

“Baby, Be Calm!”

Babies have good days and bad days...

What to UNDERSTAND about infant crying

Crying means “I need help.”

Babies don’t cry to annoy others.

Babies have good days and bad days—like all of us.

When babies cry, it does **NOT** mean they are bad or spoiled.

Babies cry for lots of reasons. Your crying baby may be

- Hungry
- Lonely
- Ill or in pain
- Uncomfortable (too hot, too cold, wet diaper)
- Overstimulated (stirred up by noise, light, activity)

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|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> need love | <input type="checkbox"/> uncomfortable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> scared | <input type="checkbox"/> lonely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hungry | <input type="checkbox"/> hurting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wet | <input type="checkbox"/> “hello, I’m here.” |



Babies can’t help themselves when these needs arise.

A quick response to your baby’s cries teaches your baby to trust you to help her.

Over time, this trust helps your baby calm down more easily and cry less.

What to DO about infant crying

When you have met all the normal needs and your baby is still crying, try these things:

- Offer a soft voice, kind words, and comforting touches.
- Try rocking him continuously, lying across your lap.
- Try the rock/stop method.
- Swaddle him with a warm, soft blanket with just the head uncovered.
- Burp him.
- Give him a pacifier.
- Treat and cure diaper rash.

Offer a soft voice and kind words

“I can handle this.”

When you start to feel upset about your crying baby, do these things:

- Notice your own feelings and accept them as normal.
- Remind yourself that he isn’t crying to upset you on purpose.
- Think positive, calming thoughts like “I can handle this.”
- Ask trustworthy others for help to care for your crying baby.

What to KNOW about infant emotions

Emotions are signals from the central nervous system. Through the body, emotions tell us what is important to us—what we like or don't like, what we want, what we need. When we accept and respond to infant emotions, we help babies learn about themselves.

Anger. Like us, babies have an emotional reaction when they can't have what they want or need. Anger and tears are signs of healthy emotional growth. Respond with understanding.

Joy. Along with crying, joy is one of your baby's first forms of emotional communication. His social smile will appear around 4 to 6 weeks in response to your smiling face. Express your positive feelings to your baby to help him develop his capacity for joy.

Excitement. Your baby may show excitement in response to your talking to her or playing with her. When your baby turns her head away, that's a cue that she may need a break from the fun.

Fear. Your baby may show fear in response to unfamiliar people and places. To help a baby who has a hard time dealing with new situations, introduce things slowly, so he gets used to them.



Things to know about your baby's fear of strangers:

- It is normal.
- Your baby is beginning to develop a sense of self and others.
- Your baby can now tell the difference between who is family and who is unfamiliar.
- Your baby is afraid because he doesn't know what a stranger will do (not because of who the stranger is).

Things to do when your baby shows fear of strangers:

- Comfort her.
- Hold her while she gets to know the person.
- Wait before handing her over to the unfamiliar person.
- Let her become comfortable and make new friends at her own pace.

What to KNOW about creating feelings of love and self-confidence

Babies learn about love from the words and actions of the people who care for them.

- Share lots of hugs, kisses, and smiles.
- Tell your baby how important he is to you.
- Feel good about her and let her know that you do.
- Send a powerful message of love with your positive, undivided attention.

Babies grow in self-confidence when adults nurture and meet their needs:

- Respond to your baby's needs and interests.
- Be sure that she knows you love her even when you don't like what she does.
- Let your baby develop at his own rate. A little challenge is good, but pushing him to do something he is not ready to do will backfire.
- Point out at least 5 things your baby does right each day.

Adapted from content published in the *Just in Time Parenting* (JITP) newsletters at www.extension.org/parenting.