

DEALING WITH WEANING CONFLICT IN JAPANESE MACAQUES

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Japanese macaque infants are not always allowed to contact their mothers' nipple during weaning period. Mothers often actively reject nipple contact attempts (NCA) made by their infants in order to prevent them from suckling. Data from fifteen mother-infant (yearling) pairs in a free-ranging group of Japanese macaques were used to examine the relationship between maternal activities and NCA by infants. Mothers were more likely to allow their infants to put their nipple in the mouth when mothers were grooming their infants and when mothers were being groomed by other group members. Mothers' movement to reject NCA by infants tended to interrupt grooming which were receiving from conspecifics. Thus, mothers seemed to tolerate NCA by infants to maintain being groomed by conspecifics. Mothers rejected almost all NCA when they were feeding. On the other hand, infants tried to put the nipple in the mouth when mothers were grooming infants and were being groomed by other members more frequently than expected by chance. Infants seldom tried nipple contact when mothers were feeding. These results indicated that infant could attempt nipple contact in the appropriate context by monitoring the maternal activities. Through compromise in weaning conflict with the mother, the infant may construct a developmental base for dealing with social challenges.

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