

Enjoy Your Baby



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

Contents

1

Love and Attention

2

What Your Baby is Saying

3

Can You Spoil a Baby?

4

Make Ordinary Things Count

5

Relationships Matter

6

Your Baby Knows When You're Stressed

7

Baby Blues and Postpartum Depression

8

Everybody Needs Support

9

Babies are Affected by the World Around Them

10

How to Get Help

1

LOVE AND ATTENTION

Parents and grandparents: 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 her. When you hold her close, this calms her down. She knows it's *you* — she knows your voice and your smell. When your baby cries, knowing you're close makes her feel like she's not alone.

Hold your baby. When you rock your baby she feels secure, when you cuddle her she feels 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 her for pre-school 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. She'll show you when she's content by cooing or smiling and when she's distressed by crying or fussing. As she gets bigger, she'll giggle when she's happy or wiggle her arms and legs with excitement.

Even though she can't talk, she's learning to communicate with you. In time, you'll get to know her different cries and movements.

How your baby gets your attention. Your baby will repeat your sounds and movements to get your attention. Later, she'll do this with words. As she shows feelings, she's looking for your reactions and learning from your responses. She'll 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 she needs to grow and develop.

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



3

CAN YOU SPOIL
A BABY?

Maybe you've heard that it's good to let a baby cry or that picking him up too much will spoil him. *It's not true.*

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

Maybe you've heard that ignoring a crying baby makes him independent. It doesn't. It makes him scared and sad.

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

4

MAKE ORDINARY THINGS COUNT

You don't have to wait for *the right moment* or buy special toys to give your baby what she needs. What she needs the most is you and all the ordinary things you do.

Babies love everyday things. The sound of your voice. Playing peek-a-boo, singing songs, 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, at the park, at the supermarket?"

Show her things, let her touch them.

Babies learn by exploring. Encourage her curiosity. Show her flowers, fabrics, baby books, pictures in magazines. Let her touch the first snow, mommy's hair, 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 he's in a new or uncertain situation or follows your gaze to see what you're looking at. Your interactions each time he reaches out help his brain develop.

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



6

YOUR BABY KNOWS WHEN YOU'RE 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. Get enough sleep and physical activity. Something as simple as walking every day will make you healthier 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 your home today — take the baby to the park. Put your feet up after work. Babies sense your level of stress. Take special care to keep your own stress down.



7

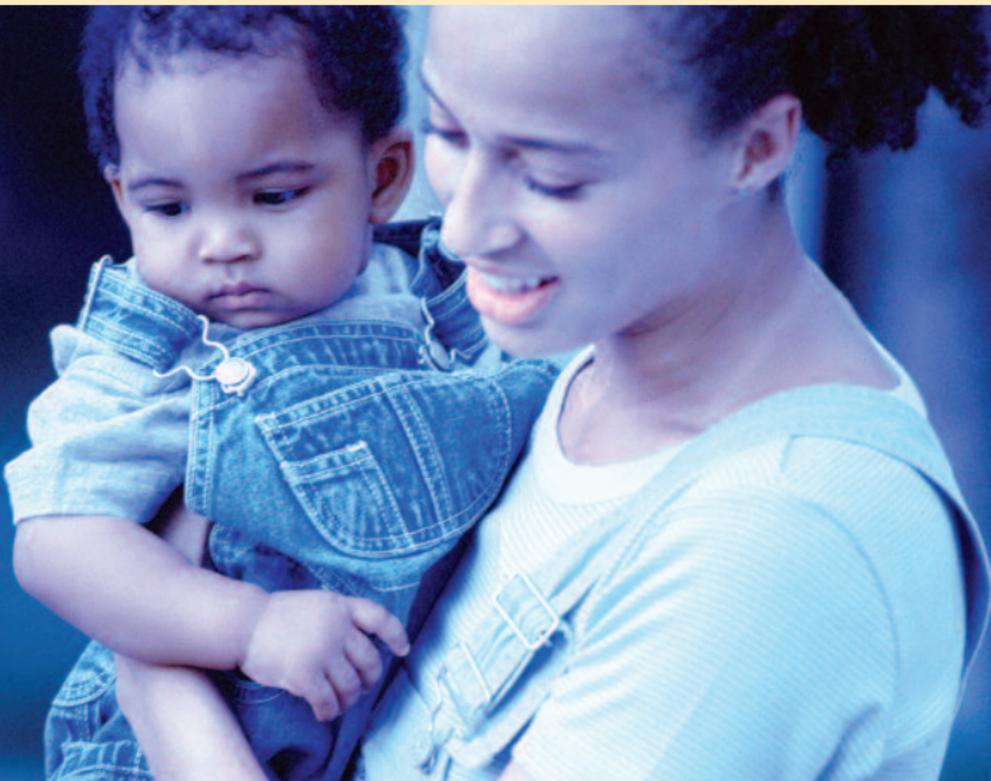
BABY BLUES AND POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

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

But if you're crying a lot, 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 child. It also can stress your baby, causing lifelong problems.

Don't suffer in silence. Depression can be treated. For help or mental health referrals, talk to your doctor or call 311 or LifeNet: **800-LIFENET** (800-543-3638).



8

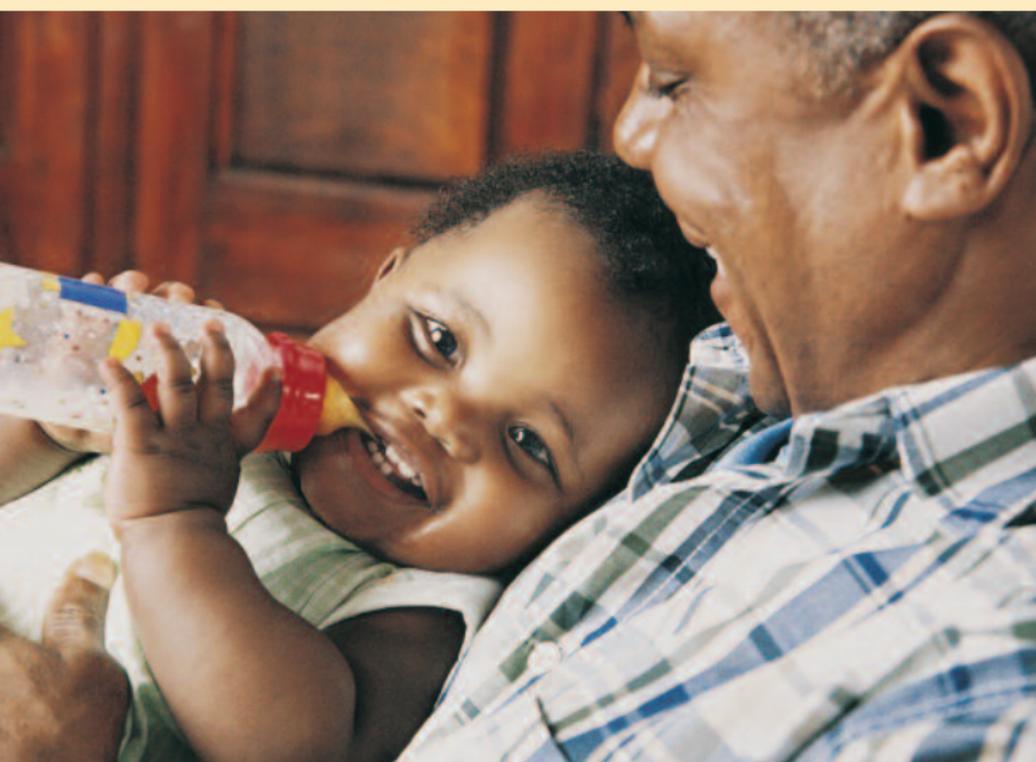
EVERYBODY NEEDS SUPPORT

It happens to every parent sooner or later. The baby won't stop crying. You've tried everything — feeding, cuddling, a new diaper, a pacifier. Now you're just too tired, sick or angry to take it anymore.

If you're having a hard time, put your baby in the crib and go into the other room for a few minutes. Take five deep breaths — inhale and exhale s-l-o-w-l-y. Check back in to make sure she is 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. 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 and violent 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 lifelong medical problems. Children exposed to chronic stress or trauma may also have problems with learning, memory and concentration — skills needed to “make it” in school.

If you or your baby has experienced serious stress or trauma, talk to your doctor. Help your child feel safe. Create a steady routine so he knows what to expect and give him 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'll ever have. You don't need to do it alone. Join a group to meet new people and find support. There are many groups for new moms and dads.

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're having a hard time coping with your new baby or the changes in your life, or need a mental health referral, call 311 or LifeNet: **800-LIFENET (800-543-3638)**.

If you're worried about someone hurting you or your child, call 311 for the **Domestic Violence Hotline**. Someone will help you, even if you're undocumented.

These hotlines are available anytime, night or day.

In an emergency, call 911.



For more copies of this pamphlet, call 311.

For this pamphlet online and more information, visit **nyc.gov** and search for *child mental health*.

helping children soar



**NYC PROJECT
LAUNCH**

NYC Project LAUNCH

Strong families and communities
Promoting social and emotional development
Healthy, happy and successful children

This pamphlet was revised and reprinted under grant number 1H79SM060274 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.