



## NICOLE CANIN: 'Newborn Behavioural Observation' Specialist

Nicole's eyes dance as she relates to me the joy she experiences when moms realise that they CAN communicate and understand baby. "It is an experience that every mom should have", she says, adding that "laypeople are not exposed to all the latest research in the field of newborn developmental psychology". Nicole is there to bridge that gap, and the more she relates about her passion, the more agog I become.



For ten years Nicole worked as a Child Psychologist, seeing children up to the age of five years of age. She liked working with young children as she felt it to be preventative of later issues. However, she began to feel that, given the importance of the first year of life, more needed to be offered to mothers of infants. So, like any good researcher, she started asking questions about the child's experiences in the first 3 months, and invariably heard of difficulties, sleep troubles, parents at their wits ends... ultimately, nothing out of the ordinary experience for parents of newborns (in my limited knowledge!). But – is this the "normal" we should expect?

Newborn Behavioural Observation (NBO) is a developmental tool that originated at the Brazelton institute based at the Boston's Children Hospital in the US. In 2015, Nicole

attended the first local training in NBO, and immersed herself in it. Ultimately, she had found her life's purpose, and she closed her private practice. She would spend the next year volunteering through the auspices of [Ububele](#), an NGO focused on building healthy relationships for children.

The point is, this is a technique to help mom and dad bond with baby, it is not a diagnostic test nor is it to be associated with pathologies of any nature. The premise on which NBO is based is that babies are different, at birth they are at different stages of both neural and motor (muscular) development, and they WANT to be organized.

**NBO is a form of mentoring  
for mom**

NBO helps mom identify early distress signals as well as

understanding baby's transitions into crying states and works toward the best methods of calming and soothing the unique baby. NBO opens a unique understanding of baby for the primary caregivers – the parents – and facilitates the fundamental bond that develops in those first 12 precious weeks.

### Baby has abilities, likes and dislikes from Day 1

Nicole has two of her own children, but they were already over the age of 5 by the time she came to find NBO. She laughs as she says, "I do wish I'd known of NBO when they were newborns!". She will shortly take her experiences of NBO to the ['World Association of Infant Mental Health'](#) conference taking place in Rome later this year, and she is the recently elected Chairperson of the Gauteng branch of this association. WAIMH's mission promotes education, research and study of the infant mental health. It also connects infant mental health specialists and professionals working within infant well-being.



**16<sup>TH</sup> WAIMH WORLD CONGRESS**  
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**The Nuts 'n Bolts of NBO:** parents book an initial session which will last 60 minutes (and is covered by medical aid, so you will only pay a small co-payment for the consult – bonus!!). Baby can be any age but

must be younger than 12 weeks to benefit from NBO. Nicole will use a few simple techniques to assess baby's needs and then discuss together with mom the best way to communicate with baby to ensure that baby's needs are met, and mom is able to recognize baby's strengths and vulnerabilities.

To provide an example – some babies are more resilient to noise and light while they're sleeping. Others are less so, and a very simple test is conducted to assess whether baby can sleep with some noise and light around, or whether this is in fact impacting the quality and duration of baby's sleep. This understanding can make a considerable difference to baby's sense of his or her control (organization) of the environment.

In another example Nicole speaks to the need to be particularly cognizant of premature infants' needs. Being premature, the central nervous system is very undeveloped and can take some time to catch up. These babies may have a low threshold to stimuli of various natures and may require different management to ensure that they're not using too much energy trying to "organize" themselves.

It's 2018 and Nicole feels ready to share her NBO specialization with moms... and she has become a part of the Physio Dynamix family. Tuesdays are her day (for now – more days to be added!) and you can book an assessment via the practice reception.

Frankly, the more I listened to Nicole, the more I started to consider this as a fundamental need rather than a "nice to have" for all babies and moms. It seems to me the obvious, practical approach to ensuring that new moms don't live the first few months of baby's life feeling the guilt of perceived inadequacy as a parent!

Come along to Physio Dynamix and meet the team. Join the online family on Facebook for updates and informative snippets.

**Reception: 011 706 7433**

**The Physio Dynamix *Holistic Health Collaboration* includes:**

**Nicole Bacher (NBO Specialist); BabyDynamix Clinic; Paceline Gym & Performance Centre; Caitlyn Tracey Biokinetics; Mindful Eating Dieticians; & Pilates.**

**For more information on each collaborator please see the website:**

[www.physiodynamix.co.za](http://www.physiodynamix.co.za)

