

# Building Trust

A photograph of a woman with short dark hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, smiling warmly as she holds a baby. The baby is wearing a white ruffled outfit. The woman is kissing the baby on the forehead. The photo is framed with a thick orange border.

*I love you  
so much.*

Communicate love through calm, warm body contact, and soothing words.

Responding to your baby in a loving way teaches her that she can trust you.



## Why this is important

Your baby learns to love and trust from your loving words and actions. Responding to her in a positive way lets her know that she can trust you with her needs and feelings. When you hold her close while you feed her, the warmth of your body and the gentle sound of your voice help build her trust in you. When you respond to your baby's cries you are teaching her about communication. She is learning that her sounds cause something to happen that makes her feel comfortable again. Your baby's trust in one or two important people will give her the confidence and security she needs later to explore her world and build relationships with others.

## What you do

- Go quickly to your baby when she expresses discomfort. This shows her that you care.
- Hold her close to you. Because she cannot yet understand your words, it is important to convey love with body language, facial expressions, and soothing sounds.
- Give her your full attention when taking care of her needs such as diapering, feeding, and bathing.
- Smile, cuddle, rock, and talk to her.
- Notice how your baby responds to you with sounds or movement. Let her know you understand she is communicating with you. *Oh, my sweet baby. I feel you snuggling into me. You are very sleepy.*

## Another idea

Use this method of lovingly responding to her throughout the day. Your baby feels secure when you offer love consistently and confidently. If you feel like picking her up, do not wait until she cries. She will thrive on your attention and affection.

### Let's read together!

*Time for Bed*  
by Mem Fox

# Songs and Rhythm Throughout the Day

Make your caregiving actions match the rhythm of a song.

By singing as you care for your baby, you help him learn to love music and feel comforted by soothing rhythm and motion.

*Rub-a-dub-dub.*





## Why this is important

The crooning and stroking you do as you cradle your baby in your arms introduce him to music and rhythm. Your gentle touches and the sound of your voice offer much more to your baby than the sounds from a radio or TV. When you choose songs that have rhymes, you are getting your baby used to the patterns and sounds of words. This will help him later as he learns how to speak and then how to read.

## What you do

- As you care for your baby, look for ways to use gentle, rhythmic motions and words. For example, when you rock your baby in a rocking chair, sing in time to the chair's motion. After feeding, you might pat his back while chanting, *Burp, burp, burp, here comes the burp.*
- Use calming words and rhythmic motions to soothe him when he cries. *Daddy loves you and Mommy does, too,* you sing over and over as you hold your baby and sway from side to side.
- Observe his body language as you move and sing. Does he appear content and relaxed in your arms? If not, try a different rhythmic motion.

## Another idea

Extend this caregiving time a little beyond what is actually needed for the care—do it just for the pleasure it brings. Use songs and nursery rhymes to bring enjoyment to riding in the car, swinging in a baby swing, or going for walks in the stroller.

### Let's read together!

*Row, Row, Row Your Boat,*  
by Annie Kubler (illustrator)

# Showing Your Baby Something Interesting

*See the bunny?*



Hold your baby or place him where he can hold his head up and look at interesting things.

This helps your baby learn to use his eyes and control his body.



## Why this is important

Your baby will want to hold up his head and control his body movements in order to see something interesting such as your face or a colorful toy. The length of time he can hold his head up will get longer and longer. He will try harder when he is curious about an object. As his head control improves, so will his ability to use his body.

## What you do

- Hold your baby to your shoulder. Keep your hand near, but let him support his own head as much as he can.
- Sit or stand so he sees something interesting over your shoulder such as another person, an animal, or light and shadows. If your baby is younger than 4 months old, hold him less than a foot away from the object.
- Talk to him and stroke him as he looks around in order to reinforce the positive experience.  
*Do you see Grandma smiling at you?*

## Ready to move on?

Put him on a blanket indoors or outdoors so that he can observe you moving and working. Make sure that you can see and hear him. Stop often to smile and talk to him face-to-face.

### Let's read together!

*Smile!*  
by Roberta Grobel Intrater

# Soothing Your Baby

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a light purple short-sleeved top, is sitting in a wooden chair and holding a baby wrapped in a white patterned blanket. She is looking down at the baby with a gentle smile.

*Oh, my little baby.  
You're so sleepy.*

Try different techniques to comfort your baby, such as holding, stroking, talking, and swaddling.

You learn what works best to soothe her, and she learns to trust that her needs will be met.



## Why this is important

A newborn baby's actions are reflexive and her response to her world is very physical. When she feels content, her body is relaxed. When she feels distressed, she expresses it with her voice and through tension in her body. Your baby's trust in you grows each time you respond quickly to her needs. As you determine what calms your baby, you will begin to adjust your response to her needs and reactions. A baby who learns at an early age that her needs will be met cries less as she gets older. Learning to trust you will help her to have trust in herself and others.

## What you do

- Pick up your baby and hold her to help her calm down when she shows distress.
- Respond to the tension in her body by swaddling her with a blanket and holding her close so that she can feel your warmth. To swaddle your baby, lay a blanket on a soft, flat surface. Position the blanket so that it looks like a diamond laid out in front of you. Fold down the top corner about six inches. Lay your baby on the blanket with the back of her neck on the top fold. Pull the corner on your right across your baby's shoulder and body, and tuck the edge under her back beneath her arm. Pull the bottom corner up over your baby's exposed shoulder, and tuck it under that shoulder. Bring the loose corner over your baby's exposed arm, across her body, and tuck it under her back. If your baby prefers to have her arms free, you can try swaddling her under her arms.
- Make eye contact, and speak softly to her: *My sweet baby, Mommy's here.* Continue to stroke and cuddle her as she calms down.
- Try making a rhythmic *shhh* sound or turn on a fan or static on the radio to imitate the *shhh* sound. In the first few months, many babies are soothed by a *shhh* sound which is similar to the sound they hear in their mother's womb.

## Ready to move on?

As your baby gets older, try comforting her by using a gentle tone of voice and offering soothing touches before picking her up. If she does not calm down, pick her up and comfort her.

### Let's read together!

*Sleepytime Rhyme*  
by Remy Charlip

# Talking to Your Baby

*I hear you  
talking to me!*

*Ahhhh.*

Smile, hold your baby close so he can see your face and lips, and speak to him in a gentle voice.

Watching and listening to you speak helps your baby begin to connect the sound of a voice with mouth movement.





## Why this is important

Back-and-forth vocal play helps your baby know that sounds and mouth movements usually go together. The pleasure of watching your face, combined with the sound of your voice, encourages him to practice making mouth noises. As your baby gets older, he will imitate the mouth movements he has seen and the sounds he has heard.

## What you do

- Hold your baby close with his head cupped in your hands so that he can see your face and lips. Position him so that he is about 8 inches away from you. This is the distance that a young infant's eyes focus best on objects.
- Lean toward him and talk happily. Make sure he can see your lips move as he listens to the sounds: *I see your beautiful brown eyes. I feel your soft skin.*
- Pause to give your baby a chance to make sounds, though he may not try to make sounds right away. If he does not respond verbally, smile back at him and continue talking, pausing occasionally to give him time to respond.
- Smile and repeat back to him the sound he made when he makes any sound, accidentally or intentionally. This encourages him to continue making sounds.

## Another idea

Try doing this back-and-forth vocal play during caregiving routines. Talk to your baby while you change his diaper, get him dressed, and give him a bath. Remember to pause to give him plenty of time to respond to your words. *Blue shirt ... Mommy is putting on your blue shirt.*

## Let's read together!

*Mommy Hugs*  
by Karen Katz

# Holding and Dropping

*Would you like to hold your rattle?*

Offer toys that your baby can close her hand around.

This encourages her to use her hands to grasp and release objects.



## Why this is important

When your baby learns to grasp, she begins a lifelong process of working with her hands. Hand skills such as buttoning a shirt, cutting with scissors, and writing with a pencil all begin with the ability to close her hand around an object. Young infants hold toys tightly because they have a gripping reflex. They do not yet know how to open their fingers. As your baby begins to move her fingers more purposefully, she will learn how to grasp the toy and intentionally release it. Dropping it shows she is making progress!

## What you do

- Choose a toy that the baby can close her hand around easily, such as a soft animal or a rattle. Hold the toy so the baby can see it. **Remember to keep small objects out of her reach to avoid choking hazards.**
- Touch the toy to the inside of her hand so that her fingers close around it, as you describe it. Let go of the toy so that she can feel herself holding it. *This is your fuzzy lamb.*
- Repeat the game each time she drops the toy. *You dropped the fuzzy lamb. I will get it for you. Feel how soft the lamb is!*
- Encourage her to use each hand to hold the toy. *What about your other hand? Can you hold your rattle with this hand?*

## Another idea

Vary the game by using objects with different textures. *Here is a bumpy rattle. Here is a smooth hippo.*

## Let's read together!

*My Fuzzy Farm Babies*  
by Tad Hills

# Exploring a Face

*Cheek. That's  
Momma's cheek.*



Name the part of your face your baby touches the moment she touches it.

Allowing your baby to explore your face helps her begin to connect the word she hears with the part of the face she feels.



## Why this is important

Very young infants have not yet learned that they can reach out and touch most things they see. As your baby grows, she will learn to move her hands purposefully toward an object. Your face is her most familiar object and frequently the one nearest to her. Allowing her to see and explore your facial features helps her gain better hand-eye coordination. Hearing words such as *eye*, *nose*, and *mouth* prepares her for identifying and naming her own body parts later when she starts talking.

## What you do

- Encourage your baby to use her eyes and hands to explore your face. When she reaches for you, lean in closer so that she may comfortably touch you with her hands.
- Speak to her softly, naming each part and describing what she touches the moment she touches it. *You are touching Mommy's nose. Now you are touching Mommy's cheek.*
- Guide her to touch other parts of your face. For example, you might slowly turn your head to the side and guide her finger around the curves of your ear. *This is Mommy's ear.*

## Another idea

As you do this activity with your baby, think of face movements that will seem surprising or funny to her such as blinking your eyelids, raising your eyebrows, wiggling your tongue, or puckering your lips. Smile and laugh with her.

### Let's read together!

*Baby Faces*  
by DK Publishing

# Propping Up Your Baby

Use a pillow to prop up your baby so she can look around independently.

Propping her up allows your baby to explore more easily with her eyes and hands.



*Who's in that mirror?*



## Why this is important

Propping your baby up on a pillow allows her to hold her head up and look at objects and the people around her. When your baby is flat on her stomach or back, her exploration is limited. She may see only the rug under her or the ceiling above her. With her chest elevated or when you prop her in a sitting position she can observe what is going on around her and use her hands to explore toys placed directly in front of her. As your baby spends time in these positions, her muscle control will increase and she will be able to bend and reach for objects.

## What to do

Place a pillow under your baby so that her tummy rests on it and her arms are out in front of her. This position allows her to hold up her head and look around. Observe your baby carefully and help her if she slips. On the pillow she may push with her legs or roll sideways. **Do not leave your baby unattended during this activity.**

- Place a few toys near her hands so that she can see and touch them. Try holding a mirror in front of her. Notice how she watches the baby in the mirror.
- Talk about the objects as she explores each one. *You're looking at the yellow bunny rattle.*
- If she prefers sitting up, place firm pillows behind her back so that she is sitting, leaning back, with her head supported comfortably. Position the pillows to prevent her from falling over. Place a few soft pillows in front of her in case she falls forward.
- Place objects in different positions around her to encourage her to practice moving her head to look at something to explore.

## Another idea

Prop your baby in a seated position on the floor in a room where you are working. Talk to her as you work. For example, as you fold laundry, lay a blanket on the floor and prop her up with firm pillows, making sure she is securely supported on all sides. Explain to her what you are doing and stop frequently to touch her gently while including her in your work. *I'm folding the blue towel. Feel how soft that is against your cheek.*

### Let's read together!

*Bright Baby Animals*  
by Roger Priddy

# Peek-a-Boo

*Where's my baby?*



With your baby facing you, talk to her from behind a cloth, and then peek out.

Over time, your baby will learn that you are still there even when she cannot see you.



## Why this is important

An infant cannot understand the permanence of objects. When an item is gone from her sight, she thinks it has disappeared. Talking to her from behind the cloth helps her to learn that your face is there even though it is covered. Over time your child will learn that a toy or face still exists even though she may not see it. This concept is essential to her security as she begins to crawl and walk out of sight of familiar people.

## What you do

- Cover your face with a light towel or baby blanket while facing your baby. Talk to her from behind the cover, and then whisk it away or peek around the cloth while saying, *Peek-a-boo!*
- Alternate between covering your face and hers. Each time, be sure to talk to her through each step of the game: *I'm looking for my baby. Where is the baby?*
- Look for signs that she is trying to remove the blanket herself. She may thrash her arms and legs or rub the blanket with her fists. Help her if she cannot grasp the blanket and pull it off.
- After playing the game over a period of time, gradually take longer to pull the blanket away. If she successfully pulls the blanket, show surprise and excitement at seeing her again: *You found Momma! I'm so happy to see you!*
- Remove the blanket quickly if she appears distressed by the game. Make sure that during the game she can always see part of you so that she feels secure.

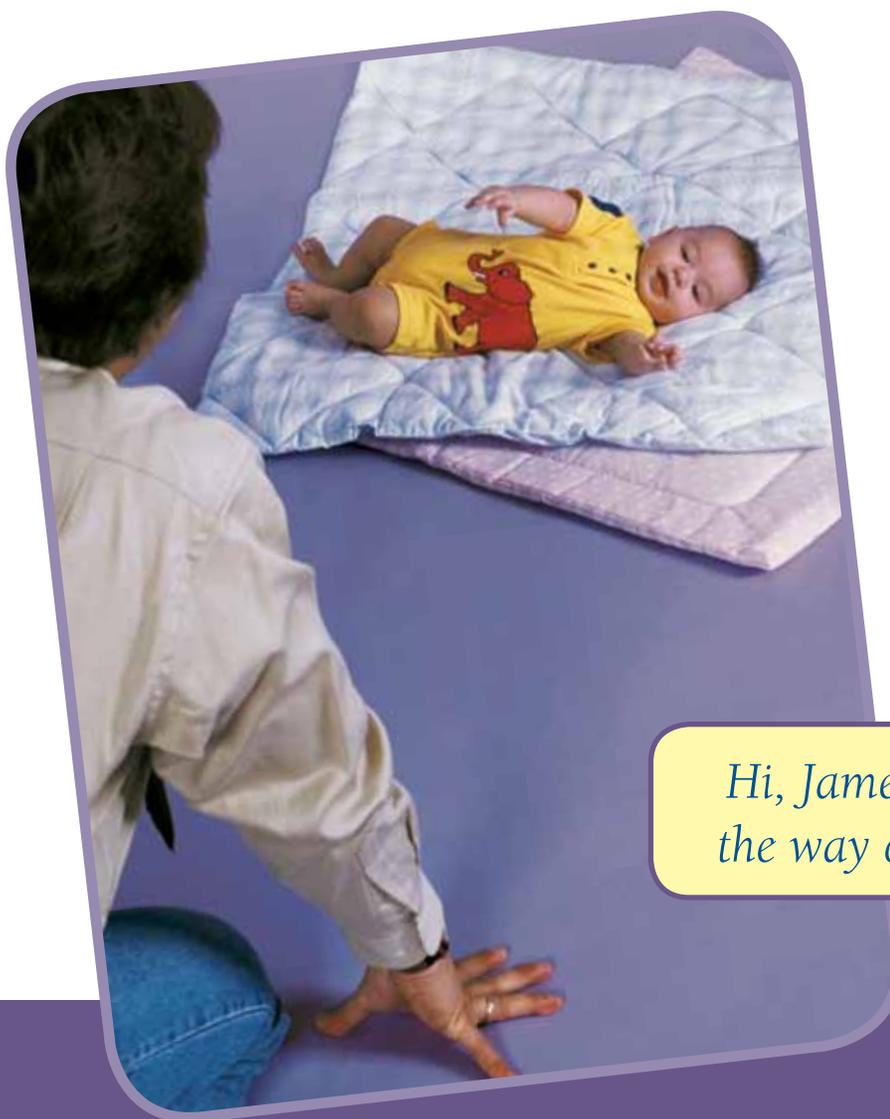
### Another idea

Play the game during routine times of day. Anything can be used to hide behind—a shirt, washcloth, diaper, or bib.

### Let's read together!

*Peek-a-Boo!*  
by Roberta Grobel Intrater

# Searching for a Voice



Call your baby's name from a distance so he can practice locating your voice.

This helps him learn how to locate the source of a sound.

*Hi, James! I'm all the way over here!*



## Why this is important

Locating sounds that are out of sight encourages your baby to use his eyes and ears to identify the sound and to use muscle control to turn his head in your direction. When he is older, these skills will help him pay attention to a voice from another room, recorded music, or signals for safety.

## What you do

- Place your baby on his back and move to a position a few feet away. Speak his name softly several times until he attempts to turn toward the sound: *James, can you see me? I'm over here.*
- Allow time for him to try to find you. He may not turn his head until he realizes he cannot see you in front of him.
- Smile, pick him up, and cuddle him when he successfully turns to look at you. If he cannot find you, move closer to him while you continue talking until he sees you.
- Move to another position in the room and repeat the game until your baby loses interest or becomes fussy.

## Ready to move on?

When your baby is comfortable lying on his stomach, try the game from that position. While on his stomach he must manage the weight of his head as well as the direction, so he may not look at you as quickly or for as long.

### Let's read together!

*Big Baby Book*  
by Helen Oxenbury