



# Creating Positive Experiences for Your Infant

By: Robert Sege, MD, PhD, FAAP

The first year of life is filled with major growth and development. (</English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/default.aspx>) It is easy to see how the baby in your arms becomes the babbling baby pulling up, giggling, laughing, and trying to walk and talk! Infants also develop emotionally as they begin to learn about the world of people.

Fortunately, parents naturally provide the love that infants and toddlers need. Among the many changes at birth, mothers and their partners experience a surge in a hormone called oxytocin. This hormone is known commonly as the "love hormone." It provides a rush of emotion to fuel the bond between children and their parents.



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## Everyday ways to be positive

Positive experiences during these years helps set patterns and build a strong foundational relationship that will last a lifetime. Here are a few things to remember as you and your baby are creating those first experiences.

**Comfort your baby.** All babies cry. This is how babies communicate before they can say words. Often, it's easy to figure out what makes babies cry. First, check to see if they are hungry, their diaper is wet, or something else is bothering them. Sometimes, they really need comforting. Try swaddling (</English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/swaddling-is-it-safe.aspx>) your baby. This reminds them of the comfortable feeling of being inside the womb. Many parents find that walking with their baby or humming, singing, or rocking gently, can help.

Every so often, your baby will still cry no matter what you try. If you're feeling frustrated, it's okay to put your baby back into the crib and let them cry it out. Remember, deep in your heart, that crying is just what babies do at this age, and that this phase will pass soon enough!

**Start a "conversation."** Of course, babies do not understand words yet. Right now, they are learning the sounds and rhythm of language—from you. As they babble and coo, and their parents speak with them, they learn about the back and forth of conversation.

Talking with your baby begins the long process of language development. It also teaches them about feelings. Sometimes those feelings are love. Sometimes they are frustration, humor, or boredom. Hearing you talk, the sounds and rhythms of speech, the expressions on your face, and the way you hold them all teach babies about emotional expression.

Sometime around two months old, your baby will begin to reward you with smiles and giggles and then babbling. All these wonderful natural changes are the first steps of learning language. They also let you know that your baby is off to a great start.

**Cuddle & hold your baby.** Babies feel secure and loved when held by their parents, grandparents, and caregivers. This physical affection helps babies control their own emotions. Close physical connection between babies and parents is so important that pediatricians recommend skin-to-skin contact (</English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/Pages/About-Skin-to-Skin-Care.aspx>) right after birth to help the newborn adjust to life. Having a parent hold the baby close so important that it is part of the care given to premature infants in the hospital. This expression of love rewards the baby. It also brings joy to parents.

**yourself.** Relationships between parents and infants are the most important and satisfying connections we ever have. They keep parents and children stable and resilient through the ups and downs of life.

Creating these positive experiences in the first year of life goes a long way towards helping your baby develop healthy relationships for a lifetime. And, it brings joy to their parents, as well.

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## A word about taking care of you

Did you know that at some point or another almost all parents cry too? When babies sleep so little and cry so much that you feel tired (</English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Welcome-To-The-World-of-Parenting.aspx>), exhausted, and frustrated, this is the perfect moment to reach out for support from another adult-your friend, partner, parent, sister, or good friend. Remember, people close to you want to feel useful but sometimes don't know what to do. When you reach out for help, you are offering a person you love a chance to feel needed.

## Your pediatrician is here to help

Some babies are fussier (</English/ages-stages/baby/crying-colic/Pages/Calming-A-Fussy-Baby.aspx>) than others. If you have questions, remember that pediatricians have learned tips from hundreds of parents and can help you through this phase. Give your pediatrician a call.

## More Information

- [Tips for Coping With a New Baby During COVID-19](/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Tips-for-Coping-with-a-New-Baby-During-COVID-19.aspx) (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Tips-for-Coping-with-a-New-Baby-During-COVID-19.aspx>)
- [Simple Ways to Boost Your Baby's Development at Home](/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Simple-Ways-to-Boost-Your-Babys-Development-at-Home.aspx) (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Simple-Ways-to-Boost-Your-Babys-Development-at-Home.aspx>)
- [Parenting in a Pandemic](/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Parenting-in-a-Pandemic.aspx) (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Parenting-in-a-Pandemic.aspx>)
- [Ages and Stages: Baby](/english/ages-stages/baby/Pages/default.aspx) (</english/ages-stages/baby/Pages/default.aspx>)
- [ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences](/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/ACEs-Adverse-Childhood-Experiences.aspx) (</English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/ACEs-Adverse-Childhood-Experiences.aspx>)

## About Dr. Sege



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