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Marshall Henry Klaus was a scientist and pediatrics who studied maternal-infant bonding in the twentieth century in the United States. Maternal-infant bonding is the psychological and chemical attachment between mother and infant. Klaus co-founded DONA International, an organization [9] that trains birthing aides, called doulas, to provide physical and emotional support to laboring mothers. He also studied the differences between the immaturity of newborn infants and the experience provided in nurseries and birthing centers in different countries and compared them to those found in the United States. Klaus’s study influenced national and international initiatives to create hospital policies focused on promoting early bonding between mother and infant. Klaus catalyzed the advent of doulas and international policies that emphasized interaction between new mothers and their infants.

Klaus was born on 6 July 1927 to Caroline Epstein Klaus and Max Henry Klaus in Lakewood, Ohio. His mother was a teacher and his father was a physician. Klaus had one younger brother, Carl, who was born in 1928. He grew up in the family home in Cleveland, Ohio, where Klaus attended elementary school until his father’s death in 1934. Shortly following his father’s death, Klaus’s mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. Klaus claimed in an interview that certain events in his childhood were important for his future career. One such event took place shortly after his mother’s cancer diagnosis, when she was being treated with radiation. During treatments, she would look through the glass wall of the hospital and cry. The crying reminded Klaus of his mother’s blindness and lack of eye contact and furthered his desire to understand the maternal side of childbirth and infant bonding.

After observing a high death rate among the infants born at that hospital, Klaus and his colleagues looked for a way to improve the care of newborns. They began to study the study of the infant’s heart and vascular system, because that only required three years of training. However, after one year of studying cardiology, Klaus switched to pediatrics, the study of the lungs and the respiratory system in infants. In 1960, within the first year of his training, Klaus established a hospital in Stanford, California, which was called the Children’s Hospital of Stanford. Klaus was able to study the effects of different technologies on pediatric physiology.

In 1973, Klaus was transferred to the research department at Stanford University [10] in Stanford, California, where he utilized his experience in Singapore and his NIH grants to continue his research in a different direction. At Stanford University, Klaus studied more neonates, or infants younger than four weeks old, at a special nursery designed for premature infants. However, while doing so, Klaus began to focus more on the mother-infant relationship. Klaus was a big open room with rows of incubators and a space for mothers to sit in the corner. Klaus noticed that upon examining healthy infants, the infant’s eyes were fixed on the mother. Klaus then began to focus on the mother infant relationship and the importance of eye contact.

In 1972, Klaus received another grant from the NIH. This grant allowed him to study the effects of different technologies on pediatric physiology. In 1973, Klaus and his family moved to Novato, California, a suburb outside San Francisco, California, where Klaus and his family lived. In 1980, Klaus and Kennell established DONA International, which was then called Doulas of North America. DONA International is an organization [11] that trains women to become certified doulas, and the organization places a large emphasis on maternal-infant bonding and breastfeeding.

Klaus continued to deliver lectures on maternal-infant bonding across the United States. The following is a list of some of the places where he presented his work:

- Novato, California
- San Francisco, California
- San Juan, Puerto Rico

Klaus is best known for his work in the field of maternal-infant bonding. He was awarded the National Medal of Science in 1997 for his contributions to the field of pediatrics. He was also awarded the Japan Prize in 1998 for his work in the field of child development.

Klaus died on 15 August 2017 in San Francisco, California. He was 90 years old. Klaus is survived by his wife, Anna Freud, and his two sons, Carl and Max. He is also survived by his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Klaus is remembered as a pioneer in the field of maternal-infant bonding and a dedicated family man.
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Subject
- DONA International
- Mother and infant
- Mother-Infant Interaction
- Doulas
- Labor
- Obstetrics

Topic
People

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