



Born to be wild – are our babies still Stone Age babies?

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Goals

To better understand early childhood behaviors from the perspective of evolutionary behavioral research.

Abstract

Many parents are unsure how much closeness they “are allowed” to give their baby without possibly “spoiling” him or without hampering his development of autonomy. Guidebooks are also, to some extent, of the opinion that early childhood behaviors must be “steered” for educational reasons so as not to make the children too dependent on their attachment figures; here, infant sleeping, in particular has become a significant area of conflict. This lecture views early childhood behavior from the perspective of evolutionary behavioral research: what “survival value” did the individual early childhood behaviors have – from crying to regulating sleep? How much closeness to the attachment figures can be considered as the archetypical standard from this perspective? Is this standard still valid today? What does today’s behavioral and brain research say about the archetypical expectations of the human infant? Then, from this perspective, the term “spoiling” will be examined critically and the question asked: how children became autonomous under the original living conditions of humanity. What ingredients are provided? To what extent are these anchored in the infant’s bonding system? Which of the ingredients have become rare today? What role do intuitive behaviors of the parents play? How can these be supported under today’s conditions? Finally, the perspective of evolutionary behavioral research will be used to better understand the increasing disorders in early childhood behaviors and to outline possible answers – also in view of the fact that, from an evolutionary standpoint, human beings are to be regarded as “collectively nurtured” creatures.

Publications

Herbert Renz-Polster: Kinder verstehen. Born to be wild: Wie die Evolution unsere Kinder prägt [Understanding children. Born to be wild: How evolution shapes our children. Kösel 2010