

Understanding your baby's needs



Accept me as I am

Accept and enjoy all the ways that I am different from you. I am unique. There is no one else like me. When you love me for who I am, I learn that I am loveable. With acceptance, I feel loved for who I am, not just for what I can do.



Be with me as I explore my world

Share my discovery of each new experience for the very first time.

I need to know that you are happy about me exploring my world. When you support me to discover new things about my world, I feel brave. I feel good when I learn that I can do things for myself. When you allow me time to practice new skills, I feel important and respected.



Comfort me when I need you

Crying is my way of telling you that I am feeling tired, sad, overwhelmed or confused. I need you to hold and soothe me, to feel your warm touch and calming voice. I will eventually learn to comfort myself through how you calm me down.



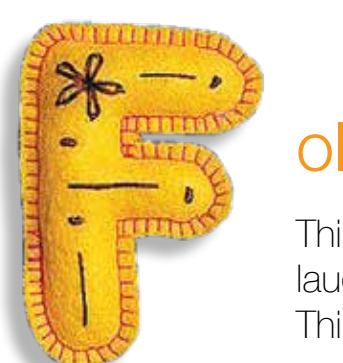
Do things with me over and over again

I need to repeat each new experience many times to learn and grow strong connections in my brain. When we do things that I love over and over again - like read my favourite story, sing my favourite song, or play my favourite rhyming game - then you are helping important connections in my brain to grow stronger. I feel safe because I know what is coming next and I feel good about myself because I can do this.



Enrich my day

I thrive when you share your day with me. I am happiest when I know you are close by - when I can hear your voice as you talk, read or sing to me. When I can see you as you walk or drive or work in the garden I feel calm and settled.



Follow my lead

This is how I tell you what I need - I cry, I laugh, I reach out to you with my fingers. This is how I show you when I want to engage with you and when I have had enough, when I want you to comfort me and when I want you to play, when I want to be held and when I want to be on my own. When you follow my lead, I know that you know and understand me.



Grow and change with me

I am growing incredibly quickly and changing every day. I am constantly watching, listening and learning. I need you to learn more about me as I develop and grow. As I change, I will need different things from you.



Hold me in your arms

Crying is my way of telling you that I am feeling tired, sad, overwhelmed or confused. I need you to hold and soothe me, to feel your warm touch and calming voice. I will eventually learn to comfort myself through how you calm me down. When you are always there for me, I learn to trust.



Imagine being in my world

In my first year of life, my brain is developing incredibly quickly - faster than it will ever grow again. The way I see and feel the world is constantly changing. Having you with me, as the one thing I can be sure of, really helps me feel safe.

I experience the world through my emotions and senses. I do not yet understand where I end and the world begins. It seems like whatever is happening around me, is happening to me too...and that can feel too much for me sometimes. I need you so much.



Join me in my play

Smile, talk, play, sing, hold, and dance with me. I do not need expensive toys. My favourite toy is you!

Every time we have fun together, I feel good. Those good feelings help my brain to grow. When we enjoy each other our relationship gets stronger. Having fun with people who love me, gives me the message that it feels good to be with other people.



Keep me safe

I cannot protect myself. I rely on you for everything. As I grow and start exploring the world, I do not recognise danger. I need you to keep me safe. I need to feel safe in my relationship with you.



Learn my language

My first language does not have any words. I show you how I am through the way I breathe, whether or not I am making eye contact with you, the brightness of my eyes, my facial expressions, the way I hold my body. Crying is part of my language too. It takes time to learn my language, but the more time you spend listening to and watching me, the sooner you will get to know me, and the sooner we will understand each other.



Make time for yourself

Looking after me takes a lot of time, but it is important for you to make time for you. Other adults can care for me while you do the things you like to do.

Only when you make time for yourself, can you properly take care of me. When you feel rested and supported, you will have more energy to enjoy and take care of me.



Nurture my relationship with you

My relationship with you helps me understand how relationships work. When you are predictable in the way you respond to me, I learn to trust and rely on people. When we have fun together, I learn that relationships feel good. When you are consistently warm and loving, I know what healthy, loving relationships feel like. I will take these experiences with me all my life.



Organise our day

I feel safe when my world feels predictable. When our day has a rhythm and routine to it, it helps me to settle, to understand what will happen next and to trust.



Pause for a moment when you are feeling stressed

I know that sometimes it might feel hard or confusing to care for me. I am not the only one who feels tired, sad, angry or worried. At these times, I need you to pause and be aware of how you are feeling. Knowing yourself is as important as you knowing me.



Quieten yourself before trying to soothe and calm me

The best way to help me feel calm is for you to feel calm. I learn how to cope with stress by seeing and feeling how you do that. Whenever you feel stressed as you care for me.....it will help me if you find a way to feel quiet...

STOP what you are doing. Feel your feet planted firmly on the ground. PAUSE and breathe in and out slowly, at least 3 times. REFLECT on what I might be feeling and what I need. THINK about how you are feeling and what you need. RESPOND to me calmly.



Reflect on the parent you want to be

What is important to you about how you parent me? Where do your ideas about parenting come from? How do you want me to experience you as a parent? Take time to reflect on how you want to respond to me and how you want our relationship to grow.



Show me what it is like to care for me with others

It is OK to talk to others about your experience of looking after me. By talking to other parents, you realise that you are not alone. Everyone is going through similar things. You will find support when you share your own thoughts, your reactions and your feelings.

And remember, it is OK to ask for help. It can be confusing to care for me sometimes.



Turn into me

Use your face and your voice to show me that you understand how I am feeling - whether I am happy, interested, sad, angry or frightened. When you mirror my sad or happy face, I learn that each of my feelings is important to you, and that I am important.

I do not know how to make myself feel better. I cannot calm myself down when I am upset. I need your help to do this until my brain develops the connections that allow me to do that for myself. Those connections get stronger each time you use your soothing voice, touch and movements to calm me. It helps me when you talk to me calmly about how I am feeling. It helps me when you hold me close and you are tender.



Understand what I can understand

Walk in my shoes and see the world through my eyes. I do not understand the world the way you do. I am still learning about me, you and us. I cannot link my feelings to my thoughts and my behaviour. I learn how to do this every time you help me. I need you to understand what I understand. We are part of each other.



Verbalise my feelings

When I hear you putting my feelings into words, I begin to learn that there are ways of making sense of my feelings. Words teach me that my feelings are real. The way you talk to me shows that my feelings are true. Your words give me a language to understand me and you and our family.

It does not matter if you do not always get it right. It is important that I know you are there for me and that you are trying to understand me.



Watch, wait and wonder

I know you are really busy. My pace is slower than yours. If you go too fast, you will miss the amazing things I am doing. Make some time every day to enjoy being with me. Turn off your phone, the TV.....and just hang out with me. When you do that you will discover so much about me! You will also discover whether I need your help to do something, or whether I need your encouragement to try to do it by myself.



Explore the world with me as if it is the first time you have discovered it too!

Every smell, every sound, every texture, every sensation is brand new for me. My brain is switched on to pay attention to new experiences. In the first few months of life, I can actually notice small things that the adults around me do not see.



Yarn with me

Talk to me and tell me stories. I love it when we cuddle up together with a book and you point to the pictures and talk and sing about them. It means so much to me when you make animal noises, bounce me on your knee, let me hold and chew the top corner of a book. It is so much fun when you let me help to turn the pages.

Although I do not speak or understand words when I am first born, I come to understand your language more quickly than you think. I have fun reading and learning with you. But most of all, when we do things together I feel close to you.



Zero in on my special signs that tell you when I am sleepy

My tired signs I show you are special to me. I might turn my head away from you, rub my eyes, pull or rub my ears, or yawn. Maybe I become restless, make jerky movements with my legs and arms. I might cry louder or go very quiet.

I cannot tell the difference between night and day when I am new to this world. I can only sleep when I feel safe.

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