



Welcome Words

On Social and Emotional Development

Hello New Parent! We hope you will think of Welcome Baby Family Resource Center as your partner in parenting as you meet the wonder and challenges ahead. During the next twelve months, you will receive an edition of Welcome Words covering 6 special topics and including other resources you may find helpful. In addition to Welcome Words, Welcome Baby offers other services and classes that are described in our quarterly newsletter and website: www.welcomebaby.org. You are also invited to call us at 919-560-7341 if you have questions or concerns. Welcome Baby is a program of Durham County and Durham County Cooperative Extension. We receive support from Durham's Partnership for Children - a Smart Start Initiative and NCHHS-Department of Community Programs.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT...

IN THE First 3 MONTHS:

By 8 weeks, baby will spend much of the day watching and listening to the people and things around him learning what and who will soothe him, feed him and entertain him. He starts experimenting with grins and grimaces. The first smile is a big developmental moment and makes all the sleepless nights worth while! Your baby will discover that just by moving his lips he can have "conversations" with you as you smile and talk back to him. Of course, your baby will not respond this way to everyone. With grandparents and caregivers, baby may be shy at first but soon begin to coo and smile. At 3 or 4 months, he will become fascinated by children and that interest will increase over time. These smile conversations are a very important part of social and emotional development.



IN MONTH 4 AND BEYOND

Between 4 and 7 months, your baby's personality begins to emerge. Earlier, your baby is focused on getting physical needs met but as her physical abilities grow, for example-use of her hands, or sitting up, she'll become more aware of the world around her. She's eager to explore and will demand your help with yelling, banging and throwing. Her temperament-whether easy going, strong-willed or shy, will become evident. You'll fare better accommodating your child's temperament instead of changing it. Your child's personality and behavioral style may affect how you feel about yourself as a parent. An agreeable child is more likely to make you feel competent while an irritable child may make you feel like you are doing something wrong. It takes time to get to know what works best with your child.

ADVICE ABOUT SPOILING

"You're spoiling that baby!" Sound familiar? During the first six months don't worry about spoiling your baby. Respond promptly to her needs. In fact the more promptly you respond and comfort her, the less demanding baby will be when she get's older! By helping her develop a sense of security now, you are creating a foundation of confidence about herself and you that will allow her to gradually separate from you and become a strong independent person.

WHEN GOOD-BYE BRINGS TEARS

Although your baby may have cheerfully greeted a baby sitter in the past, chances are that this is about to change. As babies learn about object permanence – that people and things exist even when they can't be seen – they also recognize that parents are unique individuals.

Within the next few months, your baby will probably begin to feel worried when you leave her, perhaps even when you tell her goodnight. Your departure may bring tears, even when she's left with people she previously enjoyed.

One of the first emotional milestones of childhood, separation anxiety doesn't last forever, although it may seem to. Typically, this phase peaks between **10-18 months, then fades before age 2.**



While it can be a trying time, it's helpful to realize that your baby's anxiety is normal and a sign of her healthy attachment to you. Don't worry that she's spoiled, or that she won't stop crying after you leave. Most likely her tears will dry quickly, and she'll settle in and enjoy herself.

To ease good-byes for both of you, try to be consistent about routines, both at bedtime and when going out. Develop a parting ritual. This can involve giving her a favorite blanket or stuffed toy, and a special kiss. You might blow her a kiss as you leave, or give her a kiss on each cheek or hand. One mother puts a kiss in each of her toddler's hands and pockets for her to "save" for later.

Always say good-bye. Although it may seem easier, resist the temptation to slip out. If you're leaving your baby at daycare, try to allow a little extra time to help her settle in before you go. Make a cheerful exit. Be firm and upbeat, saying, "I'll be back later. You'll have fun with_____."

Be honest with your friends and family about how tough this time is for you. No one likes to leave a crying baby. But remember that in most cases babies stop crying within just a few minutes.



STRANGER ANXIETY AND YOUR BABY



Stranger anxiety usually shows up around the same time separation anxiety sets in. It tends to appear between 3 and 6 months of age and can last for a year or two. Your baby is now aware of a stranger's presence and of the fact that they are a separate person from Mom or Dad. When she is separated from her parents and introduced to the presence of a "stranger", she may become anxious. This is related to the developmental "object permanence" stage. Object permanence is the understanding that things continue to exist even when they cannot be seen, heard or touched. She thinks that once a person (like Mom or Dad) disappears from sight, then they have literally disappeared into thin air. She is scared that Mom or Dad is not coming back and she is left with this "stranger".

How can you help alleviate Stranger Anxiety?

Don't pressure your child to be "sociable"

Allow your child to become accustomed to new faces and new places at his own pace.

Don't ignore your child's distress. The upset that children feel when they are exposed to unfamiliar people is real. Ignoring this distress can provoke more anxiety and will probably increase clinginess and distress.

Warn friends and relatives. You should let family members know, who might have their feelings hurt by your infant's rejection, not to take it personally. Parents should explain that this wariness of strangers is a normal part of development and not the result of anything they have or have not done.

Teach friends and relatives appropriate approach techniques. Let them know that young children need time to warm up to unfamiliar people. Instead of rushing in to pick children up, give the child time and space to warm up to them. Try offering a favorite familiar toy and wait for the child to accept it. Tell them to use soft calm voices, not to force eye contact and to take things very slowly.

Provide reassurance. Children often need comfort and reassurance from their parents as they go through this stage. Therefore, parents should try to be available to reassure their children when they face new people. And parents should provide lots of love and affection through both words and gestures (e.g. hugs and kisses).

Remember your level of comfort or discomfort is picked up by your child so be as calm and comfortable as possible so your child will feel as calm and comfortable as you.



SETTING LIMITS FOR BABY



With a crawling baby in the house, it's easy to find yourself saying "No!" almost constantly. The better childproofed your home, the fewer times you'll have to say, "No!" and the safer your possessions. While your baby is beginning to understand what "No" means, he's too young to remember for more than a few minutes that your treasured crystal vase is a "no-no."

This lapse doesn't mean that it's pointless to set limits for your baby. It's not too early to begin teaching him words like "ouch" or "hot." But that doesn't mean you can rely on him not to reach for your cup of steaming coffee—even though he may point to it and say "hot." That level of understanding is several months away.

For each "No," it's a good idea to offer a substitute that's okay. If he starts to throw toys, offer him a ball instead. "You can throw this ball, not blocks." For the next few years, diversion will prove to be one of your best strategies for good behavior.

Babies quickly pick up on their ability to create a strong response from parents, whether it's anger, laughter or frustration. Try to keep your cool when setting limits, even though you may feel more like yelling or bursting into laughter. If you rotate playthings, this is the time to pull out a "new" toy to distract your baby.

No one's perfect, of course, and if you do lose your temper, be sure to apologize by saying something soothing such as, "I'm sorry I yelled. I was angry." Then follow your apology with a reassuring hug. **It helps to remember that your baby isn't being bad. It's his job to explore his surroundings. Using distraction is a good way to teach what's allowed and what isn't.**

Babies, of course, have more than their share of accidents. If yours spills a glass of milk as he reaches for his cracker, let him know that accidents happen: "Oops! The milk spilled." Whatever he does, be sure he knows it's his behavior that's at fault: "Biting hurts," not, "You're a bad boy." Telling a child that he's bad can lead to more negative behavior.

You're not spoiling your child if he sometimes gets what he wants. Offering him choices—"Do you want a cracker or a bagel?"—gives him a chance to develop a sense of independence.