Marie Louise also known as 'The Modern Midwife' is an experienced Midwife, adult educator and qualified hypnobirthing teacher with over 10 years of experience working in midwifery. She has travelled extensively to learn about midwifery in different cultures and has also practised in Australia. Marie Louise has a baby daughter.

Bonding, comfort and baby wearing

Most people know about the benefits of skin to skin at birth, after all instinctive to most parents and is really well encouraged within midwifery. As the weeks go by the benefits of skin to skin with your baby can sometimes be forgotten but they are still ever so important.

During the fourth trimester your baby is very much an extension of your body and (as I am sure you have noticed) is reliant on you for comfort as well as survival. There is a theory that human babies are born before they are ready so that they can fit through the pelvis. Some experts believe that if human babies were born as mature as many other mammals, like chimpanzees, pregnancy would last a whopping 17 months! Can you imagine!?

When a baby comes into our world their life as they have known it has completely changed. There are clearer, louder sounds, all kinds of different smells, it's bright, there's no more fluid, it's around 15 degrees cooler and they're an independent person, separate from mummy. Their bodies are also doing things they have never done before, like breathing and feeding, it really is a different way of life. It must be such a strange experience for them.

It takes a while for babies to adjust to all of these big changes - understandably. I think I'd be pretty hysterical if someone dropped me into another planet and expected me to be able to self soothe and feel safe alone.

Sometimes babies are labelled "needy" or "unsettled" and some babies do want more time with their parents than others, but no baby really means to be 'needy'. Most of the time they just know they feel safer being close to you, able to smell you, hear your heartbeat and voice.

A newborn baby's incredible sense of smell will never be as good in adult life. Many experiments show how babies turn towards the smell of their mums from a very young age. Being close to your baby means they can smell your familiar scent. That's one of the reasons the doctors and nurses in special care baby unit recommend baby's have something with them in their cot that mum has been wearing, so that they can smell her and feel comforted by that.

When it comes to touch, science has proven that babies who are massaged gain weight quicker and perform better in recognition tests. It would appear that touch aids brain development. If you observe older babies you will often see them put their hands up mums top to touch her skin too, it's instinctive behaviour for babies and young children to want to be able to touch you and feel closer to you.

The needs of a baby can be exhausting for parents but it does get easier and as they get older they do get more independent. It isn't always realistic or practical for parents to be holding their baby all day. You also need to have your hands free and move around freely. I'm a fan of baby wearing because it can help babies to feel safe, supported and comforted but allows parents to have a bit of freedom too. Baby wearing meets many of their needs not to mention it is part of ancient human culture and practised globally. Baby wearing evenly distributes your baby's weight to help protect your back and posture too. Postnatal back pain is very common so it is important to be aware of how you are holding your baby and where the weight is being distributed.

To ensure you practise baby wearing safely follow these tips:
• Baby should be held tight to you so they can't fall out.
• Baby's face should be in view at all times and close enough to kiss
• Keep them in an upright position, with their chin off of their chest (the neck shouldn't be able to bend over).
• Baby should have a supported back, and not be able to slump, to avoid breathing problems.

Marie Louise, "The Modern Midwife"