

Q FUSSY BABY

Caregivers for infants and toddlers are very special people! As a caregiver, you must respond to the individualized needs and each child in your care. Not a simple task . . . but a rewarding one! From the moment of birth, an infant feels the impact of personal attention. It is very important that trust and caring develop between you and the child.

COMMUNICATION AND THE FUSSY BABY

Crying fussy infants can create a nerve-racking situation for the best of us. Understanding the different types and reasons for crying is very important for the caregiver's peace of mind and for the infant or toddler's well being. **AND ALWAYS REMEMBER, NEVER EVER SHAKE A BABY OR TODDLER!**

Crying is a form of communication. To understand what the problem is, you must listen carefully to the child and try some approaches that may tell you what the child needs or wants.

CAUSES

Some of the reasons which may cause crying are:

- a change in caregivers or care settings,
- temperature . . . too hot or too cold,
- hunger,
- boredom,
- tiredness,
- overstimulation or sudden change,
- wet or soiled diapers,
- frustration,
- discomfort from gas,
- illness,
- teething or colic
- a need to be held.

BASIC NEEDS

The following are some basic techniques to try first with an infant or toddler who is continuing to cry:

- offer some food or drink,
- make sure the child is dry and clean,

- check for clothing or pins that may be causing pain or discomfort,
- determine that the child is not too hot or cold,
- burp the child to eliminate gas,

PAIN

If the child is still crying, look for signs that the child may be in pain, hurt or ill. Some typical signs are:

- rubbing or batting at ears,
- running or blurry eyes,
- rash,
- white sores in the mouth,
- stuffy nose,
- type of bowel movement (constipation or diarrhea),
- fever,
- gum tenderness,
- bruises or
- not using an arm or leg,

. . . and of course check with others in the house/center to see if they know or saw something that may have resulted in the baby's distress.

TENDER LOVING CARE

If you have tried all of the above and the child is still crying, some tender loving care may help.

- Pick the child up to cuddle, walk, talk or rock soothingly,
- Hold the child to your shoulder and gently rock or pat the back,
- Change the child's position,
- Give the child something interesting to do or watch that may divert his/her attention,
- Wrap the child in a warm, snugly, soft blanket.

SOOTHING

If the child continues to cry, or if crying recurs, you may become agitated and upset. You need to be aware that the child can and will pick up on your feelings and probably become more upset as a result. You need to get your own reaction under control and then try some of the following ideas to pacify the child:

- dip a pacifier in something sweet (DO NOT use honey),
- touch tongue with a few drops of lemon juice,
- hold a clean, wet washcloth on the forehead or let child chew on the cloth,
- experiment with different types of music (classical, singing lullabies, music box, etc.),
- turn on the TV to distract and make noise,
- set a loud timer and with a definite tick-tock sound
- place child in a carrier (front pack for infants . . . back pack for toddlers) and carry child with you as you go about regular routine, breathing slowly & calmly.
- turn on a vacuum cleaner, dryer or humidifier (the monotonous noise can have a calming effect),
- if the baby is teething, try to gently massage the gums.

If the crying still continues, gently place the child alone in a safe, quiet area (crib or playpen) away from stimulation for 5 to 10 minutes. Stay close so you are available immediately if needed. Often the child is overtired or stimulated and only needs some quiet alone time.

YOUR NEEDS

Do not forget to pay attention to your own needs during this time. The calmer you are, the calmer the child may become. If at all possible, call another adult to take over for awhile and take a break, especially if you are feeling upset.

If you are watching other children, ask an adult to relieve you and try taking the crying child for a ride in the car (in a car seat of course) or stroller. Sometimes the motion of the car will lull the child to sleep. (A pleasant relief for both of you)!

EATING DISCOMFORT

If you believe the crying may be related to eating discomfort, try some of the following techniques:

- hold the baby more erect while feeding a bottle (close to a 45 degree angle rather than horizontal),
- burp more frequently,
- check the nipple on bottles to assure that a steady, smooth stream exists (too big or small a hole can cause swallowing air and gas),
- place your hand on the baby's stomach and use a gentle circular rubbing motion, or gently flex the baby's legs,
- calm the baby in a warm bath.

SPECIAL TIPS FOR YOU

- Check the basic safety items first.
- Remember, crying is the child's way to communicate . . . try to listen and understand the message.
- Stay calm and relax . . . the baby will read your body messages loud and clear.
- The most important tip of all: when beginning care for a child, **ask the parents what techniques they use to successfully calm the child when fussy.** Those techniques may not work for you . . . but they might save you a lot of time and worry if they do.

Good luck!

Remember...

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