliness, isolation, lack of independence, and sadness of the Western world on our childrens' lack of "in-arms" experience with their mother.

While I wholly support attachment parenting styles (such as frequent carrying of your baby), many of Liedloff's assumptions and suggestions are naive. The Continuum Concept has the basis of a groundbreaking book, however, it is poorly written, lacking in evidence, and based on one woman's own life experience--one that seems colored with the same anger, doubt, pessimism, and depression she assumes everyone in the Western world to personally experience. I count myself out of this contingent and maybe that's why I just can't support the theories the book lays out.

Kristi says

When keeping in mind that the author is neither a parent or an anthropologist, this book gives an incredibly different, and much needed point of view on baby-rearing. A must-read by any parent, whether you agree 100% or not, everyone with an intent to raise a child should give this book a read in order to see another perspective. The insights in this book are invaluable when forging your own parental style, one that frees the mother to pursue her own needs while at the same time giving the baby what he needs as well. A huge a-ha! moment for me, unfortunately not until my fourth (and final) baby was over a year old.

Eirene says

This book was very interesting, and definitely worth reading if you have/are going to have a baby. Take the best and leave the rest. The author spent some years with a tribe of Brazilian natives, and makes all of her conclusions based on her observations there. She says that packing your baby around in a baby carrier, and co-sleeping, and basically keeping baby near you at all times, meets a psychological need that both mother and baby have to be close to each other; she says it eliminates postpartum depression, and helps babies develop into capable, confident children and adults. I packed both of my babies until they were crawling, and co-slept for about six months before introducing the crib, and so far, have observed nothing that refutes the argument. My kids are both independent, happy, and have no separation anxiety. And I never had any postpartum issues. That was my experience, but I didn't do any of that stuff because it was the "right" way. (In fact, most people said it was wrong.) I did it because it felt natural and good. It met both of our needs. So, this book? I'd like to see some unbiased research into the subject. And since this book was written in the 'Seventies, and many people have read it and applied the principles, more research could be done. The book itself isn't perfectly convincing. I'm not huge into credentials, or anything, and a Ph.D definitely doesn't qualify somebody as a genius, so I'm willing to listen to her, and consider her ideas. But prepare yourself for a few over-excited, opinionated rampages. There's also the fact that she did very little additional research, and didn't have any children of her own. Often she cites experiences she had with pet monkeys. Come on, sister! But until that day when "studies show" I feel like these are principles worth applying, just because they feel right in your gut.

Raederle Phoenix says

This is one of the most influential books I've ever read. The friend who gave it to me said, "This was the book that turned me into a thinking person."

Instead of speculating about what does or doesn't work for children based on research or educated guesses, this book takes us into the lives of a highly successful culture in South America that actually thrives at making people happy, connected and energetic.

Taylor says

What is a more perfect picture in this world than a contented baby in loving parent arms? Leidloff claims that this is the place to be if you are an infant; that the modern traditions of swings, cribs, playpens, and other child-holding-devices go against our nature and evolution, and can do great damage to a person by denying an infant's automatic expectations.

I agree with much of what she says. Obviously, babies are made to be held. We are the only primates that willingly set our young down for (often) hours at a time. We are the only primates that purposefully ignore our young's cues for food/comfort/attention/etc. (Just let him cry...he's fine...) We are the only primates that listen to the advice of "experts" rather than follow our own finely tuned and well evolved instincts when it comes to caring for our young.

It's an interesting book. Parts made me cry. Parts made me scoff. Parts made me want to throw the book across the room and throttle Ms. Leidloff. Parts resonated very strongly with me. She's on to something, but I am only inclined to trust her so far...given that she has never had her own children. It's supremely easy to talk expertly about theories. It's an entirely different game to see those theories in action.

I think the most amazing part was her conceptualization of the modern infant born in a hospital and placed in a crib, instead of in where it instinctively knows he belongs (in Mama's arms).

Reading this made me think about the many times parents have told me (as their childcare provider) to allow their infant to cry itself to sleep. I was deeply grateful for my safe homebirth and my son that is rarely allowed to cry without our loving attention and cuddles (only in the car seat...we run many errands on the bus now). It is no wonder infants sound like torture victims when allowed to cry alone. How horrible that must be.

I have such a strong, mama-bear, visceral reaction to the very idea – and a holy horror of myself for the many times I have listened to parents instructions instead of my own heart and let babies cry – that I can't seem to get cohesive sentences out just now.

There are many places where Leidloff is full of crap...but anyone who writes a "raise your child this way" kind of a book is full of crap. If I were writing a book about caring for children it would go something like this:

Every child is completely different and you are always flying by the seat of your pants. You'll work it out. Just keep on loving them. That's all.

But that's all personal opinion. If anyone else has thoughts on Leidloff's concepts, I would be extremely interested...

Kyra says

Entirely changed the way I view parenting.

Michelle says

This book was a very bad read. So bad it belongs in its own 'so bad it's good' category - I laughed out loud at some bits. Here (in my opinion) is why:

1. The evidence presented for the book's main premise - that western traditions of raising children are damaging and a primary cause of drug abuse, homosexuality, social isolation and all manner of other societal evils - is hardly scientific. The author's singular observation of a south American tribe in the jungle suffices.
2. Dare you bring a child up in traditional western ways e.g. use a pram, cot or playpen? The prelude explains you will - or should - feel very guilty, now you have been introduced to 'correct' child raising techniques.
3. The author's belief the stone age Yuqana tribe instinctively know how modern society should raise their children is at best naive, at worst misanthropic.
4. Some of the observational evidence provided to support the author's theory beggars belief. The author

illustrates the evilness of playpens with an anecdote about a Yuqana tribesman who builds a crude playpen out of sticks for his children. When he realises the playpen is in fact no good for his children, he destroys it immediately. But why did this tribesman build a playpen out of the blue, without ever having seen or used one before? Why did he feel the need to build one, if in fact the tribe's child-raising techniques to date were so idyllic? It's never explained and I find myself wondering whether this example - and others - are fabricated 'evidence' to support the author's theories. (By the way, have any scientists returned to the jungle to test the author's continuum concepts?)

5. The book's impersonation of an evidence-based anthropological study via use of big words and opaque, convoluted (and sometimes contradictory) language is laughable. Wish I still had a copy of the book to give you some examples of Liedloff's more brilliant passages.

Needless to say, I am not opposed to Liedloff's baby rearing recommendations - baby wearing, co-sleeping, breastfeeding on demand, etc. Rather, it's her execution of an argument for them that I have trouble with.

Adrienne says

If you have a baby or are going to have a baby, I consider this mandatory reading. Actually, whether or not you're having a baby, I think this is a very interesting read. The way we become parents and raise babies in our culture is historically quite strange and I think we would do ourselves all some good if we took some of the principles of this book to heart. Here's a quote:

"It is no secret that the 'experts' have not discovered how to live satisfactorily, but the more they fail, the more they attempt to bring the problems under the sole influence of reason and disallow what reason cannot understand or control."

And another...

"We are now fairly brought to heel by the intellect; our inherent sense of what is good for us has been undermined to the point where we are barely aware of its working and cannot tell an original impulse from a distorted one."

Cjasper says

I first read this book seven years ago, as a new mom, and just reread it for book group. First of all, I am appalled at the state of mind I must have been in when I first read it, cause boy did I swallow it hook, line, and sinker. My brain must have been in a hormone-induced state of mush. I mean, "evidence" suggests that homosexuality may be caused by non-continuum care. I didn't even notice this before! Or how awesome it is that the girls' in the indigenous cultures greatest joy stems from the pleasure of bringing their father a drink of water. Yeah, that resembles what I want for my girls.

Anyway, I still find the book unsettling for a couple of truths, as in true to my experience. Most moms I know find motherhood isolating. Most find it horribly disorienting. Most find it oppressively difficult. We all

come through it, find ways to cope, rearrange our lives and psyches and eventually sort out our lives again. Nonetheless, I do wish I lived in a culture where these states of motherhood were not something to be overcome, a culture where motherhood is never even associated with these states of being. But now, much less then when I read this for the first time, I haven't a clue as to what to do with this insight.

Shannon says

I had high expectations for this book, as it is an oft-mentioned title in Attachment Parenting circles and has its own following as a parenting style in and of itself. (Continuum Concept parenting and Attachment Parenting are not the same thing, but there is some overlap.) Though the book does contain many intriguing ideas, I found myself overall quite disappointed.

The book, written in 1975 (with an introduction added in 1985), is based on the author's experiences spending extended time with an indigenous people in Venezuela, the Yequana. Based on her observations, she concludes that their way of life is more in harmony with the natural way that humans are meant to live, in accordance with the evolution of our species, than the lifestyle of modern Western society. She claims that the natural state of the Yequana is happiness, a primary example being that they do not have a word for "work" and they enjoy everything they do. The cause? She places huge emphasis on the importance of infants being held in their mothers' arms, 100% of the time, during the first 6-8 months of life, and attributes most of the unhappiness of modern civilization to the fact that infants in Western society are largely deprived of this "in arms" experience. She devotes a significant portion of the book to describing the subjective experience that she imagines an infant in each respective culture goes through, and the remainder of the book critiquing specific aspects of modern child-rearing and explaining how specific personality characteristics and modern problems are specifically the result of being deprived of the "in arms" stage.

The fatal flaw of this book is that the ideas presented are purely the theories and opinions of the author. The author has absolutely no qualifications other than her personal experience with this particular group of people: she is not an anthropologist, sociologist, psychologist, scientist, researcher, doctor, or any other relevant qualification. Throughout the entire book there was only one citation. In fact she is overtly anti-intellectual, stating that our overuse of intellect in the modern world has, to our detriment, taken over our natural instincts as humans. There may be some truth to this, but I found it ironic that someone writing a book primarily about the importance of following one's instinct in the care of infants is not even a mother herself. There were certainly several parts of her book that my "motherly instinct" just flat out rejected. Some of the claims of the author have since been shown to be true by research, however others contradict the findings of research. Her own cultural bias is apparent in her assumption that homosexuality is a pathology and the assumption of the existence of "God". However the opinions of the author in this book are presented as if they are objective fact. It would have been more accurate if every sentence in the book was preceded with "I think," "I believe," or "My theory is."

For instance, the lengthy descriptions of an infant's experience in the indigenous and then the modern world are presented as factual descriptions, when in fact they are her interpretations of her observations, colored by her opinions. In short, they stem from her imagination. Maybe there is truth to them, but maybe not; there is no way of knowing. I wonder if Yequana mothers, let alone infants of either culture, would agree with these descriptions. While interesting to think about as a hypothesis or possibility, they don't have much value beyond the speculative.

Another big problem with this book is that all of the author's assumptions about human nature and what is

natural to our species come from her (unscientific) experience and observation of just one indigenous culture. Anthropologists have shown us that there is actually quite significant diversity among indigenous cultures, and Liedloff herself comments how different the neighboring indigenous cultures were from the Yequana. All cultures are unique, and adapted to their particular circumstances. She clearly idealizes all the features of the Yequana culture and assumes that modern culture would be better off by adopting them, but this is not necessarily the case. For example, she critiques parents for "chasing" their toddlers to keep them from harm or from wandering off, and the example she gives is of seeing modern parents do this in New York's Central Park! Maybe if I lived in an indigenous village surrounded by familiar places and trusted community members I could allow a toddler to wander as they pleased, but in a dangerous urban environment like NEW YORK CITY, I would definitely be keeping a protective watch on my child. The comparison of such different settings just doesn't make sense.

A specific critique I have of the parenting style that the author advocates is her critique of modern Western parents being too "child-centered." While I agree with the importance of a child being immersed in the normal life of adults and society, I don't think this should be done at the exclusion of direct interaction and attention, which in my experience babies both need and thrive on. In addition to some "out of arms" time being important to physical development (such as learning to crawl and sit, which start gradually from a very young age), I think that direct interaction and attention are a quite natural way of welcoming a child into the family and community, and communicating to them their inherent worth as a person. The way Liedloff describes it, she seems to advocate just completely ignoring young babies as one goes about their daily life. Not only do I think this is not healthy for the baby or the parent-child bond, but anyone who has ever had a baby can tell you it's not realistic. Babies have constant needs and are completely dependent on their caregivers to fulfill them- eating, sleeping, comforting, and toileting, are all things babies cannot do themselves, let alone laundry, bathing, and other tasks that are inherent to baby care. But the biggest disagreement I have with the author's criticism to being "child-centered" is that it directly contradicts one of the most central aspects of Attachment Parenting, being responsive to your child. Research has demonstrated the importance of caretakers being attentive to an infant's cues and responding in a caring, consistent way in order to establish a secure attachment. It is one of the central tenants of Attachment Parenting and its importance has been demonstrated in psychological research.

That said, I did find many of the author's ideas quite intriguing. For example, I agree with the author about the importance of keeping young babies close to their mothers' bodies at nearly all times. Indeed, the importance of this has been demonstrated by studies done on touch, attachment, co-sleeping, and so forth. However, I think she isolates this particular issue excessively, rather than acknowledging it as one ingredient in an overall approach to parenting. Other important factors include growing up in an environment of unconditional love, acceptance, and belonging, caretakers who respond in a consistent and caring way, positive examples and relationships with family and community, breastfeeding, and a positive birth experience, to name a few. Just carrying your baby all the time is not enough; all aspects of parenting have an impact on babies and the adults that they grow into. I thought her interpretation of personality quirks to be very interesting, for example a person being very messy because they are seeking the fulfillment of deprived infantile needs (though someone taking care of them and loving them unconditionally despite their flaws). My subjective opinion (note my qualification!) is that this might very well be the case for some people, however it must be considered in light of the whole person, which is complex and individual.

Another idea I liked about the book was the concept that children, like all humans, are social animals and they do what they think is expected of them. They instinctively want to fit in and please their parents. She gives an example that sometimes parents give them messages like "Don't touch that, you'll hurt yourself" and the message the children hear is that the parent expects them to hurt themselves at some point, and so they do. I do think that expectations are powerful and the language we use is important. But again, this is one

factor in a complex system of influences, and needs to be considered in context.

It appears even the things I like about the book have serious qualifications. So if there is so much to criticize about this book, why does it have such a strong following? What made it so popular?

I think the reason is that it makes the reader question the status quo of the way we treat babies in our society in a powerful way. This was probably groundbreaking in the time it was written, and is still groundbreaking today for people who haven't been exposed to ideas outside of the mainstream. Just the idea of putting oneself in the "shoes" of a baby and imagining what they might go through is important. Asking the question of how humans evolved and how this impacts the needs of babies is important. Questioning our cultural practices and considering more traditional practices, like slings instead of strollers, or co-sleeping instead of cribs, is important. So in summary I think this is a great book to open minds and get people thinking, but because it is so grotesquely subjective and unscientific, it should not be looked to in itself as a source of information or a guide to parenting practices. Fortunately there are many other books available now which cover these topics and make use of more objective research methods through fields like anthropology, psychology, evolutionary biology, and neurobiology. For instance, I recommend *Our Babies, Ourselves*, which is a more scientific version of the topics broached in *The Continuum Concept*.

Sue says

This book is about the happy social lives of the Yequana, a Stone Age tribe in the Venezuelan jungle, and the importance of what the author calls "the in-arms" experience. "In-arms" means quite simply that a mother or care-giver carry a baby from the moment it is born until the baby learns to creep, crawl and otherwise seek independence from his mother. Liedloff's premise is that babies who are unconditionally and constantly held and who participate, albeit passively from their mother's arms, in the world around them grow up to be happier and more secure people.

This is fine and I sure did my share of carrying with my two children, who are happy and secure enough for their age. I know plenty of moms who want to hold their babies but don't for fear of spoiling them, and it makes me feel sad - for the mom who is denying herself this lovely pleasure and for the baby who just wants to be with his mom.

Two things I did not like:

One, while the methods of the Yequana are admirable and probably for the better, they are virtually impossible to implement in our society for the simple fact that we tend to lack the benefit of living in a tribe. I'm sure it's much easier to carry your baby all day every day when you have someone else to help you do the housework and cooking. Vacuuming with a 20lb child strapped to you is not always my preferred way to spend the morning.

Two: The author says that all deviant behavior is due to lack of sufficient "in-arms" time as an infant. I can see that some babies who don't get their needs met might spend part or all of their adult life searching to complete or recreate that lovely time traveling on mommy's hip. What I don't believe is that the author should label homosexuality as deviant behavior and list homosexuals in the same category as drug and sex addicts, gamblers and run of the mill criminals. I was reading the 1977 copy of the book and perhaps the newest edition is a little more modern in its treatment of homosexuality. I can hardly believe people are gay because mommy didn't hold them enough.

Interesting read but a warning to mothers - no matter how much you are doing for your kids you stand the chance of feeling pretty guilty.

Richard Reese says

Jean Liedloff was a New Yorker who went to Europe and pursued modeling and journalism work. She met some Italians who were leaving for the jungles of Venezuela to hunt for diamonds. On a whim, she joined their expedition. Over the course of five expeditions, she spent two and a half years living with Stone Age people. As she bounced back and forth between the modern world and wild freedom, she became acutely aware of the staggering differences between the two ways of life.

The natives were “the happiest people I have ever seen.” She found their lack of unhappiness to be spooky. The adults maintained a high state of social harmony — even when everyone was drunk. Their children were all well-behaved, never argued, never hit each other, never had tantrums, never suffered boredom, and were never punished by their parents.

Returning to the modern world was always a ghastly experience, because the people were so strikingly unhappy. Why? Liedloff explored this question in her book, *The Continuum Concept*. It compares wild people to civilized people through the eyes of an eyewitness reporter, and tries to explain how communities of the same species could be as different as night and day.

Liedloff observed that the misery of civilized people began shortly after birth, when the newborn was immediately carried away from its mother, placed in a crib in the nursery, and left to scream. Welcome to civilization, Bubba! The sense of wellbeing enjoyed in the womb came to an abrupt end at birth, and most of these kids would never again recover it.

The Indians, on the other hand, raised their children in accordance with ancient instincts — a specific sequence of normal developmental experiences that Liedloff called the human continuum. From the moment of their birth, newborns were held and nursed and loved — and this warm, secure, continuous contact lasted for months, until the child indicated that it was ready to begin the creeping and crawling phase. Raised in the Indian manner, the kids lived with a sense of wellbeing throughout their entire lives. They were happy.

Our animal instincts are very much in tune with our evolutionary journey. In the civilized world, “primitive” instincts were disregarded, and society was dominated by intellect. The Indians were intelligent, and they knew how to reason, but for them intellect was a servant of instinct. The rise of civilization corresponded with the rise of intellect. Unbridled intellect is the father of unstable societies, like the one outside your window.

Today, civilized mothers are so removed from natural life that they actually have to read books by childrearing “experts” like Dr. Spock to learn how to raise their young. But when these non-continuum instructions are followed, civilized mothers “produce children they cannot love, who grow up like themselves, anti-self, antisocial, incapable of giving, destined forever to go hungry.”

Indian children, raised via time-proven instincts, develop normally, in a sequence designed by evolution. Civilized children do not. We miss vital developmental steps in childhood, and this frequently leads to adults who have infantile components in their personalities, for their entire lives. Here is the most striking

paragraph in the book:

“Man can ‘survive’ in appallingly anti-continuum conditions, but his well-being, his joy, his fulfillment as a whole human being, can be lost. From many points of view he might be better off dead, for the life force, in its ceaseless tending toward repair of damage and completion of developmental phases, among its instruments employs anxiety, pain, and an array of other ways of signaling that things are wrong. Unhappiness in all its forms is the result. In civilization, a frequent outcome of the operating of the system is constant misery.”

She wasn’t fond of modern society. Liedloff eventually became a psychotherapist, and she used what she had learned to help some people reduce their inner pain. She didn’t discover miracle cures, but she believed that some degree of healing was possible for some people. Her book has helped many new mothers avoid making some of the classic mistakes.

She presents us with compelling descriptions of both ways of life, and these fit nicely with studies done by many others. The symptoms of our illness are numerous and easy to see. But her diagnosis is primarily focused on the child-rearing process, and I suspect that this might be too narrow.

There are many other major differences between wild societies and civilization. Wild people live in wild lands filled with wild animals, and they spend most of their time outdoors. They rarely experience strangers, crowds, or machines. They are not controlled by others, they are free. Their sense of rightness is not suffocated by contact with school systems, corporate systems, religious systems, or greedy, exploitative, dishonest people. Civilization damages us in numerous ways, throughout our lives.

The good news here is that we can quit blaming our parents for screwing us up, because the entire society is screwed up. “All one can discover from horizon to horizon are victims of victims.” The bad news is that we are locked into powerful, unhealthy patterns of living, and damaged parents create damaged children. There are no simple solutions. The good news is that Peak Cheap Energy is going to disrupt our patterns of living, and one of the possible outcomes is positive, beneficial change. Liedloff provides us with some important pointers for the road ahead.

Lisa C says

Every parent/parent to be should read this book. Very insightful and compelling. I learned so much about why I am the way I am, and why other people are the way they are. I feel it has set me on a path towards healing, and I am relieved to know that I can help prevent my child from being a victim of our culture. The basic idea of the continuum concept is that there is a natural way that we are all meant to develop, though civilized life has torn us away from it. When an infant doesn’t get what he needs, it leads to problems for the rest of his life. Hold your baby until HE says he is ready to let go!

Jenni says

Yowza. I started this book a few months ago, then picked it up again last weekend. What timing! I just read

Weissbluth's HSHHC, and my husband and I are in the midst of transitioning our infant daughter to sleep in her crib.

So with that in mind ... this book made me cry. Liedloff's chapter on The Beginning of Life -- the first experiences and feelings that a baby has when she's not in her mother's arms -- my gawd, how excruciatingly painful was that? I understand that she wants to make a point, and some of those feelings might be right on. But Liedloff doesn't know that (no one can), and anyone coming to her book after a few months or even weeks of mothering is in for a soul-wrenching read.

I am a babywearer, and my daughter spent her first four months in my bed and in-arms. Then I had to go back to work, and my husband and I, along with our pediatrician, believed that we would all sleep better -- with our primary care and concern being our baby girl -- if she left the family bed. I cannot believe that, because of this decision, my baby will not grow into a happy, secure child or adult.

There's a lot of interesting material on the social tendencies of humans, and I appreciate the alternative view of child-rearing in the Yequana culture. I agree that we need to trust our parental instincts more and occasionally tell the experts and pediatricians to bug off. But each child, each family is unique, and no mother should feel damned for making choices that work best for her family. So take Liedloff with a giant grain of salt. I'm just sayin.
