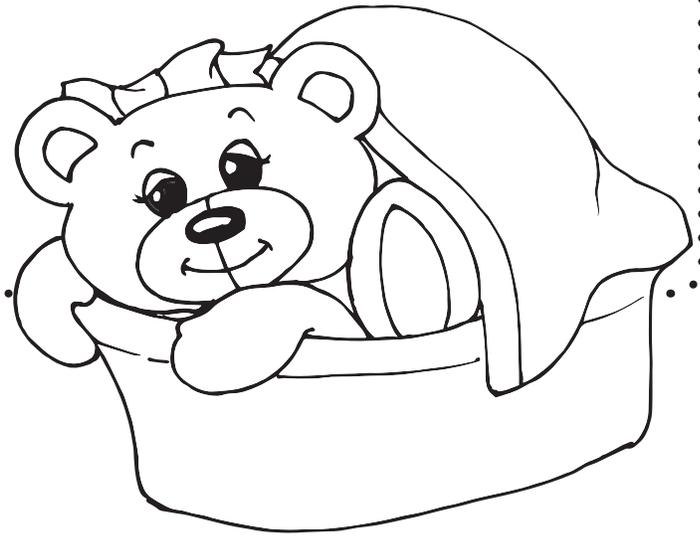




Dear Parents,

Though it may not seem possible, young infants do experience stress. Babies are sensitive to the stress adults feel and their own experiences can generate stressful feelings. For example, babies experience stress when their needs are not met. They cry when they are hungry, overly tired, need to be changed, or when they are getting too much or too little attention. Not attending to a crying baby can cause the baby to feel stress. Babies also experience stress because they are constantly subjected to things and situations they have never encountered.

Babies are not born knowing how to handle their stress. They are still developing their understanding of how the world operates and how they fit into this new environment. You can help reduce stress for your baby and help her learn how to handle her stress better.



What You Can Do

- Tend to your baby quickly when she cries. Babies who are responded to quickly tend to cry less and therefore are less stressed.
- Keep your newborn baby swaddled.
- If your baby is feeling stressed, hold her close and breathe deeply. She will eventually regulate her breathing to match yours. Some babies respond to the feel of their bare skin on your bare skin.
- Teach your older infant how to take a deep breath by asking him to pretend to smell a flower (breathe in through nose) and then blow out a candle (exhale through mouth).
- Bath your stressed baby in warm water.
- Try cuddling and gently rocking your baby when she is feeling stressed. Try adding more comfort by making a swooshing sound.
- Be careful not to overstimulate your baby. Shield her from bright lights, cool temperatures, fragrances, and loud noises.



- Dear Parents,
- Emotional intelligence includes the ability to recognize and manage one's emotions. Babies, as early as one month old, display emotions that indicate they are keenly aware of what is happening around them. By four months, babies recognize differences in facial expressions (happy, sad, no expression). When babies are content they are more alert, attentive and responsive.
- Around 16 months, a toddler's "sense of self" emerges. Toddlers begin to understand they have feelings and emotions that are separate from others. They begin to express their opinions. We often see this in the form of a tantrum. It is at this point that children's emotional repertoire grows to include self-consciousness, pride, shame, and embarrassment. These more complex emotions show the connection between thinking and feeling. It is at this point that little ones are ready for adults to coach them during emotional moments. This is called *emotional coaching*.

What You Can Do

- According to Dr. John Gottman, author of *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*, there are five steps to helping children learn to handle their emotions.
 1. Be aware of emotions, both yours and your child's.
 2. Connect with your child. Encourage your child to talk about his emotions.
 3. Listen to your child without judgment.
 4. Help your child name the emotion he is feeling.
 5. Help your child find a solution to what he is feeling.
- Value your child's range of feelings including not only the positive ones (happiness, surprise, calm) but also the negative ones (anger, fear, jealousy, disappointment).
- Be a good role model by handling your emotions in a healthy way.
- Show empathy for others and for your child.
- Look at things from your child's point of view. If he is sad about a broken toy, don't tell him it is silly or that it is only a toy.
- For more information on emotional coaching read *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child* by Dr. Gottman, *Pride and Joy* by Kenneth Barish or *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman.





Dear Parents,

Babies begin to hear sounds during the fifth month in the womb. In fact, if mom speaks often during the last trimester of her pregnancy, she will be rewarded by her baby recognizing her voice at birth! This early introduction to speaking lays a foundation for language.

Babies pay attention when you speak to them. They are watching the shape of your mouth and the movement of your tongue. They are following the pitch of your voice. This is how they learn to speak. They cannot learn to speak by listening to TV or radio or a recording. They have to have face-to-face contact. The more we read, speak and sing to little ones, the better sound discrimination they develop and the bigger vocabulary they build.

Little ones who are surrounded by language during the first 18 months of life will have vocabularies that are 185 words larger than a peer who was not surrounded by language. By age 2, this vocabulary will grow to 295 more words than their peers.

What You Can Do

- Read to your baby before she is born. Continue reading to her after she is born.
- Sing to your baby often.
- Talk to baby even though you know she does not yet understand you. Narrate your actions. Discuss your thoughts. Describe things you see.
- Speak to your child from across the room and speak to her face to face. Make a point to speak to her daily with eye contact about 12 inches from her face.
- Check with the doctor if your baby appears to have allergies. Nasal congestion can impact the inner ear and your baby's ability to hear sounds clearly.
- Recite nursery rhymes that you recall from your own childhood or memorize some that are new to use and say them to your baby.
- Teach your baby sign language when she is 8 months old. Sign language increases language. It is also wired on both sides of the brain which leads to faster processing of information.

