

The Maternal Heartbeat

The maternal heartbeat in utero is the most powerful, patterned, repetitive sensory signal that the developing brain is exposed to is the maternal heartbeat. As the aorta moves it creates a powerful vibrating and auditory rhythm, which activates the brain stem for months and months, which in turn creates and organizes the brain stem - which will ultimately be used in regulating rhythms like sleeping and waking. These neuronal networks, are core foundational templates are organized in response to patterned, neuronal activities which are guided and shaped by the maternal heart beat. Because of the way in which the brain makes an association between things that co-occur in time, this pattern becomes associated with being in utero where the fetus is warm and safe, and not hungry, etc., etc. See where I'm going with this?

This gives us a powerful insight into how to recreate a sense of safety, calm and comfort. Isn't it interesting that every single Aboriginal healing ritual that involves grief or loss, involves patterned, repetitive dancing or drumming at a frequency of roughly 80 beats per minute, which is comparable to the maternal heart rate in utero. Isn't it interesting that when children who are retarded or autistic get overwhelmed and engage in self-soothing behavior like rocking or head banging, it's at a frequency of 80 beats per minute? Isn't it interesting that when someone chants or says their rosary beads, it's at a frequency of 80 beats per minute? All of these things are self-soothing and we do them almost automatically, because they make us feel better.

From a speech Bruce Perry, MD, PhD gave to EMDRIA 2002