

Session 6 TREE Log:

Getting to Know Your Baby

Newborns to Age 4 months: Early Relational Health Ideas

(TREE Program Maryland Chapter AAP <https://www.mdaap.org/tree/>)



Making the Case:



- More than 1 million new neuron brain cell connections are formed every second in the first few years of life.
- The early years are the most active period for establishing neural connections, but new connections can form throughout life.
- Responsive, nurturing, serve and return interactions with caregivers play an essential role in supporting healthy brain development.
- Parents are concerned: Is my baby ok? Am I doing ok? Provide positive feedback

Your Baby's Abilities:

- Tell me or show me (try it out) what have you noticed your baby doing so far? (show off your baby)
- Clinicians can demonstrate some of the baby's abilities (Newborn Observations System Brazelton Institute)

Discuss and Try It Out:

- Does your baby gaze at or track your face or a red ball at 8-12 inches? (babies don't always do this)
- Have you noticed your baby smile at you yet?
- Does your baby turn towards your voice or a rattle?
- How does your baby respond when you speak in parentese?
- What kind of vocal sounds does your baby make?
- Does your baby grab on to your finger?
- Do you place your baby on their belly for supervised tummy time?
- Can your baby lift their head when on their tummy?

NOTE: gross motor development proceeds from head and neck to legs- “top to bottom” and fine motor skills proceed from center to periphery- “inside out”

Engagement: Having Fun Together

- How do you have fun and interact with your baby?
- How does your baby let you know when they want to *engage* you? (discuss bright gaze, eye contact, eyebrows lifted, smiling, hands and arms out, grabs fingers)
- What does your baby do to elicit a reaction from you?
- Can you identify your baby's **Newborn States**? What state is your baby in now? (deep sleep/ light sleep/ drowsy/ quiet alert/ active alert/ crying or simply **SLEEP/ ALERT/ CRYING**)

NOTE: the best time to engage is when your baby is quiet but alert



Deep Sleep



Active Sleep



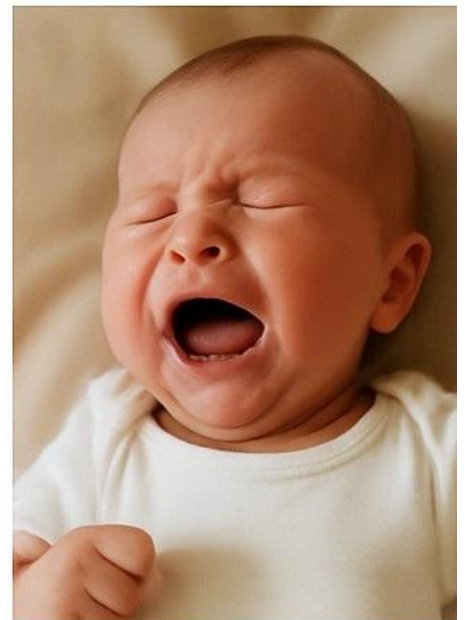
Drowsy



Quiet Alert



Active Alert



Crying

Disengagement: Fussing and Crying (crying peaks at age 6 weeks)

- How does your baby let you know when they want to *disengage* from you? (gaze averted, turns away, eyebrows furrowed, frowns, fusses, cries, stiffens, arches, fingers splayed)
- Does your baby require a lot of stimulation to connect?
- Is your baby easily *over stimulated*? How can you reduce over stimulating your baby? (reduce noise/ reduce light/ alter room temperature/ gentle rocking)
- How consolable and *easy to soothe* is your baby when upset? (rate) How does your baby let you know they are hungry? tired? uncomfortable? Can you distinguish different types of crying?
- Have you tried the **5 S's** to calm your crying baby? (*co-regulation*) (swaddling/ side/ shushing or vocalizing or singing/ swinging or rocking/ sucking)
- How does your baby *self-regulate* and calm themselves when upset? (hands to mouth, sucking, grasping)



Swaddling



Side or Stomach



Shushing



Swinging



Sucking



**Swaddling + Shushing
+ Swinging + Sucking**

Calming Your Baby

Discuss: (see Getting to Know Your Baby TREE Syllabus)

Serve and return are interactive back and forth activities like speaking in parentese, making funny facial expressions or playing peek a boo



- ***Rupture and repair*** are the essential components of relationships. Baby's cues and parent responses are constantly mismatched up to 70% of the time. The key is trying to make sure that repair follows rupture.

“You and your baby won't always be in sync. Nobody is. Sometimes you'll miss a cue and they will become upset. What's important is noticing it and finding your way back to each other.”



Reflective Questions:

- What has been the best part of being a new parent?
- What has been the most difficult?
- What difficult experiences have you had or are having that you feel may impact your parenting? (we ask all of our families this question)
- What do you do to take care of yourself?
- Do you think you can *spoil* your baby with too much attention?
- Do you have any other *concerns*?

Praise-Guide-Praise: have parents watch their baby and observe their interaction

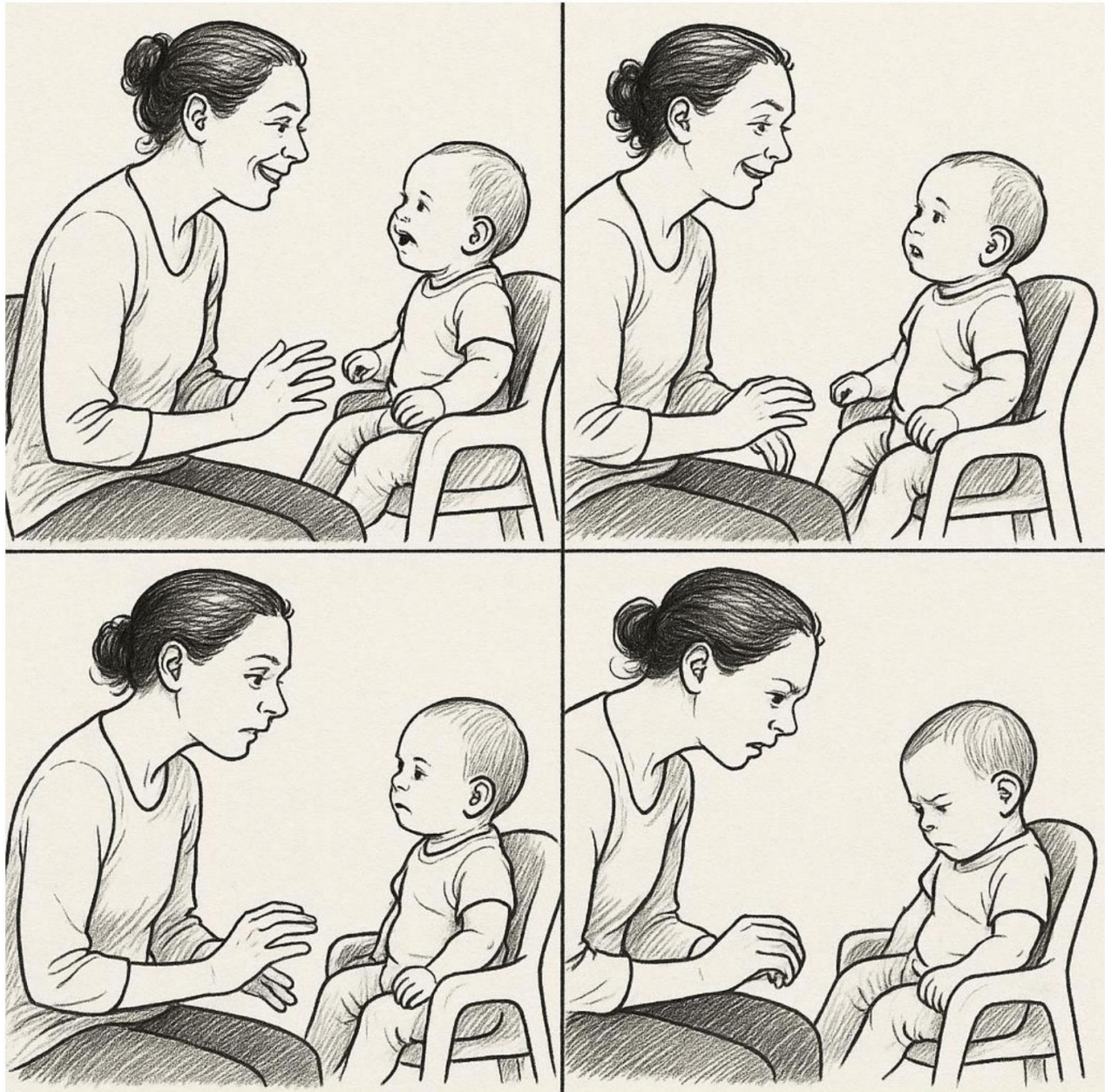
Try it Out: “Let’s *watch* your baby for a moment”

- What do you *notice*?” (help the parent notice a specific cue: eye contact, quiet alertness, turning toward voice, hand movements, rooting, yawning, looking away, or fussing)
- Help the parent *interpret* rather than merely observe the cue.
 (“When she looks away like that, she may be telling us, ‘I need a little break’)
The central lesson is: “**Your baby communicates long before having words**”.
- Have the parent *respond* to the baby’s cues. (parent might talk softly, imitate a sound, smile, pause, pick the baby up, or reduce stimulation)
- Use the *Praise-Guide-Praise* approach to promote the parent’s confidence and competence
 - **Praise:** “I noticed you and your baby smiling so beautifully back and forth”
 - **Guide:** “What do you think your baby is telling you when she smiles?”
 - **Praise:** “Yes, she is letting you know she feels safe and loved. I think you totally get it” (providing positive feedback to the parent for successfully reading the infant’s social cues)

Reading Your Baby's Body Language Illustration:(you can use this illustration to have a conversation about the baby's cues if the child is sleeping or fussy during the encounter)

Reading Your Baby's Social Cues

Note the mother's and baby's facial expressions and body language. What vocal sound do you think the mother is making in each picture? What are the mother and baby feeling and thinking?



Adapted from Beatrice Beebe

Beebe Youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIQ8-F6PIYA>

- Ask the parent if they can imitate or label the facial expressions of the mother in each picture? (parents can use a mirror or use their cell phone to view their own facial expressions)
(maternal facial expressions include *smiling*/ *puzzled* face/ *empathy woe* face/ *upset* face that matches baby)
- What are the baby's facial expressions in each picture?
(baby facial expressions: *smiling* face/ *puzzled* face/ *mild sad* face/ *upset* face)
- Have the parent make the vocal sounds that the mother is making in each picture (note that vocal sounds are high pitched for smile and surprise and progressively deeper for puzzled, woe and upset face)
- Ask the parent what body language is depicted in the illustration (gaze and eye contact, brightening, eyebrows, mother's and baby's head position, hands open or closed, arms extended, and mother's proximity to baby)
- Encourage Caregiver **Reflection**: ask caregivers to pause periodically when they are with their baby and ask themselves:
 - What are you feeling or thinking right now?
 - What do you think your baby might be telling you?
 - What do you notice about your baby's facial expressions and gaze?
 - Are you aware of the physical space between you and your baby?
 - What sounds and vocal pitch are you using?

NOTE: These feelings, thoughts and observations can provide insights into how you are connecting with your baby