



Keeping Peace in the Car

- Dear Parents,
- It is frustrating and disconcerting when little ones choose to cry in the car. It makes it extremely difficult to concentrate on driving. Little ones cry in the car for many different reasons. A few of these reasons might include not being able to see you, not liking being strapped into a seat, being hungry, and even in some cases being uncomfortable with the movement of the car. Some babies cry every time they are in the car. Try some of the suggestions below but do not give too much attention to this frustrating behavior. If crying persists over time, talk to your pediatrician.

What You Can Do

- Make sure your baby is comfortable. Ensure that car seat straps are safe but not too tight. Make sure clothing is not bunched up under your child.
- Ensure that air vents are not blowing directly on your baby.
- Swaddle your newborn (up to 3 months). This helps your baby feel secure.
- Talk and sing to your baby.
- Play a music CD. Use lullaby music if it is okay if your baby falls asleep. Otherwise use a CD that contains traditional songs like "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and "The Wheels on the Bus."
- Make a CD of you singing to play in the car.
- Provide toys for your baby.
- Provide snacks for older children. Make sure that snacks are safe and not a choking hazard.
- Copy photos of family members and encase them in clear self-adhesive paper or laminate them. Tape the photos in a place (side window, back of driver seat, back of back seat) that your baby can see them.
- Place a mirror where your baby can see himself.
- Some babies need to be calmed instead of entertained. Provide a stuffed animal that plays ocean wave sounds or has a heartbeat sound.



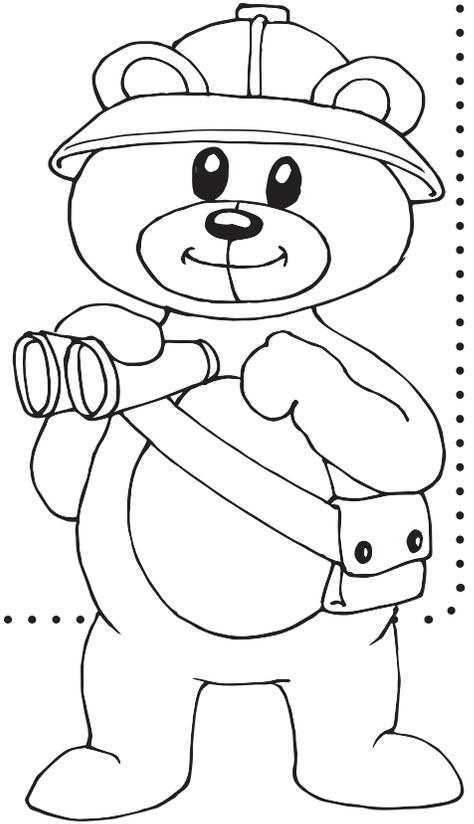
- If your car trip is longer than 20 minutes, avoid using a DVD to entertain your baby. The American Pediatric Association and The American Medical Association both recommend no use of two-dimensional imagery (computer screens, phone screens, television) with children beneath the age of two because it interferes with your baby's visual wiring.



Dear Parents,

Children are born curious and capable of generating solutions to problems. They have a reverence for everything and a profound drive to explore and discover. You have probably observed a young child, intent on reaching for a toy, try various strategies until she gets what she wants. It is this innate curiosity that drives exploration. Exploration is the heart of learning and the key to building a baby's cognitive (thinking) skills.

It is exploration (driven by curiosity) that uncovers the relationship between cause and effect, the joy of learning, the pride of accomplishment that accompanies creativity, and the self-confidence that blooms with solving problems. It is crucial to encourage a baby's natural curiosity. When it is stifled, babies will become dependent on adult approval and less likely to have enough confidence to explore alone. The critical steps involved in trial-and-error learning will begin to be extinguished.



What You Can Do

- Child proof your home so that you do not find yourself saying "no" to your baby as she explores.
- Allow your baby to explore when she is awake. The only time your baby belongs in her crib is for sleeping.
- Avoid keeping your baby confined to feeding tables, swings, walkers, and carriers. Little ones can't explore when they are confined.
- Offer your child interesting things that will encourage her to look (photos, bird's nest, tree bark, shells) and listen (musical toys, baby band instruments, squeak toys). Always make sure that items you provide are safe (large enough not to swallow or to break).
- Talk with your baby when you see her show interest in something.
- Take your baby on a nature walk or stroller ride often. Talk about the things you see. Direct your baby's attention to interesting things you see.
- Organized problem-solving strategies (experimentation with the goal of finding a solution) begin to wire when toddlers are around 18 months old. In preparation for this stage, offer your young infant activities that stimulate his natural ability to think critically and creatively. Model problem-solving strategies and discuss your thinking as you work through problems. It takes firsthand experience and a great deal of practice for this process to become second nature for a young child.



Dear Parents,

Oral communication is a two-way street that involves both listening and speaking. Listening is as important as speaking. In today's busy world, it is easy to give superficial attention to a child's questions and comments. If this becomes the norm, children may feel their thoughts are unimportant. This inhibits their self-confidence and self-esteem.

When you listen with interest to your child and respond constructively, it helps your child learn that his thoughts and comments are valid and respected. When you are "fully present" with your child, he feels he is the most important person in your world. This feeling helps build both self-esteem and communication skills.

Being "fully present" extends beyond communication. It also means spending quality, uninterrupted time with your child. Being with your child is not a time for multi-tasking.

What You Can Do

- Stop what you are doing and listen to your child when she speaks. This doesn't have to happen 100% of the time, but it does need to happen the majority of the time.
- When listening to your child, make eye contact and encourage your child to do the same.
- When you are busy, tell your child that you need a few minutes. Get back to him as soon as possible.



- Take time each day to spend quality time with your child. During this special time, ignore all other things that might take your attention away from your child (cell phone, other people, contemplating a to-do list). Try planning a specific time each day for this uninterrupted time with your child to ensure that it happens.
- Always make bedtime a time that you slow down. Putting your little one down for the night should be a special time. Create a routine. With a younger baby, that routine might be a feeding before going down for the night. For an older baby, it might be a bath followed by a story time.