



Prenatal Sciences, the Human-Earth Connection & Life Sustainability

By Antonella Sansone¹

The congress theme, 'Prenatal Sciences, the Human-Earth Connection, and Life Sustainability'² invites you to share scientific evidence and stories with the wider community from around the world that will help children thrive to live compassionate, creative and fulfilling lives impacting the wellbeing of our humanity and our planet. David Sloan Wilson, Professor of Biology and Anthropology, has explored how the basic drive towards goodness – compassion, loving kindness, altruism, connectedness – can be consciously nurtured and passed onto the offspring to overcome destructive emotions and create a better future for humans and the planet. When these human prosocial virtues are cultivated from before conception within a connected supportive community, they can evolve as a product of evolution because of the epigenetic intergenerational transmission and create a kinder, more compassionate and peaceful world. According to Sloan Wilson, evolution can be a conscious process guided by humans to achieve ethics for the whole world and earth.

What if birthing a humanity successfully happens, one that will be hardwired to live in peace and respect for all life in all its forms and with a sense of oneness among all human beings and elements of Nature?

What if, by transforming our minds we can improve not only our own health and well-being, but also that of pregnant mothers and fathers by better supporting them and their developing babies through humanized care and policy making? We know that during their life before birth babies' development and wellbeing are affected by the environment surrounding the pregnant parents, in particular their emotional responses to life events and their own childhood experiences.

The congress will shine light on the practice of mindfulness and compassion as producing a greater sense of our interdependence not only within our organism (cells, organs, systems, mind, body and soul), but also on one another, and on every life on the planet and the cosmos, ensuring life's sustainability. When this sense of interdependence and awareness of the unborn baby as a sentient being are nurtured on a grand scale, they inevitably affect the way in which practitioners relate to pregnant mothers and their babies and families, leading to changes for the better in our communities, societies, nations, and planet.

¹ Dr Antonella Sansone is Clinical & Health Psychologist, MA, PhD Candidate, Mindfulness Facilitator/Teacher, Author.

² The title and theme of this congress have been inspired by Antonella Sansone's book *Cultivating Mindfulness to Raise Children: Why Human Connection from Before Birth Matters* (Routledge, 2021) and her forthcoming book *The Reuniting of Ancient Wisdom and Science, the Human-Earth Connection, and Life Sustainability: A Journey with a Remote African Tribe*.



The nurture of human virtues such as mindfulness, compassion, kindness, anything associated with goodness, has epigenetic effects and thus mitigates or breaks cycles of transmission of the adverse consequences of trauma and mental disorders as well as social ills such as criminality, addiction, intergroup hatred and mindlessness about our planet's well-being. The findings and stories presented in this congress further our understanding of how genomics and stress interact and suggest that further investigations of the genomics of stress response can uncover mechanisms that lead to depression and other mental dysfunctions, therefore to societal and ecological problems. These findings show the importance of the history of stressful childhood events of traumas in the response to stressful events, which determines a child's and adult's resilience. When parental wisdom is allowed to unfold thanks to an appropriate environmental provision, compassion and attunement are possible and infants and children can thrive.

Mindfulness-based approaches to pregnancy, birth, and the perinatal period with a focus upon the quality of the relationship with the preborn are viewed as one solution to an urgent public health need, reducing selfishness, fear, hatred, greed, us/them thinking, the threats of eco-calamities and promoting more kindness, affiliation and calm. Today many empirical studies confirm the ancient wisdom that guided individual and community well-being, including motherhood, for millennia, and the effects of mindfulness practices that shape the brain both structurally and functionally. In the same way, studies provide evidence that continued mind-body training can reshape the brain and alter human traits and behaviour.

At a time when major global challenges are affecting everyone and everything on the planet, we have the chance to make a difference in human evolution by implementing a paradigm shift. This is synthesised in the 8 May document released by WHO, UNICEF and other partners:

We now understand that the period from pregnancy to age 3 is the most critical, when the brain grows faster than at any other time; 80% of a baby's brain is formed by this age. For healthy brain development in these years, children need a safe, secure, and loving environment, with the right nutrition and stimulation from their parents or caregivers. This is a window of opportunity to lay a foundation of health and wellbeing whose benefits last a lifetime – and carry into the next generation. (World Health Organization, 2018, p. 7)

It is clear from both science and indigenous way of being, doing and knowing that healthy child development from conception lays the foundations for lifelong health and emotional security and is key to shaping a thriving human family, community, society and planet. Investing in the youth of the country can save many societal problems and reduce the costs of mental dysfunctions, criminality and disrespect for the Earth, because an educated and conscious youth will be continuously open to growth and transformation and create a new generation of enlightened citizens. It has to begin with a comprehensive training for frontline parental and child healthcare delivery staff, which includes the practice of human virtues and integrates science, philosophy and spirituality depth into the inner being in preparation for serving humanity. This will help improve maternal, paternal and neonatal/child outcomes and prevent health issues.



This global event will bring evidence that reaffirms indigenous wisdom that it is possible to cultivate positive human qualities and physiological regulation transforming our being in depth, and that any of us can walk the deep path leading to compassionate caregiving practice, as well as flourishing parenting and childhood. We don't need to be in a crisis to take up mindfulness practice. Human qualities are like seeds: we can sow the seeds of love, kindness and compassion or of anger and fear, and transmit them to children. The future of our Earth and its Mother Nature relies on humans' wisdom caregiving qualities, thus on training the mind and heart and impact next generations through epigenetic effects.