



Ray Castellino

# Life in the Womb: Life All Around

An Interview with Ray Castellino, DC (retired), RPP, RPE, RCST®

By Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

**In the womb**, babies experience themselves and their mothers in totality—there’s no sense of separation, individuation. They are a gestalt, merged as one. The baby experiences and internalizes everything the mother experiences and feels.

**In the womb**, if the mother is experiencing a challenging life event, it is a challenge to the baby, too. If she can verbalize her experiences to her baby, say something to the effect, “Little one, I’m having a hard day. You are not causing this. Daddy and I are working out some stuff, you don’t have to do anything about it,” she is creating a relationship with her baby that leaves imprints for healthy differentiation when her baby is older. If the mother has enough essential support for herself (psychological, emotional, and physical), her baby will be more likely to relax or not be as affected by the stress. She is also creating positive neurological imprints for lifelong patterns of dealing with conflict and stress.

**In the womb**, babies’ bodies are growing—their physiological, psychological, and physical systems are forming. Babies are shaping, becoming a self in the energetic field of the mother’s reactions to her internal and external experiences. If the mother feels stressed out and unsupported, the baby will grow in the tension of that energy. The dad also has a strong effect on how the baby grows in the womb. If mom feels that she can rely on him and they have clear supportive communication, the baby will grow in a relaxed energetic field.

Castellino's work is about strengthening relationships. He focuses on freeing the energy locked in our systems from early adverse experiences and on changing the core beliefs we formed early on that no longer serve us.

**Working with parents** prenatally and perinatally, Ray Castellino, director of Castellino Prenatal and Birth Training (CPBT) (a two and a half year process he has conducted since 1994) and co-founder and clinical director of BEBA (Building and Enhancing Bonding and Attachment), understands the importance of acknowledging the preborn/newborn's innate sense of being (consciousness) and the effects of the baby's internal and external environment on his/her development.

**With an extensive background** in polarity therapy, craniosacral therapy, group and family dynamics, somatic experiencing, play therapy, movement therapy, re-patterning ancestral imprints, body biomechanics, and pre and perinatal somatic psychology, Castellino has several projects that he originated besides his work in BEBA.

**He works** with small groups of adults in what he describes as 'Womb Surround Workshops', he sees families in private practice and with his colleague, Mary Jackson LM, RN, RCST called, 'About Connections'. They work with families prenatally through birth and the first 9 months outside of the womb believing that the work is most effective at the very beginning of life. Their goal is to prepare families for birth and, after birth, to help babies resolve and re-pattern prenatal and birth trauma imprinting. They also work with families with toddlers and older children/teens.

**In all of his work** Castellino is dedicated to changing relationships to those early adverse experiences that

contribute to core beliefs about who we are, how we are, and that influence our relationships with our self and others.

**He says** that the only reason to look at early imprinting is to improve the quality of our lives today and in the future. In addition to 'Womb Surround Workshops', BEBA, CPBT, and 'About Connections', he is currently collaborating with Anna Chitty (Colorado School of Energy Studies in Boulder, CO) presenting an Advanced Energetic Bodywork Training: Body into Being.

#### **A Family Session**

**Families can come** to sessions in a variety of states. Sometimes parents have been arguing, moving at society's frenetic speed, exhausted from sleepless nights, disconnected. They may be mired in a state of fragmented energy. Their infant, sensing this distortion, this energetic chaos, can be crying, tense and unable to settle.

**"Mary and I sit down** and get quiet. We work with the parents to create more space in the compressed energy they appear to be bound in. As parents share their experience, we support them to create space between their words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs; to actually create spaces in their narratives with commas, periods, especially paragraphs," Castellino says, using a metaphoric example of how writers create tempo and rhythm on the page to explain how he and Mary first attempt to establish harmonic resonance or attunement with the family and within the family system. "The result

is that the parents slow down and deepen their connections with each other and their children. We witness the parent's speech patterns matching the internal baseline tempos and rhythm of their children's being.

**"Our work** is to slow down with the parents in the process, to open space so they can perceive their experience. Mary and I sit there and resonate in those slow rhythms. As the parents slow, the baby relaxes. In day-to-day reality, parents are often under-supported; they have their own traumatic histories as well, and spin in discordant rhythms. As we slow down together, a harmonic resonance or attuned energy field emerges. We coach the moms and dads to lean on each other (*figuratively and literally*). We have them do it again and again and relax. We ask them to look at each other from this relaxed, slow, frame of view. We often hear parents make statements to each other such as, 'Hi, I haven't seen you since the baby was born.' As the parents slow and reconnect, the baby relaxes and gazes up. The mother engages and dialogues with the infant.



There is an opportunity here for the baby to engage in one of the most profound discoveries that we have made: This is that the babies are able to show and tell their own stories of how they were born by the way they move and emotionally express themselves. As we see babies expressing themselves this way and being received by their parents, we also see how profoundly healing this process is for the whole family.

**“Mary and I** ask parents to practice these connection exercises every day at home for 20 or 30 minutes. When they object that life is too busy, we say, ‘Leave the laundry, leave the dishes. Try to put connecting in this way at the top of your priority list. It’s critical that you connect, resource, appreciate each other. Watch what your baby does when you do.’

**“That simplicity** is missing in our culture,” Castellino adds.

### **A More Personal Historical View**

**Castellino was born** in 1944, the first child. His mother was 19 years old when she gave birth. Four years later, she gave birth to Ray’s sister, in the same hospital, with the same obstetrician she “revered and trusted”. Although their births were not without some complications, Castellino says his mother was proud of the fact she delivered both her children without anesthetics or interventions.

**“When I was born,”** Castellino says, as he describes his memory of his birth, “my mom hemorrhaged so they cut the cord, fast; they saw I was breathing and pink. They separated us. The hospital staff followed the protocol of the time; however, they didn’t know we both needed to be skin to skin for my needs as well as hers. Her body might have stopped bleeding faster had I been able to nurse. I believe the reason she bled

was because she smoked three packs of cigarettes a day throughout her teens. Even though she had stopped smoking early in the pregnancy, her body didn’t have the fortitude to hold capillary integrity.

**“When I was** in my mid-thirties, I described my birth to my mother. I had a memory of seeing my birth from the vantage point of looking down from the ceiling. Seeing my own birth from the ceiling, I believe, indicated I was in shock and had left my body, dissociating from it. I described the color of walls and windows, the stainless steel, the number of people. I described it all and my mom said, ‘Yes, Ray, that’s how it happened, that’s what I remember, too.’ This experience strengthened my profound interest in how our consciousness comes into the world.”

**Castellino recalls** sitting behind the couch in his family living room as a ten year old boy listening to his mom and her group of life long, female friends who met regularly to talk about their lives. They often spoke about their children’s births and their life challenges. They grew up together and eventually one by one died.

**“My brother** was the third child. It was 1954, a different time from 1944 when I was born. At the time (*of my brother’s birth*), we were part of Kaiser Permanente. My mom didn’t have a choice in terms of her obstetrical care and the delivery protocol. And she was livid because the obstetrics team used anesthesia and interventions that she felt she didn’t need. I was ten years old hearing these women speak with feeling.

**My mom** was not a therapy person. She was an Italian woman who raised kids, cooked, and lived with the effects of her own abuse and traumas that she had grown up with. She was a

sales person who worked hard. I remember hearing her talk about what happened for her and how disappointed she was that she was not allowed to birth the way she already knew she could.”

### **How does consciousness come into the physical realm?**

**According to Castellino,** many members of the Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health (APPPAH) had some sense that human consciousness preexisted before we came to life in a physical body. Twenty years ago, members of APPPAH acknowledged that babies’ innate needs for security, belonging, love and nurturing, and their need to feel wanted and valued, to be seen as a self were present before birth. APPPAH members have worked hard to frame it into some sense of knowing, he says. For Castellino, part of this frame involves an energetic perspective of human consciousness.

### **Polarity Therapy**

**Castellino** left his job teaching music in 1971 to study Polarity Therapy with Dr. Randolph Stone, DO, ND, DC, the originator of Polarity Therapy, and others. Castellino watched Dr. Stone work with clients and listened to Dr. Stone talk about how consciousness comes into being, through body. He learned about the body’s life force and how energy moves through the body and how someone can sense it when sitting with another person.

**His interest** was piqued and his clinical work eventually evolved from a dyad approach to working with families and ‘Womb Surround’ groups. The ‘Womb Surround’ process is a form of group therapy (typically 7 adult members, enough to reproduce family dynamics). When sitting with this ‘Womb Surround’ ‘family’ and with new families,

Castellino is interested in the quality of the energy moving between both the family members or the participants in the workshop.

**When asked** to define the word 'energy,' he replied, "It's an experiential perception. Words and descriptions often distract us from the perception of it. While we can create images of the energy fields and think about it, we are moving from the actual to an abstraction of the energy. There's a difference between producing a memory of it and observing and imaging it. There's a difference between imaging and observing and perceiving. I'm interested in the perception and in the observation.

**"With the practice** of his Polarity Therapy, Dr. Randolph Stone encouraged us to observe and experience the way energy moves through the physical body, sense where it gets stuck, and discover what it takes to support the opening and rebalancing of the energy or life force. I can see images in my mind's eye that are secondary to the sensation of the energy flow. The energy is perceived through sensation. It's like if you place a magnet under a plastic plate with filings on it, there is movement. The filings will take the shape of an energy field. Energetic shapes and movement in patterns are seen throughout the whole of creation.

**"An energetic perspective** encourages practitioners to pay attention to the health of the system (*versus the dysfunction or disease*). If you can sit with a person doing trauma work and perceive health and movement, you can see where the energy is blocked, stuck," Castellino says. "You can support free movement of that energy so that health expresses itself as growth.

**"Infants arrive** with basic needs—experiences they must have and need to have—they come with a state of

'must need'. Beyond the basic needs of protection, warmth, food and human connection, babies also 'must need' accurate reflection so they can come to know the self (consciousness) in the physical body. That reflection is first and foremost a very somatic, physical process and a reflection of the rhythm of the baby in the formation of his/her body. Part of accurate reflection is that we as adults 'must need' be in alignment with the baby.

**"The problem is** that virtually all of us, at least some of the time, are out of harmonic resonance with ourselves and with others," Castellino explains. "The whole universe revolves around the same rhythm and, if we attune with a baby, we will discover our own primal rhythms. But, if we're caught up living a life that some adult has figured out for us or at the tempos influenced by modern technology, we do not develop an accurate knowing of our self.

**"The autonomic** nervous system, including the social nervous system, is intricately tied together with rhythm. Porges' work with sound demonstrated that if you get the right pitch with an autistic child that child's system will move to a higher order of organization. Sound, pitch, rhythm; every sound is a vibration, every ray of light is a vibration. Vibration is rhythm," he says.

**"From a perspective** of how energy moves between people, we can see how adults need to give accurate reflection to little ones to match their tempo and to have connection. If we resonate in the right tempos, we have connection. If our tempos are dissonant and out of phase, the infant will disorganize.

**"In the beginning** we are merged beings. Growing up is a process of differentiation and individuation. If you have well-bonded and well-attached infant-parent relationships,



the infant and his/her parents will be able to perceive themselves in each other. They are in different bodies. The child has his/her own soul and consciousness (Our initial consciousness does not perceive itself as separate, it's merged).

**"I try to understand** all the layers, look at the common denominators in all of the simplest forms. From my point of view, relationships involve energy, tempo, rhythm, resonance, and discourse. The first step is being in attunement," Castellino says.

**Dr. Raymond F. Castellino** facilitates people of all ages to resolve and repattern prenatal and birth trauma imprinting. This includes facilitating babies and children in the family setting and adults in individual and small group settings. He also offers phone support for parents, adults, and professionals seeking supervision. He works both alone and together with midwife Mary Jackson. In addition to working with individuals, groups, and families, Dr. Castellino also offers educational services to train others in these skills. His educational services include a two-year Foundation Training, as well as numerous presentations and seminars both locally and worldwide.