

the child and the parents.

Tactile stimulation is extremely important in the total process of acquiring trust. The degree of mothering skill, the quantity of food, or the length of sucking does not determine the quality of the experience. Rather, the total nature of the quality of the interpersonal relationship influences the infant's formulation of trust.

During the second stage, the more active and aggressive modality of biting occurs. Infants learn that they can hold on to what is their own and can more fully control their environment. During this stage, infants may be confronted with one of their first conflicts. If they are breastfeeding, they quickly learn that biting causes the mother to become upset and withdraw the breast. Yet biting also brings internal relief from teething discomfort and a sense of power or control.

This conflict may be solved in a variety of ways. The mother may wean the infant from the breast and begin bottle feeding, or the infant may learn to bite substitute nipples, such as a pacifier, and retain pleasurable breastfeeding. The successful resolution of this conflict strengthens the mother–child relationship because it occurs at a time when infants are recognizing the mother as the most significant person in their life.

Cognitive Development: Sensorimotor Phase (Piaget)

The theory most commonly used to explain **cognition**, or the ability to know, is that of Piaget. The period from birth to 24 months old is termed the *sensorimotor phase* and is composed of six stages; however, because this discussion is concerned with ages birth to 12 months old, only the first four stages are discussed. The last two stages occur during the toddler period of 12 to 24 months old and are discussed in [Chapter 11](#).

During the sensorimotor phase, infants progress from reflexive behaviors to simple repetitive acts to imitative activity. Three crucial events take place during this phase. The first event involves separation, in which infants learn to separate themselves from other objects in the environment. They realize that others besides themselves control the environment and that certain readjustments