

Enjoy Your Baby



**Building Healthy
Foundations for a
Lifetime of Success**

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1

LOVE AND ATTENTION

Parents, family and caregivers: You are the most important people in your baby's life. Your love and attention are as important as food and a place to live.

When your baby cries, comfort them. When you hold them close, this calms them down. They know it is *you* — they know your voice and your smell. When your baby cries, knowing you are close makes them feel like they are not alone.

Hold your baby. When you rock your baby, they feel secure, and when you cuddle them, they feel loved. Sometimes all it takes is a touch or a smile to show your baby that you care.

Show affection. Giving lots of affectionate care will build your baby's social and emotional development. Developing this foundation early on prepares them for preschool and beyond.



2

WHAT YOUR BABY IS SAYING

Your baby has feelings right from birth.

At first your baby will just express a few emotions. They will show you when they are content by cooing or smiling, and when they are distressed by crying or fussing. As your baby gets bigger, they will giggle when they are happy or wiggle their arms and legs with excitement.

Even though your baby cannot talk, they are learning to communicate with you. Over time, you will get to know their different cries and movements.

How your baby gets your attention.

Your baby will repeat your sounds and movements to get your attention. Later, your baby will do this with words. As they show feelings, they are looking for your reactions and learning from your responses. They will mimic your facial expressions and begin to understand your feelings.

Talk and listen to your baby.

Reading, singing and telling stories will help your baby connect with you and feel the love and affection they need to grow and develop.

Sharing activities helps your baby's brain develop. Right now your baby is learning to take turns and how to give and get attention. These are important social skills your baby will have for a lifetime.



3

CAN YOU
SPOIL A BABY?

Maybe you have heard that it is good to let a baby cry or that picking them up too much will spoil them. *It is not true.*

Babies cannot be spoiled by too much love and attention. Babies cry only when they *need* something — a clean diaper, a feeding, a burp or to let off steam.

Maybe you have heard that ignoring a crying baby makes them independent. It does not. It makes them scared and sad.

Your baby depends on you — not just for food, clothes or a place to sleep, but because just being close to you comforts them. Your touch, your voice and your smell all soothe them and make them feel secure. Knowing you are there will help them learn and grow.

4

MAKE ORDINARY
THINGS COUNT

You do not have to wait for *the right moment* or wait to buy special toys to give your baby what they need. What they need the most is you and all the ordinary things you do.

Babies love everyday things — the sound of your voice, playing peekaboo, singing songs and giggling together. They love when you notice everything they see and talk about it: “Look, a pigeon, a cloud, a noisy bus. What’s up today at the corner store, the park or the supermarket?”

Show your baby things and let them use their sense of touch. Babies learn by exploring. Encourage their curiosity. Show them flowers, fabrics, baby books or pictures in magazines. Let your baby touch the first snow, your hair or toys in the tub.



5

RELATIONSHIPS
MATTER

Your baby is building a special attachment to you first, and then to other close caregivers, such as grandparents, babysitters and day care staff.

You might notice that your baby looks to you for cues when they are in a new or uncertain situation, or follows your gaze to see what you are looking at. Each time your baby reaches out, your interactions help their brain develop.

Your relationship helps your baby learn and grow. Give them lots of smiles and hugs every chance you get: when they wake up, before bed, when they are feeding and during bath time. Your engagement helps your baby form a secure attachment with you. This builds their trust in you and creates a safe base from which they can explore the world and grow.



6

YOUR BABY KNOWS WHEN YOU ARE STRESSED

To take care of your baby well, you must also take care of yourself. Have a regular doctor who knows you, so you can get the health care you need. Eat healthy foods, and get enough sleep and exercise. Something as simple as walking every day will make a difference and improve your mood. Make time to connect with friends and family.

Find healthy ways to relax. Take a nap when the baby sleeps. Get out of the house — take the baby to the park or grocery store. Put your feet up after work. Babies sense your level of stress. Take care of yourself to keep your stress level down.



7

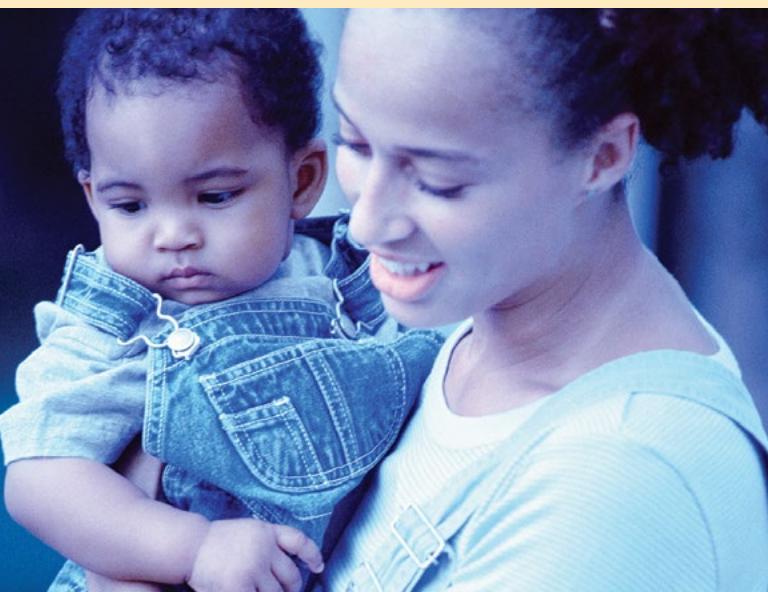
BABY BLUES AND POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Many new moms experience changes in their mood and cry more often after their baby is born. This is common and usually goes away in a few weeks.

But if you are crying a lot, or you feel sad, guilty, hopeless or overwhelmed for more than two weeks, you may have postpartum depression. Talk to your doctor.

Depression makes it hard for you to care for your baby. Also, it can stress your baby, which may cause long-term issues.

Don't suffer in silence. Depression can be treated. For help or mental health referrals, talk to your doctor, or call **311** or NYC Well at **888-NYC-WELL** (888-692-9355).



8

EVERYBODY
NEEDS SUPPORT

It happens to every parent sooner or later: The baby will not stop crying. You have tried everything — feeding, cuddling, a new diaper, a pacifier. Now you are just too tired or frustrated to take it anymore.

If you are having a hard time with your emotions, put your baby in the crib and relax for a few minutes. Take five deep breaths — inhale and exhale slowly — and then check on the baby to make sure they are safe.

It's important to ask for support.

Call a friend, family member or neighbor who can help you calm down or come over and keep you company. If you need a break, ask someone you trust to watch your baby so you can go for a walk or do something you really enjoy.





9

BABIES ARE
AFFECTED BY THE
WORLD AROUND
THEM

Even before they have words, babies can feel, remember, and experience stress and trauma. Many things can cause stress or trauma: loud arguments, fights, physical and sexual abuse, name-calling and hurtful teasing, being around people who use alcohol or drugs, losing a parent or caregiver, or neglect by the person who is supposed to be in charge.

Exposure to chronic stress or trauma interferes with your baby's brain development and can lead to long-term medical issues. Children exposed to chronic stress or trauma may also have problems with learning, memory and concentration — skills needed to succeed in school.

If you or your baby has experienced serious stress or trauma, talk to your doctor. Help your baby feel safe. Create a steady routine so they know what to expect, and give them lots of loving attention. Be aware of your own stress and take care of yourself too.

10

HOW TO
GET HELP

Being a parent is the hardest and most important job you will ever have. You do not need to do it alone. Join a group to meet new people and find support. There are many groups for new parents and caregivers.

To learn more about your baby's social and emotional development, **talk to your pediatrician or family doctor**. Your doctor can tell you what to expect at each stage, suggest activities for bonding with your baby and help if you have any concerns.

If you are having a hard time coping with your new baby or the changes in your life, or if you need a mental health referral, call **311** or NYC Well at **888-NYC-WELL** (888-692-9355).

If you are worried about someone hurting you or your child, call **311** and ask for the **Domestic Violence Hotline**, or call the hotline directly at **800-621-HOPE** (800-621-4673). Someone will help you, and services are provided regardless of immigration status.

NYC Well and the Domestic Violence Hotline are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and in multiple languages.

In an emergency, call 911.



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