



Handouts 15

How babies interact and regulate emotions at the same time

As adults we all take time out from the tiring experiences of everyday life. We can be overwhelmed with intense interactions with others and physical activities. If we pay attention to ourselves we can recognise the different ways in which we cope with these day-to-day stresses.

Babies too have in-built reactions to coping with things when they become too much.

You might notice that the baby begins to disengage by looking away or might start to look a bit distant or his/her eyes might glaze over.

You might feel rejected or feel that you have done something wrong. Sometimes it might be tempting to jolly the baby up again.

The important thing is to understand and support the baby's efforts to take a break. You can do this by recognising the signs of baby winding down and to remain nearby and available.

Babies can take time out for varying periods of time. Some for a few minutes and others for longer. They may sit quietly for a few moments, might doze or fall asleep, or just look a little vacant.

Babies will give clues about when they are ready to engage again. You are likely to see a 'brighter' baby who becomes lively again, expressing through facial expressions, vocal noises and bodily movement that he/she would like to interact again.