

**MICHELINE CHARPIE**

**The Lullaby: a Magical Play of Love to Foster Attachment with the Premature Baby**

Bonding is a process engaging the mother in interaction with her unborn child. The fetus is the object of an intense ambivalence: death wishes, unconditional love, expectations of not yet fulfilled dreams, transcendence of the parents' wishes and desire to love and to be loved. At birth, the imaginary child, the dream child will have to come to terms with the real child and this encounter is delicate. In the case of premature birth, the baby arrives when the mother is highly involved in her dreams and wishes. She can experience loss of self-esteem at not having completed the pregnancy. She often feels guilty and frustrated. Danger and desire will reach a peak. She is grateful for the caretakers who work hard to save her baby's life, yet she is jealous of their continuous presence. Death wishes, fear of attachment, desire for protection and extended symbiosis make that period difficult.

The use of lullaby and its lyrics can bridge the gap of the early and traumatic separation, and help the mother express her conflicting feelings. Analytic work using lullaby can help foster the attachment with the tiny baby. The lyrics frequently contain clues that lead to the exposure of a hidden problem. Singing can be a way to foster the encounter with a premature baby, whose life threatening medical condition may hinder the attachment process and lead to long lasting after effects.

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