

# Birth to 18 Months

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STAGE



*Dear Diary,*

*I can't believe that Christopher is already 18 months old. Will all his days and months and years with me zip by so quickly? It seems like such a short time ago that we brought him home as a newborn and stared for hours at his little face and wondered what the months ahead would bring.*

*It took a while for us to get to know each other. At first I jumped every time he let out the slightest whimper; I wanted him to know that he could count on me to keep him comfortable and safe. It wasn't long before all my efforts were rewarded with his wonderful smiles, and then came those delicious, wet kisses, and now his famous bear hugs. When he was only about 6 months old, I remember the way his whole face would light up and his big nearly toothless smile would greet me when I picked him up out of his crib every morning. What a wonderful way to start each day. I don't mean to sound like we haven't had our tough times, too. There've been lots of days when Christopher has let us all know that he's not completely*

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*happy with the way we're taking care of him. Right from when he was an infant, he'd hold his breath and then scream when he felt frustrated—not too much has changed in that department.*

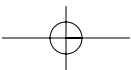
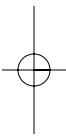
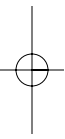
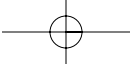
*I think I'm still his favorite person (if I do say so myself). At around 7 months old, Christopher decided he didn't want anyone but me to hold him when he was tired, and he definitely didn't want to stay with a babysitter (even his dad couldn't calm him down sometimes when I went out). He's getting better now about staying with other people, but he still likes it best when I'm around (especially if there's a loud noise or a big dog around; they seem to frighten him).*

*Would I be bragging too much if I said that I think Christopher is a very smart little boy? He has always been the kind of person who focuses intently on things and tries to figure everything out. I remember even when he was just 4 months old or so how he'd hold things, look at them so closely (and of course put everything in his mouth to explore the feel and texture). Around 8 months, he spent so much time with his crib activity board, pushing the buttons, spinning the wheels, and figuring out how everything worked over and over again. He has always loved to go places—he seems eager to see everything and learn about every twig, leaf, and ladybug he passes. It's just amazing to watch his thinking skills in action. Lately I've noticed that he seems to enjoy pretending—he sits in a box and pretends it's a car. He picks up a stick and pretends it's an airplane. He's so much fun—and now that he can talk a bit, I have a better idea of what he's thinking. It's incredible that a child can move from babbling sounds like bababa at 6 months old to saying, "I want juice" just one year later. Right now, his favorite word is no!*

*It's been fascinating to watch Christopher become a part of our family. At first he was just this totally dependent little human being who didn't know us at all and only cared that he was fed and dry. Then he began to recognize us and reach out to be held and played with. Pretty soon he was "talking" up a storm, using his own little lan-*

*guage to tell me all about his day and his dreams and plans. Now he seems so grown up as he plays with his little friends (or plays next to them, I should say, because they don't seem to get the idea of socializing yet). He no longer is the totally dependent infant who needed me to do everything for him—he's growing up to be a confident and sometimes-independent little person.*

*I want Christopher to learn how to share, and how to be kind, and how to understand the needs of others, but he just isn't ready yet—my wonderful, beautiful son is very self-centered right now. Because he's sure the world revolves around him, he just doesn't seem to care about the feelings of others. He doesn't share at all. He sometimes hits his friends. And it's like talking to the wall when I try to explain why he has to clean up his own toys. I think all I can do right now is to show him through my own example and with facial expressions and my tone of voice what is right and wrong, good and bad. Hopefully, in the next few months he'll get the idea.*



# Emotional Health

STAGE 1

  
*Birth to  
18 Months*

**A**lthough many forces shape a child's level of emotional competence (such as genetics and environmental factors), it is now well known that the parent-child relationship during infancy and toddlerhood has an exceptionally strong and lifelong influence on children's emotional development. In fact, there is growing biological evidence that infants need responsive care from their parents and caretakers in order for the parts of their brains that control emotions to develop properly. This development is nurtured as infants learn about love and affection, joy and anger, and fear.

## Love and Affection

Eight-month-old Rachel sat contentedly in her infant seat watching her grandmother prepare her lunch. Then, suddenly, Rachel came alive as if someone had thrown a switch in her nervous system. Her face lit up with a full-face smile, her arms flailed up and down, and her little legs kicked wildly as she let out a loud squeal. The love of her life had just entered the room—Mom was home.

Making children feel loved is the single most important task of parenting. This feeling enables children to value and love themselves. It teaches them how to love and relate to other people. And it allows them to become emotionally stable persons. Our children learn to love by being loved. It's as simple as that.

Love and affection are first nurtured in infants through the development of trust. From the moment of birth, children begin the task of assessing if they can trust the world they live in to meet their needs. Are cries for food promptly answered or are they ignored for long periods? Is the need for comfort lovingly met or is it answered with harsh words and rough handling? Do they have influence over the adults who care for them or are they powerless in an indifferent world? The answers to these questions determine how emotionally



## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

secure children grow and how they later form attachments of love and affection.

### AGE DIFFERENCES

**For the first 6 months, infants do not feel love and affection. They are wholly dependent on their caretakers to have their needs met—that's all. In the second half of the first year, babies become attached to their primary caregivers and begin to show much affection by kissing and hugging. In the second year, most babies are head-over-heels in love with their parents.**

Babies who learn that the adults in their lives are trustworthy and can be counted on to respond to cries of frustration or distress form a positive image of themselves and others. Parents who can respond with a soft voice to a baby's hunger at 3 A.M. or respond to a baby's persistent cries with gentle handling (even when they themselves are fatigued and impatient) teach children that they are important and loved. This lesson allows children to later build loving relationships. But if babies learn that their cries for help are not answered or result in anger or harsh treatment, they become wary and distrustful of others. As these children grow they generally lack confidence and feel unworthy of warm, responsive attention.

To an infant, love means development of affectional attachment with a caretaker. This relationship (called *attachment* or *bonding*) becomes firmly established by the time the infant is 8

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### CONSIDER

**With approximately 6 million infants and toddlers in childcare in the United States, it's very important that the caregivers know the importance of love and affection. To promote healthy emotional development, infant childcare should have the following characteristics:**

- Warm, sensitive caregivers who are trained in infant development, who understand the importance of children's early relationships, and who are able to form effective partnerships with parents.
  - Low staff turnover, to ensure continuity in caregiving for children.
  - Small groups of 6 to 8 infants or 8 to 10 toddlers.
  - Low child-teacher ratios: no more than three (and for high-risk children, preferably two) infants per adult. Each infant should be assigned to only one or two primary caregivers who feed, change, and play with the babies, allowing the babies to form meaningful, secure relationships with those who care for them. Caregivers should not change each year (any more than we would recommend changing parents every year) but should stay with the same infants for at least 3 years (Lally & Gordon, 1977).
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## SEX DIFFERENCES

**Bonding is not for mothers and infants only. Children attach themselves to many people, depending on the nature of their long-term interactions. This leaves the door wide open to secure attachments between the child and the father. Fathers who make an effort to spend time with their babies, who talk and laugh and play with them, teach their children that they are someone special who can be counted on to give lots of love and attention. This is the foundation of attachment. Babies typically develop an attachment to a second caretaker (often the father) by 18 months of age.**

or 9 months of age and is characterized by strong interdependence, intense mutual feelings, and vital emotional ties. Early attachment helps a child develop trust and confidence in the caregiver and is vital to the quality of relationships the person will later develop with peers, relatives, other adults, and a spouse.

Bonding does not happen immediately, or quickly, or in only a given window of time. It is a process that happens over many months and even years. Like any other love relationship, it develops in gradual stages and improves and deepens with time and attention.

If you want your baby to “love” you, try these three simple suggestions:

- Consistently and immediately respond to your baby’s cries of distress.
- Give much physical contact. Babies feel safer, sleep better, gain more weight, and are more interested in being with people when they are often cuddled, held, and stroked. The importance of loving touch cannot be overemphasized.
- Play with your baby. Even in the first few months of life, infants enjoy games like peek-a-boo and songs. This creates a pleasure bond that encourages affectional attachment.

Some signs that an infant is making this affectional attachment to you are the following:

- The baby will smile when he or she sees you.
- The baby will seek close physical contact with you when he or she is distressed.

### JUST A PHASE?

**If a baby does not show signs of attachment to the primary caretaker by 1 year of age, the parent should seek a consultation with a pediatric mental health professional.**



## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

### SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME

Some infants are more securely attached to their parents than others. Researchers Ainsworth, Bell, and Stayton observed mothers and their babies at home and noticed that mothers of securely attached infants ages 9 to 11 months were especially sensitive to their children's efforts to signal their needs and quicker to respond to those needs than were mothers of insecurely attached children. This "fit" between the mother's and the infant's behaviors has been called *synchrony*, and in numerous studies throughout the years it has been found to be a strong indicator of overall attachment quality (Hughes, Noppe, & Noppe, 1996).

- The baby will be upset when separated from you.
- The baby will show pleasure when reunited with you.

### *Parenting to Nurture Love and Affection*

- Teach your child to trust you by responding consistently with love and sensitivity to your baby's cries of hunger, pain, or discomfort.
- If you need childcare, find a program that allows one caregiver to take care of your child over a long period of time.
- Create an affectional attachment with your baby by (1) consistently and immediately responding to your baby's cries of distress, (2) giving much physical contact, and (3) playing with your baby.
- Make your baby feel safe and comfortable.

### *Avoid*

#### REMEMBER

Love and affection is a give-and-take proposition. What you give to your baby is what your baby learns to give back to you.

- Getting angry when your child begins to cling to you and avoid strangers at around 8 months of age. It is a normal sign of attachment and affection.
- Letting your own fatigue or anger push you to respond negatively to your baby's cries.
- Assuming your infant doesn't need quality time with you because he or she seems content to be alone.
- Expecting bonding to happen immediately, or quickly, or in only a given window of time. It is a process that happens over many months and even years.

## Joy and Anger

Although the emotions of joy and anger are very much a part of babyhood, most child experts believe that these feelings require mental processes that are not present at birth. Parents may swear that their newborns light up with joy one minute and have a quick temper the next, but the smiles and cries are actually prompted by other, internal stimuli.

### **Joy**

The smile of a newborn is probably based on brain stem activity. It occurs during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep and during those waking states in which rapid eye movements can also be discerned. Then, between 1½ to 2½ months, smiles begin to appear when the baby sees something pleasing. Social smiling begins around 2½ to 3 months; at this time, familiar faces are more likely to elicit smiles than unfamiliar ones, indicating that early smiling already has a cognitive component involving memory. Between 3 and 5 months, babies will smile when they notice they can control their environment; they will smile, for example, when they learn they can make a mobile move by vigorously kicking their legs. (This is called *mastery motivation*; the pleasure of success encourages them to try harder and stick to a task longer.)

Smiling may turn to outright laughter by 4 months, indicating great pleasure and a feeling of delight. At first, this laughter occurs mainly as a result of physical stimulation such as tickling, but by the second half of the first year the baby will laugh in response to interesting or incongruous events. (See the “Play and Imagination” section under “Cognitive Development” later in Stage 1.)

By the end of the first year and during the second, sustained joy or elation can be seen in toddlers. They show particular pleasure when anticipating events that will occur and in planning such events. They’ll giggle themselves silly, for example, when they know in advance that you’re going to jump out from your hiding place and say, “Boo!”

Whatever prompts a baby’s smile, it is surely nature’s way of gaining the child positive attention. Who can resist responding to a baby’s smile with a smile in return? A child’s laughter is rewarded with reciprocal laughing, talking, and other kinds of positive attention from adults. This teaches socialization skills by encouraging the child to smile and laugh some more.

**STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS****Anger**

Feelings of anger develop in much the same way as feelings of joy. In the beginning, infant crying is a call for relief from distress; it is not a display of anger. But by 6 months, anger is evident in response to frustration. When you restrict your child's body movements while dressing, bathing, or buckling up the car seat, for example, you'll see frustration turn into angry flailing of arms and legs.

Babies also feel frustrated because they are totally dependent on someone else to give them everything they desire—a helpless situation that prompts anger. Nine-month-old Jacob pushed forcefully away from his mother as he reached out toward something he wanted across the room. Jacob squirmed, twisted, and cried, but he couldn't make his mother understand what he wanted. "I've noticed," says his mom, "that Jacob gets very frustrated when he can't do things for himself. He just can't wait to grow up."

Anger is also an enabling emotion. It energizes and motivates babies to keep trying to master a frustrating event. Babies soon learn that anger can prompt action; it gains attention; it wields some power. For example, 16-month-old Clara jangled her mother's keys with glee, but then began to scream when her mom took them away. The anger grew not only from frustration, but also because past experiences had taught Clara that her anger would keep her mother's attention and would probably bring back the keys.

Now is a good time to begin teaching your child about anger by letting her experience it and by resisting the temptation to always jump to remove the frustration. If your child's temper flares because he can't make the jack-in-the-box pop up, let him struggle with it for just a bit. Babies need to learn about anger in a safe, protected environment.

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**CONSIDER**

**The line between joy and anger is a thin one for a young child. One moment your baby may be laughing out loud, and with the next breath the laugh becomes a heartbreaking scream. This line is drawn at the point of overstimulation. What is fun for 5 minutes may be more than the baby's developing nervous system can take for 5½ minutes. When your baby is laughing and having a great time, look for signs that a meltdown is about to occur. Babies will yawn, turn their face away from you, rub their eyes, or begin to wave their arms in frustration.**

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Through experience they learn that it's okay to be angry, that it's a natural response, and they learn how to let it go when it doesn't get them what they want. Experience with anger teaches children emotional control. Situations such as waiting for food or sitting in a car seat provide important opportunities for acquiring regulation skills such as turning away from the frustrating object, distracting oneself with something more comforting (like a favorite toy), and engaging in self-soothing activities (such as holding a favorite blanket or sucking fingers). Research indicates that infants who have not learned how to regulate their angry feelings are more likely to be noncompliant with parental directions when they get older and are thus likely to experience behavioral problems. But children who do learn how to deal with anger early on are better prepared when they reach school age and their parents aren't there to save the day when they encounter situations that make them angry.

It's never too early to help children learn about joy and anger by giving the feelings a name. You may feel silly telling a red-faced, screaming 9-month-old that he or she looks mad, but the idea is to get in the habit of connecting words to internal feelings. When you smile, tell your baby, "I feel so happy." Emotions have to be identified and named for children. When they understand that their feelings have names, they begin to feel a sense of mastery over them.

### ***Parenting to Help Children Handle Joy and Anger***

- Have fun with your baby. Leave lots of time for laughing and playing.
- Let your baby watch you and family members having a good time together.
- If your baby can't stand being held down for safe diapering, provide

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### **SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME**

**Mark E. Cummings of the National Institute of Mental Health Lab of Developmental Psychology in Bethesda, Maryland, studied young children's responses to expressions of anger by family members. He found that by 1 year of age, children are not only aware of others' anger, but they are also likely to react to it emotionally with feelings of stress and a threatened sense of security. So hold your temper in front of your baby. Right from infancy, your child learns about anger control by watching and imitating family members (Cummings, 1989).**

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## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

a pacifier or a toy to reduce the frustration of being unwillingly restricted.

- Control your own short fuse. Don't model behavior you don't want your child to imitate.
- Let your baby experience controlled amounts of frustration and anger.

### *Avoid*

- Denying the emotion of anger. Your goal is not to repress or destroy your child's angry feelings, but rather to help your child accept the feelings and channel and direct them to constructive ends.
- Hiding your anger when your child does something wrong (like intentionally biting you or smashing a glass on the floor) for fear your child won't love you. Children need to see that anger is a natural response to distress.
- Holding a grudge. After an angry outburst you need to show your child how to reestablish a positive relationship.
- Verbally or physically abusing your child—ever. This hurts your child's sense of self-esteem and damages your relationship with your child.
- Trying to protect your child from all frustration. It is an important developmental skill to learn how to deal with angry feelings.

### REMEMBER

**A baby's smile is nature's way of guaranteeing that babies receive positive attention. When your baby smiles and laughs and you do the same, your baby is learning how to socialize and interact with others.**

**A baby quickly learns that anger is an enabling emotion that can prompt action, gain attention, and wield some power. Babies shouldn't be completely sheltered from this emotion.**

## Managing Fear

In early infancy, babies form close bonds of love and trust with important and familiar people, especially their parents. They learn to feel comfortable and secure with the world around them. Putting their well-being completely in the hands of another, they have few fears. Very young babies can be left alone in the dark, brought to high places, shown large animals or small insects, and handed off to strangers—all without a fearful reaction.

Then one day, somewhere between the sixth and eighth month, most babies become very anxious when confronted by strangers. Your baby has become familiar with the few faces he or she sees daily and has learned to distinguish these



### JUST A PHASE?

**When your child shows symptoms of stranger anxiety, don't read too much into this behavior. Turning away from strangers, refusing to smile at Uncle Hank, running from the room when a non-family member enters are all very natural reactions to "strangers" in children under 18 months. This does not indicate the kind of social personality your child will have as an adult. It simply means that the person is unfamiliar and that your baby is reacting with caution. That's all.**

faces from others. The degree of fear a baby feels when "new" faces enter the picture varies from child to child. You may notice one day that she buries her face in your chest when you try to show her off to your boss. Or, at the other extreme, you may be embarrassed when your mother-in-law reaches out to hold her and your formerly loving child lets loose with an ear-splitting scream of terror. You, too, can look like a stranger to your baby and send him into a crying jag if you do something to change your appearance. A new haircut, a pair of sunglasses, or the addition or loss of a mustache or beard on Dad can all set off an attack of stranger anxiety.

The key to helping babies deal with stranger anxiety is to understand their fear and to give them emotional support rather than an angry scolding. Babies are still too young to learn lessons about courage and self-reliance. They certainly have no interest in being polite to strangers who want to whisk them away from their mothers' arms. They need to know they can cling to you and you won't betray them by insisting they sit on a "stranger's" lap. Ignore anyone who tells you not to cater to your child's fear. At this age, the best thing you can do is to let your baby meet many new people from the security of your protective arms or even from behind your legs. When you approach someone who is not familiar to your child, watch your demeanor. If you tense up, use a low or harsh voice, or appear unhappy, your baby will immediately become fearful. Instead, keep your voice light and positive. Smile. When you're relaxed, you communicate to your child that the situation is safe and the newcomer is friendly.

The next fear you may notice in your baby stems from separation anxiety. Babies can't grasp the concept of permanence just yet. As far

#### CONSIDER

**Never sneak out of the house to avoid a separation scene with your baby. This will undermine basic trust in you and will trigger greater separation anxiety in the future.**



## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

as babies know, when you move out of sight, you're gone forever. That's why from about 10 months of age, your baby will begin to cry when you leave the room; he'll cling to your leg; she'll scream when you try to leave the house. Your baby is afraid he or she will never see you again.

Knowing this fear of separation is perfectly normal doesn't make it any easier to bear. Some parents avoid the screaming scenes by choosing to never leave their babies. This is impractical for most parents and impedes the growth of self-reliance in the child. Although most children begin to outgrow separation anxiety by 18 months, you can teach your child now that separation is not permanent.

Separation games can help. When your baby is awake, say bye-bye, leave the room for a brief period of time, and then return with a smile and offer a cuddle. Do this often throughout the day, extending the amount of time you're out of sight each time. (If your baby immediately cries when you leave the room, try maintaining voice contact while you're out of sight.) Games of peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek are also playful ways to teach the reassuring reality of object permanence. More difficult, but also instructive, are short periods of separation. Leave your baby with a trusted (and familiar) caregiver while you drive yourself around the block a few times or run an errand. Wear a smile and an upbeat attitude both when you leave (despite the

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### SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME

A parent's influence on a baby's perception of fear has been well documented. A classic study reported in *Emotion: Theory, Research and Experience, Volume 2* (Klinnert, Campos, & Sorce, 1983), offers a vivid example. In this study, a 6-month-old boy was placed on a special table on which the edge had been extended with a clear piece of firm plastic. When the child crawled to the edge of the natural table, he looked over it, appeared to perceive the apparent drop-off, and stopped before attempting to crawl further. Once stopped, he automatically turned and looked for his mother. On seeing her, he specifically focused on her face. If the mother showed a facial expression of fear, he would invariably maintain his hesitation and not go forward. However, when the mother smiled as he looked at her, he would invariably crawl over the natural edge of the table. This study reinforces the belief that infants use the emotional communications of their parents to determine if they are afraid (Gemelli, 1996).

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crying child on your leg) and when you return. Doing this several times a week teaches your child that you do return and that separation is nothing to fear.

After 6 months, babies may also develop fears of things in their environment. The loud noise of the vacuum cleaner or of thunder may scare them. Large animals, fireworks, and clowns may scare them silly. These fears are rooted in the strange, the unexpected, and the unmanageable. If your child develops such a fear, try to desensitize his or her response. If it's the vacuum cleaner, for example, let him play with and get acquainted with the machine while it's unplugged. Show him the on/off switch so he sees you control it. Hold him in your arms at a comfortable distance while someone else turns it on briefly. For fear of dogs, let her watch a movie or read her a book about a child and a loving dog. Give her a soft, cuddly toy dog to play with. Introduce her to a very small dog from a few feet away. Slowly let her decide when she's comfortable about getting close to the object of her fear.

#### ***Parenting to Help Children Handle Fear***

- Respect your child's fears. Expecting a child to be "tough" only makes the child more anxious.
- Acknowledge and show understanding of the fear by saying something like, "I know loud noises can be scary."
- Praise your child for any effort, no matter how small, to overcome a fear.
- Assure your child that you will keep him or her from harm.
- Remember that all children have an innate fear of the unknown and the unmanageable.

#### ***Avoid***

- Overdoing your support. Too much coddling may convince your child that there really is something to be afraid of.
- Introducing the idea of fear. Saying "Don't be afraid" can make fear an option that the child hadn't even thought of.
- Calling your children's fears "silly." They are very real and serious to your child.

#### **REMEMBER**

**Babies' fears of strangers, of separation, and of the strange, the unexpected, and the unmanageable are all natural developmental stages. They are best conquered with time and understanding. Parents need to recognize the stages in their children's lives at which they will be particularly prone to fears and anxiety.**

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- Threatening a punishment based on your child's fear. Saying "If you don't behave, I'm going to leave you in this store," for example, creates a new fear of abandonment.
- Expecting your child to think the way you do. Your child is inexperienced in this world and has no way of knowing that a loud siren cannot hurt her.

# Cognitive Development

## STAGE 1

  
Birth to  
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**D**id you know that the brain is the most immature organ at birth? That it continues to grow and develop during the first years of life? The dramatic impact of these truths is just now being realized as recent advances in brain research discover that the health of the brain is influenced not only by genetics, but also by life experiences. Interactions with other people and objects are such vital nutrients for the growing brain that they can literally cause the brain to develop in different ways.

This is both good and bad news. According to research compiled by the National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, while good early experiences help the brain to develop well, poor early experiences can cause a genetically normal child to become mentally retarded or cause a temperamentally easygoing child to develop serious emotional difficulties (Hawley, 1998b).

Within each area of the brain there are millions of *neurons*, or nerve cells, which are connected to each other by *synapses*. These trillions of synapses and the pathways that they form make up the “wiring” of the brain, allowing all areas of the brain to communicate with each other. Neurons develop rapidly before birth, but after birth no new neurons are formed. Instead, brain development after birth consists of an ongoing process of wiring and rewiring the connections among neurons. New synapses between cells are constantly being formed while others are broken or pruned away. Early stimulating experiences can have a dramatic impact on this process, causing the final number of synapses in the brain to increase or decrease by as much as 25 percent (Hawley, 1998b).

These scientific facts explain why parents have such a profound influence on a child’s cognitive development. Infants and children who are rarely spoken to, who are exposed to few toys, and who have little opportunity to explore and experiment with their environment may fail to fully develop the neural connections and pathways that facilitate later learning. Despite their normal genetic makeup, these children are



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at a permanent intellectual disadvantage. On the other hand, children who are given many opportunities to explore, experiment, and interact with others develop beyond their genetic programming.

### Problem Solving

Babies learn to solve problems every time they touch, smell, see, feel, and taste the world around them. But they are unable to show any problem-solving skills until around the age of 6 months. At this time you can watch the development of a child's thinking skills that form the foundation for the complex process of problem solving in simple, everyday accomplishments:

- The 6- to 7-month-old has a collective memory that enables her to remember that a ball stays put even when it's covered by a blanket and that shaking a rattle makes a wonderful sound.
- The 8- to 9-month-old becomes fascinated with manipulating crib activity boards. He loves to push objects off the high chair just for the joy of watching what happens.
- The 10- to 12-month-old has increased memory skills and attention span allowing her to stay with an activity for 15 minutes and to remember daily routines.
- The 12- to 18-month-old learns to talk, to feed, dress, and wash himself, and even to laugh by imitating others.

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### AGE DIFFERENCES

**You can stretch cognitive abilities by offering new age-appropriate toys and by challenging your baby's powers of observation with a varied environment. In infancy, change the color, shape, and texture of your baby's toys often. At about 6 months of age, offer toys that challenge thinking skills, such as shape sorters and ring towers (these stimulate concentration and eye-hand coordination). Don't let your 5-month-old become too content with the simple rattle that was thrilling at 3 months. After 6 months, change your baby's viewpoint by moving the high chair to a new spot and by rearranging the bedroom furniture. When your child is ready to "read," make a habit of reading picture books that pop up or offer textured pictures. Each new observation builds on the last and moves your baby forward confident in his or her ability to learn about the world.**

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In the second year, you will see signs that your baby is learning how to solve problems. Initially, problems are remedied through experimentation and by accident. For example, your baby may try to push a toy through the bars of her crib and find that, in the position she is holding it, the toy doesn't fit through. Eventually, by chance, she may turn the toy and succeed at pushing it through the crib slats. The next time she tries this "trick" she will remember to hold the toy in the correct position. Puzzles with large wooden pieces offer opportunities for this same kind of problem-solving experimentation. Babies will slide the pieces around the puzzle frame until they finally fall into place. They learn the correct position by accident, but retain the piece of information for the next time they try the puzzle. This accidental learning is the basis of future problem solving.

Because problem-solving skills so often develop through trial and error, your baby needs opportunities to try, fail, and try again. This willingness to persist at a task and struggle through difficulties is the key to anyone's ability to solve any problem. This ability to persist is first learned in babyhood *if* parents can resist being overindulgent. Some babies over the age of 6 months never have to struggle to figure out how to get a toy that is out of reach, or how to get food to their own mouths using a spoon, or how to clearly communicate their needs. Their parents are always nearby to remove all obstacles. These overprotected children have no opportunity learn how to think for themselves. If you want your baby to learn how to solve problems, allow him to have some problems to solve. Hide his ball under a blanket and encourage him to find it. When a toy is out of reach, give him some time to think of ways to get it himself. When he shows that he wants to try to do something himself, let him try (even when you know you can do it better and faster).

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### SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME

Children of overindulgent parents have had many, many frustrating situations removed from their experience, and they often come into adolescence ill-equipped for the frustrations of real life. As children they instead master strategies for getting the parent to resolve the frustration for them. They have tantrums or lose control emotionally when a task is experienced as difficult. They withdraw from the activity or give up, in hopes the parent will take over (Ellis, 1995).

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## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

### REMEMBER

Babies are unable to show any problem-solving skills until around the age of 6 months. After this time you can watch the development of a child's thinking skills that form the foundation for the complex process of problem solving in simple, everyday accomplishments.

### *Parenting to Build Problem-Solving Skills*

- Offer opportunities to observe the world. Go outside, visit new places, and take a tour of the neighborhood.
  - Let your baby watch family activities such as cooking meals, talking on the phone, and doing laundry. You think they're boring; your baby thinks they're fascinating.
  - Give things names. Tell your infant, "This *ball* is *round*"; "Look at the *cat*." Tell your toddler, "I think you feel *sad*"; "Mary is your *friend*."
  - Repeat favorite activities. Babies learn by repetition and will indicate when they're bored. If your child likes to hear the same story every night, don't fight it.
  - Let your child try to work things out before you jump in to help.
- Let your child feel the pride of accomplishing something without your help

### *Avoid*

- Overstimulating your baby. Respect his need to pace his fun.
- Removing all obstacles from your baby's path. Let her think about how to solve a problem for herself.
- Protecting your child from all frustration. Problem solving requires a willingness to work through a task despite difficulty.
- Bringing out the flash cards in a misguided attempt to increase your baby's problem-solving skills. Far better to offer pots, pans, measuring spoons, water, plastic bowls, and cardboard boxes to encourage your child to think.

### Play and Imagination

Play is the occupation of children. It is what allows them to grow emotionally, intellectually, and socially. Play teaches children how the world works and how they fit into it. Obviously, play is an important part of your baby's day.

In infancy, babies play through observation. It's fun for them to see new things and have frequent changes of scenery. They love to hear



you sing songs. They like to watch you demonstrate how a rattle makes noise and can be held in the hand. You can guide your baby's fingers over the soft texture of stuffed animals. Gently tickle and kiss your baby's tummy and feet. All of these things help your baby learn how to interact with others for fun—after all, that's what play really is.

A major factor in children's play is imagination, but children are not born with an active imagination; it is something that grows gradually. Pretend play begins at the same time a child begins to speak (usually between 12 and 18 months, but occasionally sooner). The first signs will be fleeting: lifting a toy cup to the mouth or a toy telephone to the ear. These simple games will then progress to more sustained sequences such as feeding a beloved doll, washing a teddy bear's face, or sitting inside a cardboard "house."

These pretend moments encourage language development. Language uses words to represent real-life objects; so when your child makes a shoebox represent a car, he or she is developing the ability to

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### SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME

**Moms and dads have different play styles. Researchers Biller and Meredith observed that mothers and fathers interact differently with their babies when they explore the environment. Here are some things they found:**

- **Fathers encourage their babies' curiosity and, more specifically, actively encourage them to solve physical and intellectual challenges, even past the early signs of frustration. Mothers, on the other hand, while encouraging exploration, tend to be more conservative once the baby or toddler shows signs of frustration; they move in sooner than fathers to help the child or to remove some obstacle.**
  - **Fathers tend to teach young children through the course of daily life activities. Mothers tend to engage with infants and toddlers in more toy-mediated types of play and learning.**
  - **Fathers are more rough-and-tumble with their play. Children seem to enjoy the tactile and sensory aspects of physical interaction with Dad and will use his body as a jungle gym. Mothers, whose own bodies have often felt more than sufficiently used by their offspring (particularly if they have been breastfeeding), tend to avoid rough play. Babies wisely seek it less from Mom and head for Dad, the more willing partner (Pruett, 1997).**
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**STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS****JUST A PHASE?**

Some parents worry if their child shows no interest in pretend play. They see other infants happily building sand castles or playing with dolls and wonder why their child wants no part in pretending. If your child seems to have no imagination, be patient for now. Children develop their creative personalities at various stages of infancy. At this time, your child may be more interested in exploring the environment or learning to crawl, walk, run, or jump. Continue to offer creative opportunities and toys and do some imaginative modeling and soon you'll likely see signs of a budding imagination.

think in terms of signs and symbols. Repetition of these actions gives young children confidence that they can create a play world that reflects real-life experiences.

At this age, children would rather invent their own games than explore a manufactured high-tech creation. Touching, tasting, and banging are typical means of playing and learning for babies and toddlers who are just finding out what the world is made of and what they can do. That's why some of the best toys for children this age are either ordinary household objects (pots, pans, wooden spoons, and spools) or children's versions of adult tools. If you do choose a high-tech toy for your tot, make sure it's one that gives your child as much latitude as possible in dictating the form of play, rather than one that has only one predetermined outcome.

***Parenting to Encourage Play and Imagination*****SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME**

One-year-old infants whose mothers allow them to take the lead during play interactions show more persistence at solving tasks a year later than infants whose mothers are more controlling (Frodi, Bridges, & Grolnick, 1985).

- Play with your baby right from the start. Young infants love to dance in your arms and hear you sing songs. Wave to them, blow a kiss, smile often—they will soon surprise you by imitating your actions.
- Older infants love the anticipation of a surprise. Try the gonna-get-ya game as a quick way to reconnect after being apart: Wiggle your finger in the air as you musically say, “IIIIII’m gonna get ya!” As you say “gonna get ya,” gently poke your baby’s tummy.
- All the old-time baby games are still lots of fun. Don’t forget peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake, this little piggy went to market, and the itsy-bitsy spider.

- To build a child's imagination provide lots of toys (like toy telephones and teacups) that encourage creative play.
- Model imaginative play yourself. For example, pretend to feed your child's stuffed animals.
- Be sure to applaud and smile at your child's beginning ventures into the world of play and imagination.

***Avoid***

- Misjudging your child's personality. By the second or third month you may notice that your baby is highly excitable and loves loud, aggressive play. Or, she may be more mellow and prefer quiet, soft play.
- Overstimulation. When your baby gives you the signal that he has had enough, end the playtime.
- Using play to distract your baby from tiredness or hunger. Those needs must be taken care of before a baby can enjoy playful interaction.
- Squashing your child's imagination by insisting on realism at all times. If she calls her stuffed bear a puppy dog, don't automatically correct her. If he insists on wearing one red sock and one white sock, give in when you can.
- Letting unsupervised siblings play with an infant. They can very easily (and unintentionally) harm a baby. It would not be unusual for a 3-year-old to wonder if a spoon inserted into one ear could come out the other side.
- Leaving family pets alone in the room with a baby. They do not know how to play with an infant.

**REMEMBER**

- **Play is the occupation of children. It is what allows them to grow emotionally, intellectually, and socially.**
- **Children are not born with an active imagination; it is something that grows gradually.**

**Language Development**

Language development doesn't begin the day your baby first says a word. It begins right from birth. Throughout their early months, babies are listening and learning constantly. They quickly learn words through repetition, tone of voice, and association, and they will respond to words long before they can actually speak them. Words like *bottle*, *mommy*, *daddy*, and *no* are usually part of a child's listening



## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

vocabulary by 7 months of age. By the time babies turn 1, they'll have about 20 words in their listening vocabulary, and then the rush of new spoken words daily begins. (*Listening vocabulary* means the words a person understands when someone else speaks them. These words may not yet be in the person's own speaking vocabulary.)

Unfortunately, some parents still feel silly talking to a child who gives no indication that he or she can understand or has any interest in the conversation. But by talking to babies and identifying objects like *bottle*, *crib*, and *stroller*, parents help them learn how to talk. It's not at all silly to say to a 1-month-old child, "I'm putting you in your stroller now and we're going for a walk to the park." Or, "This is our car. Mommy and Ben go for rides in the car." Let others laugh if they must; you're giving your baby one of the most important tools in cognitive growth: the gift of words.

I've heard parents say, "All of a sudden, one day, he just started talking!" The truth is, the growth of language is a constant thing—if you're listening for it. The progression of speech development outlined here will give you an approximation of how your baby learns how to talk (Barclay, 1985):

1. *Birth.* Crying is the sole means of communication used by newborns. With some experience, many parents can distinguish between the sounds of different cries—the cry for food, the cry for sleep, and the cry from frustration. The most important aspect of crying as communication is the fact that it causes the parent or

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### AGE DIFFERENCES

As in most other areas of development, babies learn language at different rates and in different ways. Some coo pleasantly; others grunt and squeak. Some babble incessantly; others listen intently. Some say their first word at 7 months; others wait until well into their second or third year. And even then, language development doesn't follow a linear path; children tend to take two steps forward and then one step back. They forget words they once knew so well. Sometimes, they stop talking altogether for a while. And the proper use of words like *ran* and *went* can suddenly become *runned* and *goed*. There is no definite timeline your child must follow in the pursuit of language development. All information based on age is offered only as a guideline to give a general idea of what can be expected of many children at certain ages.

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adult to respond and thus fosters very early interaction. Also, newborns show great sensitivity to the human voice. Many are more responsive to higher-pitched voices, which may explain why they sometimes cry when Dad says a simple hello. If the father seems to be “scaring” the baby, he might try raising his voice an octave or two when he speaks.

2. *1 to 3 months.* It’s time for cooing! Babies begin to make a noise that sounds like a pigeon cooing. When they are content and satisfied, they seem to make this sound just for the fun of it. Quite naturally, parents respond to this sound with a big smile. They may mimic the sound back and initiate “cooing conversations,” or they may say (in a high-pitched, happy voice) something like, “Oohh, what are you trying to tell me? Are you happy today?” This kind of positive reaction makes the baby want to repeat the sound and gain more attention.
3. *2 to 7 months.* Vocal experimentation may become a baby’s favorite pastime. During awake periods (which are much longer now), infants will entertain themselves by producing new sounds and repeating them with some modification. This is vocal play. The game becomes even more entertaining when an adult plays along. Lengthy “conversations” can be held if the adult mimics the baby’s sound and then waits for a reply. Vowel sounds (*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*) are the baby’s favorites at first, but soon consonant sounds will follow.
4. *4 to 8 months.* While babies are experimenting with vocal play, they will also begin to babble. Along with the singular vowel and consonant sounds, repetitive syllables such as *a-la-la* will make up much of the daily dialogue. Most interestingly, babies will babble sounds not generally found in their own language. The English *l* and *r* sounds, for example, are vocalized by Chinese and Japanese infants. Hard-of-hearing infants begin to babble at the same time and in the same way as do infants with normal hearing. The sounds made by the hard-of-hearing babies are the same up to about 6 months of age. After that time the rate of babbling and the number of sounds both decrease.
5. *8 to 12 months.* Babbling begins to sound more and more like true language as babies practice the sounds they hear most often and begin to use intonation. Around 8 months, *da-da* may be pro-



## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

nounced, eliciting great pride in all fathers (although the sound has nothing to do with the word *daddy*). A little later *ma-ma* may be sounded to balance the scale (but this, too, will not really mean *mommy*). Finally, by 10 months babies are likely to use these sounds appropriately to address their parents (or any adult who happens to be in the room). Sounds will now be used as attempted words. *Fla* may mean *flower*. *Ma* may mean *milk*. *Ba* may mean *bottle*. (But don't jump to conclusions. *Ba* can also mean *baby*, *bad*, or *blanket*.) Toward the end of this period, babies learn to string sounds together to make "sentences," and often these sentences carry intonations that express meanings such as fear, surprise, or happiness. Children will ask a question with babbled sounds by raising the pitch near the end of the "sentence," as is usual in the English language.

### JUST A PHASE?

The first word usually appears around the same time as the onset of walking. If motor development is appreciably ahead of language, either hearing loss or some other language problem may be suspected. Conversely, if motor development lags behind language development, then a motor delay may be indicated.

6. *1 year.* Babies will continue to babble for quite some time into their second year, but around the first birthday, babies pronounce their first true word. This word identifies a person, event, or object in the immediate environment. The most frequently learned words refer to food and food utensils (cookie, milk, bottle), names of people and pets (Mama, Dada, and the child's own name), and the names of toys (ball, doll). After the first word is learned, others follow, slowly. The average 12-month-old has a vocabulary of about 3 to 8 words, each used as one-word expressions (but remember: the baby *understands* about 20 words).

7. *12 to 18 months.* This is the age of the parrot. Your child will listen carefully and yell out a sound in an attempt to mimic your language. At this age, you'll also see that language and thought development are closely related. As the complexity of thought increases, children can express more linguistically complex ideas. For example, as children learn that objects still exist even when they can't be seen (object permanence), they will mention an object or person not present in the room. As the idea of quantity and number develops, children begin to use plural endings and words such as *two* and *more*. When memory becomes more established, they will refer to past events. As the concept of negation is learned, children's favorite word—*no*—appears and is practiced often.



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### SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME

**Baby talk is not bad for your baby. Although you don't want to mispronounce words by saying something like, "I just wuv my wittle, pwitty baby," the sing-song, high-pitched voice that many mothers naturally use is what babies like best. Studies indicate that high-pitched sounds attract an infant's attention, and melodic intonation keeps that attention longer than normal adult conversational tones. In fact, researchers now suspect that this "infant-directed" speech is preferred over adult speech patterns by babies as young as 2 days old (Adler, 1990).**

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### *Parenting to Encourage Language Development*

- Talk to your baby about what you're doing. As you prepare a meal or shop for food, explain to your baby exactly what you're doing. Point to the food and say simply, "Apples."
- Acknowledge your baby's attempts to communicate. When he points to an object, give it to him. When he claps his hands, clap yours, too.
- When your baby babbles, babble back. Don't worry about using "correct" language; it's more important to show that you understand she is trying to communicate.
- When your baby "talks" to you, talk back. Then pause, leaving time for him to respond.
- When you say "ball," point to a ball. When you say "Mama," point to the baby's mother.
- Use baby sign language. Gestures like waving bye-bye or blowing a kiss are good ways to encourage communication skills.
- Fill your baby's day with music. Like language, music has changing rhythms, tones, and inflections.

### *Avoid*

- Using vague or general terms. Don't call a rattle a *toy*. Don't call a cookie *food*. Try to be very specific.
- Using pronouns too often. Saying, "I'm going to give you a bath," won't teach the same language lesson as "Mommy's going to give Katie a bath."

**STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS**

- Confusing your baby with intonations that give mixed signals. If you calmly and softly say, “No, don’t touch that,” your baby won’t get the message. Inflection and intonation are both part of language that need to be consistent.

**REMEMBER**

Language development doesn’t begin the day your baby first says a word. It begins right from birth. Throughout their early months, babies are listening and learning constantly. They quickly learn words through repetition, tone of voice, and association, and they will respond to words long before they can actually speak them.

- Being afraid to coo and babble. Mimicking your baby’s sounds teaches the interaction of conversation.
- Confusing your baby with full sentences like, “This is a spoon” when teaching new words. Simply point to the spoon and say “spoon” clearly.
- Feeling silly talking to your infant. It’s an important step in language development.
- Underestimating your baby’s ability to “talk” back even before he or she first says a word. Ask your infant, “Do you want juice or water in your bottle?” and wait for an “answer.” Very soon your baby will learn to fill in the moment of silence with a smile, an arm wave, or a squeal.

# Family and Peer Relationships

## STAGE 1

  
*Birth to  
18 Months*

**F**rom the moment of birth we look to those around us for physical and emotional support. The family unit is usually the first support group for a newborn. The quality of this support establishes the bonds of attachment that lay the groundwork for all later relationships. Right from infancy, our children learn the value of close relationships, the security they can gain from family routines, and the unavoidable influence of peer pressure.

### Building Friendships

Nine-month-old Tad spied his ten-month-old cousin, Lee, across the crowded room. Both babies looked at each other and let out high-pitched squeals of delight. They flapped their arms and threw their bodies forward toward each other with outstretched hands. “Tad and Lee spend a lot of time together,” says Tad’s mom, Bonnie, “but that was the first time I realized that they had become good friends.”

Children as young as 3 months do enjoy the company of other babies. They can now distinguish different faces, voices, and personalities, and will show obvious pleasure at the sight of another baby. Given the opportunity to play with the same child regularly, even infants can become friends. Side-by-side play with other babies gives your child opportunities to get used to being with other children, watching them, and imitating their actions. These are important first steps toward learning how to interact with others.

Building friendships is a slow process that doesn’t happen right away for infants, but you can get the ball rolling by setting up play dates for your baby. If you do this, make your young guest (and his or her caregiver, who should not drop off an infant at a play date) feel at ease right from the start by offering a snack—this is always a welcomed ice-breaker because it gives the baby and parent time to slowly take in

**STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS**

the environment. Then offer your little guest a choice of a few toys—bring the toys to the guest so he or she doesn't have to stray too far from home base (Mom or Dad's leg). Even if the play date never leaves the parent's lap, don't despair. Continue your efforts to make the guest comfortable. At this age, leaving the lap is the first step in the socialization process.

When you plan a play date, you may envision two babies giggling and playing peacefully with each other, but after the first visit you'll realize that children this young have no claim to social graces—they aren't able to consider another's point of view, and so sharing and cooperative play are out of the question. This doesn't mean you should call off the visits; it means you need to stay vigilant and patient. Children can't learn to play nicely without lots of opportunities to figure out how it's done.

***Parenting to Help Children Develop Friendships***

- Give your baby opportunities to spend time with other babies.
- Understand that playing side by side with other babies gives your child a chance to watch other children and imitate their actions.
- Invite the parent of your baby's friend to stay for the play date also.
- Stay nearby when your baby plays with a new friend. They are not yet ready to be socially pleasant or secure.

***Avoid***

- Waiting for your baby to grow up before you arrange play dates.
- Being surprised if your baby's play date never leaves the mother's lap. Give the child time.
- Expecting your baby to be a good friend to other babies. He or she is not yet able to share, interact nicely, or understand group dynamics.
- Giving up playdates because it looks like your baby is not playing anyway. These dates give babies the opportunity to watch, observe, and learn.



## Family Rituals and Routines

Eight-month-old Billy doesn't have a bedtime routine. Some nights his mom, Anna, rocks him to sleep; sometimes she puts him in his crib, shuts the door, and lets him cry until he nods off. And sometimes his parents let him run around until he drops. "Every night is different, but it's always a struggle," says Anna. "Are all kids like this?"

Yes. Babies have no idea when or how they should sleep, or eat, or bathe, or do any other daily activity. They need their parents to set down pleasant but nonnegotiable routines to give order and security to their lives. You can introduce daily routines when your baby is as young as 3 or 4 months.

Before 3 months of age, babies may be too immature to follow a regular schedule—they are still settling into life outside the womb. But soon, you'll notice that their crying is more reasonable and predictable. They can go 3 or 4 hours between feedings and have longer periods of alertness between naps. At this time developing routines for activities like bedtime, naptime, and mealtime is not only possible, but necessary. Babies need your help to regulate their inner clocks and to organize their needs and functions. Here's how routines work after the age of 3 months, using sleep time as an example:

**Set a definite time for sleep.** Taking into consideration your baby's daily schedule and sleep needs, determine a time for naptime and bedtime that coincides with his need for rest and then stick with it.

**Create a sleep ritual.** Make the time before sleep as routinely tranquil and predictable as possible. Then you might develop a bedtime ritual within that routine. A typical ritual might go something like

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### SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME

Researchers Daniel Kessler and Peter Dawson have found that sustenance, stimulation, and support are important elements that enable young children to thrive. They have reported that for these elements to achieve maximum benefit, they need to be organized into meaningful patterns. They advise: "A child-care system that provides regular routines that are somewhat structured around the child's own biological rhythms promotes better outcomes for the child" (Kessler, Dawson, et al., 1999).

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## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

this: You carry your baby to the bedroom, turn on a night light, sit to sing a lullaby, kiss a few stuffed animals goodnight, kiss your baby, and lay her in her bed. Say goodnight and leave the room while she is still awake.

Don't expect babies to accept their new routines immediately. They may cry and complain, but stay firm and calm. Persistent repetition will help them understand that this is what happens at this time of day. The sameness of a sleep routine, for example, carries comfort, security, and a promise that the separation caused by sleep is predictable and temporary.

Whatever routines and rituals you create, make sure they're ones you can repeat and can pass on to your child's caregivers. If you build a routine that includes a story, a song, and a nightlight, your babysitter will never get your child to sleep if he or she doesn't follow the same steps (in the same order). These are the signals that tell a baby what to do next.

Babies need to know when they eat, when they nap, and when they play. Routines and rituals that map out a predictable schedule ease the transitions that can otherwise confuse and scare young babies. As they try to figure out how the world they now live in works, routines give them a sense of security and control.

### *Parenting To Create Rituals and Routines*

- After the third month, establish a consistent daily schedule so your child feels in control of her world.
- For a few days, keep track of when your baby seems hungry and tired. Use this information to build a schedule around his biological clock.
- When your baby gets a little older and begins to resist her bedtime, first make sure the scheduled time still fits her biological clock. If

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### **CONSIDER**

**Creating daily routines for your child doesn't mean you have to follow a regimented schedule that cannot be broken. A surprise visit from Grandma is a good time to postpone a nap. You don't have to beg off a fun trip with your spouse because it would interfere with the baby's playtime. Babies can adapt easily to occasional changes without any harm. A consistent daily routine is something you can use to help babies set their biological and emotional clocks, but don't let it take all the fun out of spontaneous activities.**

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it does, use something neutral, like a kitchen timer or a certain song, to signal sleep time. She'll hear the sound and know what to expect next.

### ***Avoid***

- Worrying if you occasionally break your baby's routine. No one's life can be completely schedule driven.
- Giving up on the idea of routines because you work and life is hectic enough. Routines make life easier! When your baby learns that he always has a healthy snack while you prepare dinner and that you read him a story after the dishes are done, he won't be whining and crying for those things the minute you walk in the door.
- Creating a bedtime ritual that you won't want to repeat every single night.
- Skipping over a bedtime ritual because you're in a hurry. It will take you much longer in the end to get your child to sleep without it.

## **Peer Pressure**

Nine-month-old Tina sat contentedly in her high chair. In one fist she clutched a cookie and in the other her bottle of juice. Tina's 3-year-old brother, Ryan, sat at the kitchen table nearby, drinking his juice from a sippy cup. Tina stared at the cup, then looked back at her bottle. She watched Ryan drink from the cup. She carefully studied how he put the cup to his mouth. And then, *boom!* Tina threw her bottle across the room and grabbed for Ryan's cup. With a quick lunge and a loud cry, she grabbed the cup from his hands.

Although to Tina's mom this looked like an infant tantrum, it may actually have been peer influence in its neophyte form. We know babies are great imitators, but have you thought about what makes them copy

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### **REMEMBER**

**Babies need to know when they eat, when they nap, and when they play. Routines and rituals that map out a predictable schedule ease the transitions that can otherwise confuse and scare young babies. As they try to figure out how the world they now live in works, routines give them a sense of security and control. You can introduce daily routines when your baby is as young as 3 or 4 months.**

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## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

others? They want to do what the people around them do. They want to be like the crowd. They want to fit in. That's what socialization and peer influence is all about. Although peer pressure isn't in full swing at this age, you'll occasionally see glimpses of its development.

Parents, on the other hand, often fall into the hands of full-blown negative peer pressure of their own at this early stage. If little Christy gives up her bottle at 10 months, so should my Allie. If little Keith has the latest toy, so will my Susie. If little Clark is walking, so should my Jacqueline be. If you don't want your child to think he has to do what everybody else does when he's 14, watch out how you, yourself, buckle to peer pressure now.

Your baby's development is unique and individual. All the timelines in all the parenting books are only guidelines based on averages. If you have any concerns about developmental delays, talk to your baby's doctor or pediatric developmental specialist. Unless there is a diagnosed problem, you shouldn't spend any time trying to keep up with the Joneses' kid. Be cautious about letting peer pressure creep into your parenting style or you'll soon find that the little name-brand shoes you now buy become the way your child learns to identify herself among her peers as she grows through childhood.

### *Parenting to Help Children Deal with Peer Pressure*

- Be aware that peer pressure isn't necessarily a bad thing. Trying to be like everybody else pushes your baby to try new things.
- Watch for signs of peer influence—especially from siblings.
- Let your baby grow on his own clock without worrying if his progress is as good as other babies'.

#### *Avoid*

- Giving in to the negative side of peer pressure by comparing your baby to others—she is like no other!
- Being too concerned that other babies have more things than your baby. Your love and attention are the most valuable gifts you can give a child.
- Teaching your baby that being like other babies is very important. It is not necessary to wear the same kind of clothes, or go to the same baby classes, or have the same toys.

#### **REMEMBER**

**Babies are great imitators. They want to do what the people around them do. They want to be like the crowd. They want to fit in. That's what socialization and peer influence is all about. Although peer pressure isn't in full swing at this age, you'll occasionally see glimpses of its development.**

# Personal Growth

## STAGE 1

  
*Birth to  
18 Months*

Inside your baby is a unique individual who will grow to think and feel things that no other person on the face of the earth has ever thought or felt before. This process of personal growth is influenced daily through each experience of success, failure, satisfaction, and frustration. Each social interaction teaches your child more about who he or she is and who he or she will become. Three aspects of personal growth that you will find particularly interesting to watch are the development of a sense of self, the growth of independence through autonomy, and the evolvment of responsibility.

### **Sense of Self**

Although it's hard to imagine, your baby has no idea that you and he or she are not one and the same person. In fact, babies have no way of knowing that any other people exist separately from themselves at all. A sense of self as a separate body and mind, distinct from others, does not develop until the child is about 18 months old. Much of life before this time is devoted to learning to make this distinction.

### ***Sense of Body***

The first step in becoming aware of the self as a separate distinct individual is the realization that the body is separate and unique from all other bodies. During the first 18 months, children gradually become aware of their bodies' boundaries and wholeness. They learn that they are a nonfragmented, physical whole. Children as young as 18 weeks will gaze at their image in a mirror, but they don't recognize that they are seeing a reflection of themselves until sometime in the second year of life. By 18 months, children will point to pictures of themselves when their names are called. It is not surprising that the development of object permanence is related to the development of self-recognition. The development of an understanding of the continued permanence

**STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS**

and existence and continuity of the self is the critical first step in the formation of self-identity.

Because the baby's earliest sense of self has to do with the body, it is logical that parental reaction to a physical activity or to body parts forms the basis of the child's perception that the physical self and the pleasure derived from it are good or bad. If, for example, the mother observes the baby exploring parts of the body, including the genitals, she will bolster his feelings about himself if she allows the exploration to continue. If a child gets the impression that her parents disapprove of something about her body, her overall sense of self can be negatively affected in the long run.

It is the parent's job during this period to have a positive attitude toward the child's discovery of the body and to encourage the child to feel, explore, and examine every finger, toe, and knee. You can encourage this growing sense of self by using words to reflect a positive image of the child's body. Say things such as "What strong fingers you have" and "You are so beautiful."

***Self as a Doer***

Slowly, during the first year, babies become aware of themselves as someone who has power to make things happen. They learn that they can summon someone's attention by calling out; they learn they can grab an object and throw it aside. They learn they can make a noise happen by shaking a rattle. It is thrilling for a baby to learn this lesson. Pulling a page from a magazine shows the power of action to make a change. The baby will tear page after page, marveling in this ability to produce an effect.

To encourage the baby's sense of self as someone who can make things happen, talk to your baby about her accomplishments. Say, "Oh, you've found your toes!" "You made that spoon fall." "You make me laugh."

***Male or Female Self***

At 12 months a child's awakening sense of gender can be seen. A 1-year-old girl who is shown a film involving people of both sexes will look longer at the females than at the males. This indicates that the baby has the first inkling of gender identity. At 18 months, babies will notice that boys and girls have different sexual organs.

You can encourage the development of gender identity by using the



words *boy* or *girl* when you address your baby. Statements like “What a happy girl you are” or “You are a good boy” help your baby’s early identification with the words that define his or her gender.

### ***Parenting to Help Children Develop a Sense of Self***

- Admire your baby—simply for existing. Every time you smile and tell your baby she is beautiful, she is given a piece of information that she will use to learn she is a separate and valued individual.
- Praise your baby’s accomplishments. When you reward your baby’s smile with a smile of your own, or when you applaud his ability to roll, kick, or make noises, you fuel the infant’s development of a sense of value and associated self-esteem. Infants take pleasure in feeling that their actions can produce a joyful response from their parents.
- Be attentive to your baby’s innate needs, emotions, temperamental characteristics, and cognitive competencies. This attention helps an infant have a dawning awareness that she is important and loved. She learns that her needs are met by the actions of others who can be trusted.
- You can influence the way your baby learns about his separate body by the way you handle his skin. Massage it, rub it, feel it. The sen-

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### **SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME**

The development of self has been studied by presenting a mirror to infants and noting how they respond. One of the earliest studies to use this technique was published by Dixon (1957), who longitudinally observed five infants from the ages of 4 to 12 months. He found a four-stage developmental sequence of visual self-recognition:

1. The baby has no interest in the reflection in the mirror.
  2. The baby responds to the image in the mirror as if it were an interesting playmate.
  3. The baby is able to differentiate between his or her own reflection and the mirror image of another child.
  4. The baby shows definite signs of self-recognition.
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## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

sations and perceptions this causes help an infant construct a mental picture of his body boundaries.

- Encourage the concept of object permanence by hiding a toy under a blanket and then showing your baby that when you remove the blanket the toy is still there.
- Talk to your baby about her accomplishments. Say things such as “You clapped your hands and made a sound” or “You kicked your feet and make the toy fall down.”
- Encourage the development of gender identity by using the words *boy* or *girl* when you address your baby.

### REMEMBER

Your little baby has no idea that you and he or she are not one and the same person. In fact, babies have no way of knowing that any other people exist separately from themselves at all. A sense of self as a separate body and mind, distinct from others, does not develop until the child is about 18 months old. Much of life before this time is devoted to learning to make this distinction.

### *Avoid*

- Stopping your baby’s body explorations. Don’t get upset if he touches his genitals. Don’t keep pulling his hands away from his face or ears. Let his fingers explore this fascinating thing called a body.
- Assuming your baby’s motives are the same as those of an older child. She doesn’t rip up magazines for destructive purposes; she does it to see what happens when she grabs hold and pulls.
- Worrying that telling your baby she is a “good little girl” is a sexist remark. Political correctness is not an issue when you’re teaching your baby gender identity.
- Being embarrassed by the fact that you think your baby is the most fabulous human being on the face of the earth. This attitude will help her develop a positive self-image.

## Autonomy

“It’s obvious that Katie has a mind of her own,” laughs her mom, Sarah. “No matter how many times I tell her not to, she loves to drop her spoon on the floor and cry until I give it back to her. I think she just likes to see me bend over a hundred times a day!”

Before they can even talk, babies like Katie take tiny steps toward autonomy. Autonomy is the need to be independent—to act on one’s own, to think for oneself. It is a force that pushes even infants to find ways to control their world. It is the reason for the push and pull



between dependence and independence that parents and children struggle with throughout the years of childhood.

Using their physical vocabulary, babies will slowly learn that for each action there is a reaction. Without anyone's help they can grab at Mom's earrings and make her cry out. They can drop things on the floor and make others pick them up. They can laugh out loud and make people smile. What power!

To further develop this sense of independence, babies need some time alone. This means you don't need to constantly entertain your child. Leave her alone for a while each day to play, to daydream, and to amuse herself. These private moments are important to the baby's ability to develop a sense of self that's separate from her parents. They offer a baby the opportunity to use her senses to take in all the sounds and smells and sights of her environment. These quiet moments allow her to build a picture of how she relates to the rest of the world.

You can also encourage autonomy by letting your baby fall asleep without your help. If you always rock, feed, or soothe him to sleep, you take away his natural ability to self-soothe and therefore cause him to be more dependent on you. Many parents unknowingly teach their babies to associate their presence (while rocking, feeding, or back patting) with falling asleep. If the parent is then not able or willing to always supply this sleep environment, the baby cannot sleep and will cry throughout the night. "Putting" a baby to sleep teaches him that he cannot survive separation from Mom and Dad. It teaches him to rely on others to supply the transitional environment between wakefulness and sleep. All babies over the age of 6 months can fall asleep without the help of their parents—if their parents give them the opportunity to learn how by not picking them up every time they cry.

Crying is a baby's way of controlling the level of stimulation; the cry helps to discharge tension and fatigue and allows the baby to fall asleep. As a bonus, this skill of self-comforting nurtures the child's

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### CONSIDER

**If you bring your face very close to your baby's face, you may be invading the baby's private space. This will cause a baby to avert the eyes, turn the head away, and even cry. This is usually more of a problem with relatives and friends than with parents whom the baby trusts. Encourage siblings, family, and friends to respect the baby's personal space and keep a bit of distance between them.**

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## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

sense of control over his world and promotes a necessary sense of independence. After the age of 6 months, let your baby cry for about 10 minutes to lull himself to sleep. The crying won't hurt him, and the experience will nurture his sense of autonomy.

Your baby's personality will in many ways dictate how and when she decides to act independently. Some children are very outgoing and have no fear of moving away from Mom and Dad (directly into the street if you're not careful). Others are more hesitant and need more time to break away from your leg and join the crowd. If your baby clings to you in new situations, don't pressure her to be "brave" by pushing her away. You'll lengthen the state of dependency if you force her to try something she is not ready for. Give opportunities for separation and exploration, and then wait until your child feels comfortable enough to reach out and explore them.

### *Parenting to Nurture Autonomy*

- Accept your baby's "seek-and-destroy" behavior as exploratory adventures rather than destructive acts.
- Respect your baby's ability to self-soothe by letting him occasionally cry himself to sleep.
- Give your baby some time to be alone each day.
- Let your baby learn how to entertain and soothe herself.
- After 6 months of age, give your baby space to learn that he is an individual separate from you.

### **REMEMBER**

Autonomy is the need to be independent—to act on one's own, to think for oneself. It is a force that pushes even infants to find ways to control their own world. It is the reason for the push and pull between dependence and independence that parents and children struggle with throughout the years of childhood.

- Respect your baby's personality by giving her plenty of room and time to develop a sense of independence.

### *Avoid*

- Ignoring your baby's cries if they are signaling physical distress, hunger or pain.
- Invading your baby's privacy by continually putting your face extremely close to his if he indicates that he doesn't like it.
- Always rocking your baby to sleep or feeding him as he falls off to sleep. This will prevent him from learning how to self-soothe.



- Clinging to your baby, inhibiting the natural separation that must occur in order for the child to gain a sense of autonomy. When she crawls away from you, smile and applaud; don't rush to the rescue and keep her from exploring.
- Thinking that you must interact with your baby constantly. To "find" themselves, babies need some time alone. Time spent quietly observing and moving helps infants learn that they have a separate body that produces separate behaviors.

## Responsibility

Responsibility means being trustworthy, reliable, and accountable. It means being able to answer for one's conduct. Of course these are traits we all want to see in our children, but they are not inborn—they are learned. Be assured that initially infants feel no sense of responsibility toward anyone. Not to you, not to a sibling, not to a friend, not to Grandma, not even toward themselves. They are completely unaccountable for their behavior. However, this is the time when the seeds of responsibility are planted.

We all get our first lessons in responsibility by observing the kind of care and treatment given to us by the adults around us. Responsible adults take care of an infant's need for food, affection, and physical comfort as quickly as possible. They don't let babies scream themselves into a fit to teach them who's in charge. They give lots of unconditional love. They teach children to be responsible by being responsible toward them.

The next step in teaching responsibility to a baby focuses on the age-old method of assigning chores. Of course you cannot hold your infant responsible for cleaning up the mashed peas she spits all over the wall, but she can learn at this early age that cleaning up is a part of life. Don't clean up after your baby only when you've put him down for a nap. Let him watch you clean up with a song and a smile every day. Teach her by your own example that putting toys away naturally follows the act of playing with them. Show him that cleaning up a spill is not a punishment; it's simply the responsible thing to do. As your baby moves into his or her second year, he or she can move from watching you clean up to helping you. Make a game of picking up toys and dropping them in their container. Guide your baby's hand to pick up and

**STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS**

clean up. Older children resist chores only when they have learned that it's not their job to be responsible for their things.

***Parenting to Teach Responsibility***

- Respond to your baby's cries of hunger and pain to show her what it means to be a responsible person.
- Let your infant see you clean up his mess and his toys with a smile.
- Ask your 1-year-old to help you pick up toys every day.

***Avoid***

- Expecting a baby between birth and 18 months to feel a sense of responsibility toward anyone.
- Trying to build a sense of responsibility by making an infant wait for food or comfort. The very opposite lesson is learned.
  - Teaching your baby that chores are a negative thing by complaining about the cleanup every time she makes a mess.
  - Always cleaning up when your baby is out of sight. Let him see how it works.
  - Underestimating your 1-year-old's ability to help you clean up. With a little encouragement, she can be a big help.

**REMEMBER**

**Infants feel no sense of responsibility toward anyone. However, this is the time when the seeds of responsibility are planted.**

# Character Formation

## STAGE 1

  
*Birth to  
18 Months*

**W**hat kind of character traits do you wish for your child? When you think about this question you'll find your mind considering your own values and morals. You'll picture a person who is self-disciplined and in control of impulsive behavior. And you'll imagine someone who has respect for others. These are the building blocks of character that none of us are born with. We learn them from the world we live in. As their first teachers, your example is the foundation on which your children will build the sense of morality, values, personal discipline, and social manners that will form their character.

### Values and Morals

To adopt values such as honesty and kindness and to develop a moral sense of right and wrong, we all need to be able to experience emotions that are associated with the consequences of one's conduct—emotions such as anxiety, guilt, remorse, and discomfort. Each of these emotional underpinnings of conscience begins to emerge slowly after the first birthday. But before this time, babies' lack of identity separate from others makes it impossible for them to feel emotions connected to the well-being of others.

But this doesn't mean that values and morality are not a consideration during infancy. In fact, the lessons that lead a child to adopt cultural values and morals begin very early in life. From birth to 18 months, you teach your baby many lessons about right and wrong by the way you treat him or her.

Your daily interactions with your baby set the stage for the development of values and morals that match your own. Infants who are cuddled, loved, and cared for and whose emotional needs are consistently met are likely to demonstrate caring behavior themselves when they are older. By contrast, toddlers whose emotional needs have been ignored tend to hit others and ignore their distress. This is a logical



## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

consequence: The more often infants participate in loving and fun activities with their parents, the more opportunities there are for observational learning about family and cultural standards and for the transmission of expectations.

Feeling loved has a profound and enduring effect on a person's feelings for others—this is the core of morality. Showing love and affection to children teaches them to care about others and to respond with kindness and empathy to others in distress. Simply put: We learn to care about others by being cared for. This is how babies learn about the morals and values of their family and culture.

### *Parenting to Teach Values and Morals*

- Show your baby that his actions can cause good and bad feelings in others.
- Say the word *ouch* whenever she hurts herself; then say *ouch* again whenever she hurts someone else.
- Let your child know that you take pleasure in his existence. Answer his calls for help as soon as possible.
- When your child is too rough with pets or other children, teach her the word and action of *gentle*. If she pulls the dog's fur, take her hand away, firmly say no, and then rub her hand gently over the fur, saying with a smile, "Gentle."
- Communicate your love for your child right from the start. Children who feel good about their relationship with their parents want to adopt behaviors that please them.

### **REMEMBER**

Children adopt values such as honesty and kindness and develop a moral sense of right and wrong by imitating what they see in the world around them.

### *Avoid*

- Expecting your baby to understand how his actions make others feel. He does not know that pulling his sister's hair hurts her.
- Making your baby scream frantically before you move in to help. This teaches her that people respond to other's distress only after they are pushed to the brink.
- Thinking you can wait until your baby grows up to teach lessons in morals and values. Every smile and frown you give your baby teaches him your standards of good and bad.

## Self-Control and Discipline

Infants have no sense of self-control, and no amount of discipline will make them feel accountable for their behavior. This doesn't mean, however, that you shouldn't introduce the idea of discipline to control negative or dangerous impulses. Babies can be taught the concept of self-control—to a point.

The loudest debate in infant discipline often centers on the right and wrong ways of disciplining a crying baby. Will you spoil a baby by picking her up every time she cries? The answer is: It depends on the age and the reason for the crying. You should promptly pick up a crying infant under 3 months of age. At this stage, the only lesson a crying baby learns when his cries are ignored is that the adults in his world cannot be trusted to take care of him. So put disciplining concerns completely aside for the first 3 months.

After three months, you will begin to discern your baby's hunger and pain cries (which still need to be answered promptly) from her "I'm bored" cries. It's okay to let her cry for 2 or 3 minutes if you're busy with something else. Gradually, your baby will learn that there are times when you can't do exactly what she wants the moment she wants it. She will learn how to soothe and entertain herself sometimes by simply sucking on her fingers, watching her mobile, or cooing and gurgling.

The waiting periods can be extended as your child grows. When your 8-month-old starts to show signs of hunger, don't always sprint for the bottle; sometimes hold him and soothe him with words for a few minutes. When your 10-month-old wants a toy from the top shelf while you're cooking, say, "I know what you want, but I'm busy now. You'll have to wait." Your baby won't want to wait; he'll still pester you, but he's learning that sometimes other people's needs come before his own. To develop self-control, babies need to gradually understand that the world does not revolve around them. The ability to tolerate frustration is an important developmental task for children.

By the time your baby is 7 to 8 months old, he's ready to be told "No" when he behaves inappropriately. Babies under this age have a limited memory and won't recall that a particular action prompted your disapproval. But after 7 months, most babies can make the connection between something they have done and the word *no*. They

### CONSIDER

**Do not yell, shake, spank, or use long explanations to discipline an infant.**

### SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME

**Infants who do not learn to regulate their frustration reactions tend to be more noncompliant as toddlers (Stifter, Spinard, & Baungart, 1999).**



## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

begin to recognize the sound of the word and associate it with a stern look from their parents. Because babies don't like their parents to look or sound unhappy, this effectively teaches them what they are not allowed to do.

At first this may be confusing for both of you because the actions of babies are not rooted in the kind of motives that drive older children and even adults. When a baby hits another person, for example, it is not for the purpose of hurting that person. Usually it's simply because she's learning about that fascinating law of motion that says for each action there is a reaction. This reflects her growing awareness that she can have an impact on her environment—a healthy realization. Still, it's time to teach her that hitting is not allowed. If your baby hits the dog, for example, say “No” and frown; then take the baby's hand and rub it softly against the dog's fur and smile. Then distract her with a new activity. When she hits the dog again, respond in exactly the same way.

If after repeatedly using this first method of discipline your baby still does not understand that something is not allowed, you can use a discipline approach that is a bit more forceful. The next time she hits the dog, for example, pick her up and move her to another room. Sit down and hold her (facing you) by her shoulders and upper arms. Don't squeeze, but hold her firmly enough so she can't move or squirm away from you. After a minute or two of being held firmly, she will start to show that she doesn't like what's happening. At this point, hold her for another 15 seconds and say, “We're going back to the other room and you can play now, but if you hit the dog again I'm going to have to hold you again.” Your baby won't understand all the words, but she'll get the message. If you consistently use this approach the undesirable behavior will stop within 7 to 10 days.

### CONSIDER

**The trick during these early lessons in discipline is to make sure your baby doesn't get the message that he or she is bad. When your baby pulls your hair, be sure you don't cut emotional ties by putting the baby down and leaving him or her alone. After you say no and put your baby down, calmly draw his or her attention to another activity. This says, “I don't like what you did, but I still love you.”**

By being consistently firm but not overly reactive, you accomplish two things: You let your child know that the behavior is not allowed, and you reinforce your position as teacher and helper without becoming a hostile opponent. At some point during the second year, babies have enough stored memories like these to help them understand that there are rules that govern the way people treat one another.

Be selective about when you say no. If you overuse it, it loses its punch. Reserve your *nos* for dangerous or harmful situations like when your baby grabs hold of the lamp's elec-



trical cord or bites another child. Try not to say no when your child does something annoying, but essentially harmless. Throwing toys out of the crib, for example, is simply a game, not a dangerous situation.

If you use the word *no* firmly and consistently only when danger looms, by the end of the first year, your baby will begin to realize that you have standards that dictate what she can and cannot do. Knowing this, she will begin to look to you for cues to help her make decisions about her behavior. A toddler crawling toward the open door, for example, will constantly look back to his mother for a cue that will tell him if this is a good idea—if this is “good or bad.” The baby is comparing a contemplated action with a parent’s standard of right and wrong. This kind of social referencing sets the stage for the development of self-control that is based on parental expectations.

### ***Parenting to Teach Self-Control***

- Put disciplining concerns completely aside for the first 3 months.
- Under the age of 3 months, show your infant that she can count on you to answer her cries.
- After 3 months, help your baby learn self-control by letting him occasionally wait a short while for your attention when he cries out of boredom.
- Begin to teach your baby the word *no* when she is 7 to 8 months old.

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### **SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME**

**Do you and your spouse give your baby conflicting emotional cues? The consequences of inconsistency can make it difficult for a child to know what’s right and what’s wrong. In a study conducted with 1-year-olds, parents were coached to give consistent or conflicting emotional signals when the child was about to explore an unusual toy. The infants adapted much more easily to consistent emotional signals—either both parents happy or both parents fearful—than to conflicting signals. In fact, when they were given conflicting facial responses—happy from the mother and fear from the father, for example—the infants expressed their confusion in a wide range of anxious behaviors. Some sucked their thumbs or rocked in an agitated way; others avoided the situation altogether; still others wandered aimlessly or seemed disoriented. It seems that 1-year-olds are remarkably sensitive to emotional signals from parents (Craig, 1996).**

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## STAGE 1: BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

- Use discipline to teach, not to punish.
- When your baby does something he is not allowed to do, follow the two-step discipline plan: (1) Firmly say no with a frown, and (2) distract him with another activity.
- Reserve your *nos* for dangerous or harmful situations.
- Give your baby consistent cues about what is right and wrong.

### *Avoid*

- Expecting a baby between birth and 18 months to have a sense of self-control.
- Worrying that attending to a crying baby under 3 months of age will spoil her.
- Expecting a baby under 7 months to remember what he is and is not allowed to do.
- Overreacting with anger when your baby does something “bad.” At this age, babies have no concept of good and bad.
- Implying that the baby is bad. Focus on the undesirable action, not on the child.
- Overusing the word *no*.
- Confusing your baby’s developing sense of right and wrong by being inconsistent in your discipline efforts.

### REMEMBER

Infants have no sense of self-control, and no amount of discipline will make them feel accountable for their behavior. This doesn’t mean, however, that you shouldn’t introduce the idea of discipline to control negative or dangerous impulses. Babies can be taught the concept of self-control—to a point. Early training will lay the foundation for effective discipline in later years.

## Manners

Thirteen-month-old Kirsten toddled over to her playmate and grabbed the ball right out of her hands. Kirsten’s mother scolded, “No. No. You have to share!”

While putting the needs of others first certainly is a sign of good manners, babies aren’t ready to do this yet because they don’t possess the three things that are necessary to treat other people with consideration: (1) an awareness that they are individuals separate from others, (2) an understanding that their behavior has an impact on other people, and (3) a grasp of the idea that they are capable of controlling their own behavior. Or, to put it in its simplest terms: From birth to 18

**AGE DIFFERENCES**

Infants learn about politeness by passively watching you. But as soon as your baby begins to talk, you can take advantage of babies' natural love of mimicry to encourage him or her to imitate what you say and do. At this time, your baby still won't appreciate the need and value of manners, but he or she will be thrilled to try words like *thank you* and *please*.

months, babies are naturally egocentric and impulsive. For this reason, they can't share; they can't be quiet in church or temple. They can't let others go first or understand that interrupting a conversation is rude.

Although babies cannot yet understand the concept of politeness, they are always aware and learning about their world from your example—it's never too early to model proper social etiquette. Right from infancy, you should treat your child politely. Use a pleasant voice and a smile when you say hello. Stay attuned to your baby's non-verbal cues; responding to cries of boredom, for example, shows respect for your baby's thoughts and feelings. When your baby holds out a piece of food or a toy to share with you, say "Thank you." When your baby shows appreciation with a smile, be sure to say, "You're welcome!" These models of polite behavior build a baby's sense of self-respect and they get the child ready to respect others. Infants who are treated courteously grow up feeling emotionally secure enough to deal positively and constructively with the people around them.

***Parenting to Teach Good Manners***

- Create social play opportunities where your baby can begin to learn how to socialize.
- Expect your baby to be egocentric and impulsive.
- Treat your baby politely. Say "Please" and "Thank you." Your example is your best teaching tool.
- Be polite to your baby by responding quickly to his cries of hunger or discomfort. This will teach him how to deal positively with other people.

**SCIENCE TO TAKE HOME**

A poll conducted by *U.S. News & World Report* found that 9 out of 10 Americans think incivility is a serious problem, and nearly half think it is extremely serious. Seventy-eight percent say the problem has worsened in the past 10 years (Marks, 1996).

**CONSIDER**

Prayers of thanks for family, home, health, and daily bread teach children to express gratitude rather than taking things for granted.

**REMEMBER**

From birth to 18 months, babies are naturally egocentric and impulsive. For this reason, they can't share; they can't be quiet in church or temple. They can't let others go first or understand that interrupting a conversation is rude.

***Avoid***

- Expecting your baby to share. It's just not going to happen.
- Thinking it's not necessary to use good manners around your baby. Your actions dictate the kind of social attitude she will use herself as she grows.
- Underestimating your baby's ability to be socially polite. Teach him to wave bye-bye and to say "Hi."
- Waiting for your baby to grow up before thinking about teaching good manners. Many lessons can be learned in babyhood.