

Great Beginnings Start Before Birth: East Africa Story

There is a tribe in East Africa in which the art of true intimacy (bonding) is fostered even before birth. In this tribe, the birth date of the child is not counted from the day of its physical birth nor even the day of conception, as in other village cultures. For this tribe, the birth date comes from the first time the child is a thought in its mother's mind. Aware of her intention to conceive a child with a particular father, the mother goes off to sit alone under a tree. There she sits and listens until she can hear the song of the child that she hopes to conceive. Once she has heard it, she returns to her village and teaches it to the father so that they can sing it together as they make love, inviting the child to join them.

After the child is conceived, the mother sings the song to the baby in her womb. Then she teaches it to the old women and midwives of the village, so that throughout the labor and at the miraculous moment of birth itself, the child is greeted with its song. After the birth, all the villagers learn the song of their new member and sing it to the child when it falls or hurts itself. It is sung in times of triumph, or in rituals and initiations. The song becomes part of the marriage ceremony when the child is grown and at the end of life, his or her loved ones will gather around the deathbed and sing this song for one last time.