



## Learning from Infant Observation

Having the courage and, perhaps, confidence to say what we see in front of our eyes and then to be curious about it may sound simple, but it is not. Observing and wondering, in an emotionally available way, about the anxieties so common in the daily experience of a mother and her newborn baby helps us understand the early anxieties underlying adult experience.

Here is an ordinary moment from my observing experience with mother and eleven week old baby, Andy:

*Mother asked Andy: "Are you showing Sharon how you found your finger?" As she said this, Andy began to cry. Leaning closer to him, she inquired: "Is that finger soapy from your sponge bath?" He sucked a bit and then started to cry again. "Is that the finger where I cut the nail too short? Is it hurting you? Oh, I'm sorry," she said apologetically.*

I watched with interest and admiration this ordinary situation of a mother working hard to understand her baby's momentary distress. Observing ordinary mothering – nothing fancy – just everyday maternal functioning reminds us that the important focus is on the immediate moment and the important attribute is the determination to keep trying to understand.

Psychoanalytic therapy and infant observation allow us to more deeply appreciate that good moments and bad moments are what life is made of and to recognize the importance of paying attention to the non-verbal back and forth in all relationships.

**Sharon Alperovitz, MSW**  
Member, Washington Center for Psychoanalysis

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### The Psychoanalytic Studies Program

The Psychoanalytic Studies Program is a two-year program of The Washington Center for Psychoanalysis for psychoanalytic clinicians, scholars and others interested in psychoanalysis as a treatment modality, as a theory of mind and as a tool for psychoanalytic research. The PSP includes a one year elective Infant/Mother Observation Seminar designed to sharpen ability to look closely at what is happening before one's eyes enhancing the observer's emotional and intellectual receptivity and capacity for clinical work. ([For More Information](#))