



THE POWER OF A HUG

When having babies in the US these days, skin-to-skin contact is strongly encouraged when they are first born to help regulate their nervous systems.

Guess what? Skin-to-skin contact with someone you care about can STILL help you regulate your nervous system! Research tells us that a 20-second hug or even holding hands with someone you love can help soothe both of your systems.

When getting caught up in the thoughts, worries, and shoulds and in your mind, try some physical affection with your family members.

Touch deactivates the part of our brain that responds to threats. You may have heard recently more about how our bodies jump into fight or flight responses under stress. You can probably recall recent moments where this actually happened to you. Being a mom in today's society can be incredibly stressful. It's only natural for our bodies to trigger this fight or flight response. But thankfully for us, physical touch can be an antidote to these heightened stress hormones.

THE 20-SECOND HUG

Have you heard of the power of the 20-second hug? It originally comes from a research study done with couples in a loving relationship. Two groups were asked to do public speaking on a topic that made them upset or stressed. One group had no hug, the other had a 20-second hug from their partner beforehand.

Which group do you think registered lower stress hormones in the public speaking situation?

Other research has gone on to support the finding that hugging a loved one can increase oxytocin, the happiness hormone.

Does it have to be 20 seconds exactly? NO! But the research does support that longer hugs work better, so the 20 second goal post is helpful to make sure you're getting the best of the best with your hugs!

HEALTH BENEFITS OF HUGGING

- decrease cortisol (stress hormone)
- increase oxytocin (happiness hormone)
- mirror affects with both huggers (see earlier mirror practice pages)
- positive reinforcement for both huggers!

20 SECOND HUGS: PRACTICE & REFLECTION



Does it have to be 20 seconds exactly? Why or why not?

Who did you give a 20-second hug to today?

How would you describe your mood before the hug?

How would you describe your mood after the hug?

What was your hug partner's response? Was it awkward? Easy? Did their mood seem to improve?